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Determining Holistic Child Well-being: Critical Reflections on Theory and Dominant Models

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Abstract:

The concept of child well-being has been receiving growing attention within policy, academic research and literature. However, a precise definition of the concept of 'well-being' is problematic and continues to be debated and discussed within various scientific fields. A number of international studies and models have highlighted selected indicators as being necessary in the measuring of well-being in children, and have served as international definitions and standards for child and family policy development. Yet, these models show differences in the indicators, which they recognize as being significant. In this article, the authors will attempt to reflect upon the following questions: What indicators are the dominant international models of child well-being highlighting as important? What type of theoretical approaches do these models represent? Are there gaps between the indicators presented in these models and those raised as important in theory? The aim is to reflect upon and establish a critical dialogue around what are considered to be the most important indicators for measuring child well-being, and whether these indicators represent a holistic and multidimensional approach to child well-being, as outlined in literature. This will be done through an analysis of what the authors deemed as the dominant international models used to measure and define child well-being; the key indicators recognized through these models as being important; and reflections and discussions against a theoretical backdrop.

Keywords

Child well-being, International research, Indicator research, Holistic well-being

1. INTRODUCTION: TOWARD HOLISTIC CHILD WELL-BEING

There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace. (Kofi Annan)

The concept of child well-being is a highly contextual and complex debate, with understandings varying across different political, economic, social and cultural contexts and time periods, as well as scientific and academic fields (Heaslip and Ryden 2013; Liamputtong 2007; Narayan *et al.* 2000). Different countries define well-being in alternative ways, dependent on existing national policies, the nature of welfare and service provision, determined areas of importance within civil society, the cultural understanding of family and its structure, points of scientific and theoretical departure, and many other interacting factors. This, therefore, makes a concrete definition of well-being difficult to capture and a concept that continues to be widely debated.

However, embracing indicators of 'well-being' has been advocated as more accurately representing children and their needs at an international level. As asserted by Schues and Rehmann-Sutter (2013), one should not only measure where children are being mistreated, or how children should not be treated, but one should also take into account how they *should* be treated on a holistic level, looking at a varied number of psychological, physical, social and economic factors, as well as understanding how different environments impact upon children. Therefore, against this backdrop of differing cultural, social, economic, theoretical and language-based understandings, such reflections and discussions around well-being and its measurement need to continue to be broadened, researched and debated at both the national and international level. This is "necessary in order to develop appropriate children's social indicators-if we seek to improve their well-being by implementing the policies and services they deserve" (Ben-Arieh *et al.* 2001, p.6).

The aim of this paper is to attempt to further such discussion and debate through critically reflecting upon the key international indicators used in measuring child well-being, through an analysis of a selection of existing dominant international models, namely: *The State of the World's Children (UNICEF 2014)*; *The Child Development Index (CDI 2012)*; *OECD's Doing Better for Children (2009)*; and *UNESCO's Holistic Early Childhood Development Index (HECDI 2014)* Although not endeavouring to provide a concrete and definite answer, it is the author's hope instead that such a reflection will contribute to dialogue around the following questions: What indicators are the dominant international models of child well-being highlighting as important? What type of theoretical approaches do these models represent? Are there gaps between the indicators presented in these models and those raised as important in theory?

2. CHILD WELL-BEING: TOWARD A HOLISTIC MEASUREMENT

Many disciplines tend to focus on a limited number of indicators when measuring and understanding children's' well-being, as in the case of food security studies which tend to assess indicators such as weather-related crop failures; nutrition studies which focus on the risks related to declines in food intakes; disaster literature which focuses primarily on the probabilities and damages associated with physical disasters; economic studies which tend to focus on monetary and GDP-related measurements; and so forth (Alwang *et al.* 2001; Ben-Arieh and Fronese, 2007). These disciplines tend to fall under one of two prominent divides in literature on the understanding of child well-being. The first divide is between research that focuses on 'deficits' or vulnerability in terms of poverty, sickness, and so forth, and research which is more strengths-based in its approach (Ben-Arieh and Goerge 2001; Pollard and Lee 2003; Fattore *et al.* 2007); the second divide is between the developmental approach, which is focused upon the accumulation of human capital and social skills, and the child right's perspective, which emphasises rights-based approaches to children as human beings, and thereby incorporating the direct input of the child in the process of determining what their well-being might be and how it is best measured (Casas 1997; Ben-Arieh 2007).

Although a specific focus in various studies on certain indicators and understandings may be necessary for the achievement of particular outcomes, there is a risk of lacking a holistic understanding of children's well-being, and therefore limiting the development of holistic policies and programmes to address this area. Although literature still shows some division in this regard, more recently a multidimensional approach, which embraces all of the above considerations is being increasingly considered in research and policy, such as the definition offered by Schues and Rehmann-Sutter (2013), who define child well-being as being related to the physical, mental, personal, cultural and social development of a child, which results in a meaningful life with other human beings; and the structural model of child well-being presented by Jaana Minkkinen (2013), which outlines the well-being of a child as consisting of their physical, mental, social and material situation, which is more commonly positive than negative, and is linked with subjective measurements of life satisfaction and happiness indexes.

This holistic approach is further related to debates around studies and models addressing a child needs (developmental approach) and rights (rights-based approach), yet overlooking their will and desires. Often, understandings of child well-being are loosely related to the rights of a child, especially within social policy. However, "the underlying concept of 'well-being of a child', or of 'a child's best interest' cannot easily be deduced from such a list of children's rights" (Schues and Rehmann-Sutter 2013, p.197). Increasingly it is believed that understanding child well-being needs to take place within a three-tiered context of the basic *needs* of children, their *rights* within a global and national framework, as well as what children *want* (their will). Often the most recognised separations of child well-being from that of the adult individual is related to a child's status of autonomy and will and the understanding that a child's level of well-being is often controlled by adults. The respect and fostering of a child's *will*, over and above needs and rights, is thus recognised as being a core component of holistic well-being (Hagger 2009). Approaching child well-being with a holistic perspective that incorporates a child's will, rather than just their needs and rights brings into argument the importance of subjective measures. A child's needs "depends on an understanding of the physiological and moral status of a child, the subjective qualities of the child's relationships, and the situation in its social and cultural contexts" (Schues and Rehmann-Sutter 2013, p.199).

Therefore, defining and determining child well-being at the holistic level has become increasingly recognised as being both an objective and subjective activity, both connected to and separate from monetary measurements, based on both

vulnerability and strengths-based approaches, as well as developmental and rights-based approaches, incorporating a child’s will and autonomy, and embedded in both local and international contexts. However, such an approach is complex and large, and can raise questions as to how successfully dominant international models of child well-being measure and capture such a holistic approach?

3. RESEARCH QUESTION: MEASURING CHILD WELL-BEING

The recognition and use of various indicators has direct implications for policy development and implementation for children and are thus of incredible significance (Axford 2009), requiring constant critical reflection and debate to ensure they best represent and aid toward the well-being development of children in a global context. Thus, reflecting on the indicators used in current dominant models is a significant means of telling us how child well-being is being defined, as well as which indicators are considered to currently have important value. Against this backdrop therefore, the authors began to raise questions regarding how such indicators were determined, and whether the selection of indicators used by dominant international models resulted in a biased, or limited approach to child well-being and its measurement. Thus, the authors determined to reflect upon the following three questions:

- What indicators are the dominant international models of child well-being highlighting as important?
- What type of theoretical approaches do these models represent?
- Are there gaps between the indicators presented in these models and those raised as important in theory?

Essentially, the authors were asking: Are the dominant international models representing a truly holistic and multidimensional approach to child well-being measurement, through the use of selected and determined indicators?

4. DATA COLLECTION

In determining how to critically reflect on the type of indicators used to measure child-well-being internationally, the authors undertook significant debate on what were considered to be the most dominant or widely used child well-being models within international literature, academic research and most importantly, policy and legislation. This approach began with the questions raised by the authors regarding what constitutes child well-being at large, reflecting on dominant theoretical understandings and definitions. Following this, the authors undertook an extensive literature review on the models used to determine well-being and, with some limitation to space and in-depth analysis, selected four models which the authors found to be most cited or referred to when discussing child well-being and its measurement. Although the authors recognise that more models exist, and thus deductive generalization based on these selected four is limited, based on professional expertise and knowledge, the authors determined these four models to be the most dominant in international literature for child well-being measurement. These models and a brief rationale for their selection have been presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. Dominant International Models Measuring Child Well-being

STUDY/MODEL	CATEGORIES OF	OVERVIEW	RATIONALE
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	INDICATORS		
<p>The State of the World's Children 2014 in Numbers (UNICEF, 2014).</p> <p>(Subtitle: Every Child Counts: Revealing disparities, advancing children's rights).</p>	<p>Basic Indicators; Nutrition; Health; HIV/AIDS; Education; Demographic Indicators; Economic Indicators; Women; Child Protection; Rate of Progress; Adolescents; Disparities by residence; Disparities by household wealth; Early Childhood Development.</p>	<p>30 years of publications since 1979; Standardized global and national statistics aimed at providing a detailed picture of children's circumstances, based on the notion that consistent, credible data about children's situations are critical to the improvement of their lives – and indispensable to realizing the rights of every child;</p> <p>A key aim is to measure children's progress across the globe and improving the data in order to do so, and to provide governments with facts on which to base decisions and actions to improve children's lives.</p>	<p>Collates possibly the largest scope of numerical data on child well-being indicators at the international level and can be considered as one of the most influential spokesman and researchers of child development and protection.</p>
<p>The Child Development Index (CDI, Save the Children UK, 2012)</p> <p>(Subtitle: Progress, Challenges and Inequality)</p>	<p>Health (U5MR); Education (% of primary-age children not in school); Nutrition (% of under-fives who are underweight).</p>	<p>Developed the first ever global, multidimensional tool that enables us to monitor how individual countries are performing in relation to the well-being of their children;</p> <p>The 2012 edition shows substantial progress that has been made in addressing the most basic threats to child survival and well-being, but that nutrition is still a much needed area of improvement.</p>	<p>Widely used model; one of the first reports to incorporate a globally representative multi-dimensional tool to monitor and compare the well-being of children; Indicators were chosen specifically because they are easily available, commonly understood and clearly indicative of child well-being.</p>
<p>Doing Better for Children (OECD, 2009).</p>	<p>Material Well-being; Housing & Environment; Education; Health & Safety; Risk Behaviours; Quality of School Life.</p>	<p>Compares policy-focused measures of child well-being in six dimensions chosen to cover the major aspects of children's lives; indicators were selected in part because they were relatively amenable to policy choices;</p> <p>Purpose of this database is to meet demand for cross-national indicators on family outcomes and policies; to allow for cross-national comparisons across</p>	<p>Represented the first index on child well-being for the OECD; considered unique in its inclusion of chapters on social expenditure, as well as a review of existing child-based policies from conception to kindergarten (Irving et al, 2015).</p>

		OECD countries; to outline similarities and differences across countries and over time; to provide a framework for future assessments of family policies.	
Holistic Early Childhood Development Index (HECDI, UNESCO, 2014).	Children survive and demonstrate age-appropriate development and learning; Children experience cognitively stimulating, emotionally supportive home environments with adequate resources; Children and families have access to quality programmes and services; Children's rights are protected and upheld through the implementation of policies and programmes to support children and families.	Offers a set of targets, subtargets and indicators for the holistic monitoring of young children's well-being at both country and international levels; Intended to help spur the creation and widespread collection of indicators necessary for holistic assessment of young children's well-being, by identifying targets consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Education for All (EFA) and suggesting indicators to help track progress, inform policies and guide practices in early childhood care and education (ECCE).	Considered to offer perhaps the most extensive, holistic and multidimensional measurement of child well-being.

5. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The authors of the paper have recognised three research limitations:

1. The above models were chosen primarily through team reflection and opinion, and therefore, the selection of such models holds some author bias in terms of professional fields of study, experience, culture and exposure. The results of the study are also therefore limited with regard to broader generalization. However, the authors feel that this does not remove from the value that such a reflection holds for opening up further discussion and debate around determining effective, accurate and holistic international indicators child vulnerability and well-being;
2. The paper is focused on an international reflection in terms of understanding and determining child well-being; however, the authors recognise that the four selected models, although dominant within international literature and data comparison, cannot be said to accurately reflect an entirely international scope, as some are limited to European or Western country participation.
3. Finally, before beginning the analysis of the dominant models, the authors wish to bring to attention the indicators presented in table 2. Rather than being individualized indicators, these represent clustered broad umbrella categories of a number of indicators. Each study broke down the above categories using

selected and specific individual or grouped indicators, some of which differ from the other models. By way of an example, the domain of (child) health, as seen in table 2 is an overarching category within which various indicators from the different models are considered and clustered. In the UNICEF report (2014), the indicators which serve to measure aspects of child health included Water and sanitation; Diarrhea, pneumonia and malaria; and Vaccines and immunizations. HIV/AIDS, however, was recognised in the UNICEF model as a separate category altogether from that of child health, within which indicators such as prevalence, prevention and related child-orphan numbers were measured (UNICEF 2014). On the other hand, the Child Development Index report measures child health through one indicator, that of the under-five mortality rate. Thus, the clustered category of health in table 2 represents the wide range of differing indicators presented by the models, which the authors felt could be placed under the health domain; yet, not all indicators are uniform across models. These overarching categories were established based on an analysis of the existing categories and clustered indicators within the dominant studies/models and have been presented as such in table 2 as a means of a broader visual reflection and overview. Differences in the four model's categorical or individual indicator measurement, which are important for comparative analysis and discussion, will be highlighted in the data analysis below and have also been indicated in table 1 above.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 2 offers a broad clustered representation of the categories of indicators, which each study examines and considers as significant in measuring and understanding child vulnerability and well-being.

Table 2. Indicator Categories of Child Well-being

Domains and Indicators	UNICEF: The State of the World's Children 2014 in Numbers	Save the Children: Child Development Index	OECD: Doing better for Children	UNESCO: Holistic Early Childhood Development Indicators (HECDI)
Health				
Nutrition				
Environment/housing				
Stimulation and activities			P	
Family/Relationships	P			

Early childhood development			P	
Education				
Material/Economic Well-being				
Safety and Physical status				
Risk behaviors	P			
Demographic indicators				
Subjective well-being	P		P	
Inequality	P		P	

*P: the model partially addresses this, but not sufficiently.

6. 1. UNICEF's State of the World's Children (2014)

As demonstrated in table 1, the UNICEF's State of the World's Children model has a far international reach and determines to present an overview of child development, vulnerability and well-being across a global context. In reflecting on the indicators and categories presented by this report as necessary for understanding child well-being, UNICEF's 2014 model is comprehensive and addresses many necessary issues. Although it does at times reflect on the questions: what, where and when of hazard exposure, in terms of collecting data on aspects such as military economic spending, it is primarily focused on a political economy approach, looking at who is vulnerable and why, as well as some aspects of a resilience approach, asking how and why, reflecting on systems of resilience and discrepancies in development. However, the authors are unsure if categories such as subjective well-being, risk behaviours, family relationships, civil participation, stimulation and activities, and inequality are sufficiently addressed through this model. These aspects can be considered to be incredibly significant for holistic well-being measurement. In reflecting on the indicators used within the UNICEF study, although the categories of indicators are broad, such as women, adolescents, child protection and rate of progress, for example, the specific indicators reflected on within these categories are somewhat limited, and imply a strongly deficit, vulnerability and development-focused approach. Furthermore, although the study does focus on a child's needs and rights, with the aim of research being to inform policy and government's on the state of their children, existing disparities, and the rights of the child which are being overlooked (UNICEF 2014), sufficient consideration of a child's will and desire is lacking.

The organization has been critiqued for such oversights in its data inclusion. Although in recent years, UNICEF has begun to recognise the incorporation of child participation in the collection of data, the results published by the

organization can still be viewed as predominantly objective, numerical and statistical in nature, with little reflection on personal and subjective aspects. Skelton (2007) reflected this when critiquing UNICEF's reports for its lack of indicators, which measure a child's ability to participate within society and their lives, and having an overly statistical focus. UNICEF's agenda of democratic advancement was also noted, as well as gathering data, which is centered on the view of children as 'adults in waiting'.

6.2. Child Development Index (2012)

The Child Development Index does not offer as broad a scope as that of the other models presented in table 2., focusing solely on three broad indicators of health, nutrition and education. According to CDI these indicators are aggregated by simply calculating the average score between them for each period under review, meaning that they each have equal weighting in the index scores (CDI 2012). In measuring the interactions between country and children vulnerability, this index allows a comprehensive measurement and understanding of how these factors interact with one another and are characterized in different countries, over and above being a sole economic measurement. Therefore, CDI can be seen to perhaps more accurately answer the questions *who and why*, from a political economy approach. That being said, CDI certainly does not reflect on resilience in a sufficient manner and is notably simplistic in its measurements and considerations. Furthermore, the CDI has been critiqued for its exclusion of several countries and existing gaps in data (CDI 2012, p.6). Yet what is noteworthy about the CDI is its focus on inequality, and its reflection on how global economic decisions impact upon children:

“Is the income and opportunity gap between countries and people increasing and, if so, what does this mean for children left behind? How will the rising costs of food and fuel affect children? And how will the global financial crisis and recession impact them? These are questions that are rarely asked – and even less frequently answered – in the corridors of power” (CDI 2012, p.1).

This represents a risk theoretical approach that has not been as evident in other models, and thus offers a perspective that is certainly needed. However, it was seen by some as not taking this approach far enough, failing to reflect on the impact of child protection and physical environments. Critique regarding the objective and statistical-focused nature of the model also arose. In the author's opinion, the CDI's measurement of health, education and nutrition are limited to one selected indicator per category and therefore does not reflect a holistic well-being approach; and it does not sufficiently allow for understandings of a child's will/desire, subjective measurement or sufficient strengths-based approaches.

6.3. OECD's Doing better for Children (2009)

OECD's Doing better for Children report was developed to meet demand for cross-national indicators on family outcomes and policies; to allow for cross-national comparisons across OECD countries; to outline similarities and differences across countries over time; and to provide a framework for future assessments of family policies. It differs from the previous two models in that, although it is primarily focused on political economy approaches (the who and why questions), it does incorporate elements of the resilience approach, looking at how and why, through reflections on

quality of school life, indicators of bullying in schools, levels of school satisfaction in children, and policy and social expenditure for families and children. It was also one of the first to recognize risk behaviors as a separate category that needed to be measured in determining child vulnerability and well-being, which included indicators of drunkenness, smoking and teenage births (OECD 2009).

The OECD report incorporates both a development and rights-based approach, and although the report still makes use of primarily objective indicators of well-being, it does offer a more comprehensive picture of young people's perceptions of their well-being. Perhaps what is of most significance, is the extensive and literature-based discussion and analysis of child well-being and the selection of indicators which the OECD report offers. The report contributed to the debate on indicator development for measuring child well-being outcomes and a proposal for a child well-being module being added to the OECD Family database. Thus, although selected indicators may still show some insufficiency, the context of discussion, critical reflection and literature evaluation within which the report is embedded, should be acknowledged when reflecting on the model. This was evident, for example, in the reports analysis of the inclusion of subjective measurements:

“Theory and measurement work on child indicators has moved to viewing children as acting subjects with their own perspectives...Such an approach, although well-intentioned, raises serious issues...it does not address the problem of how to involve a newborn, or the youngest children. In addition, participation is conceived of as taking place only between the researcher and the child...Yet parental participation receives limited consideration in this approach” (OECD 2009, p.26).

OECD's review of existing policies and suggestions for further development is perhaps its greatest value. The report accents that there are a wide range of policy choices available to governments that may influence child well-being, many of which do not directly involve expenditure. OECD highlights the essential importance of countries reviewing their child policies as a package and seeking to understand these policies within a lifecycle perspective. (OECD 2009, p.164). However, despite this, the OECD study has still received significant criticism for its exclusion of sufficient subjective measurements. Furthermore, the report was critiqued for the fact that its monetary measures did not take into account differences in the median income across advanced countries in relation to which the threshold is defined; therefore, failing to recognise that households and children below the threshold in richer countries might have higher standards of living than better-off households in poorer countries (Fahey 2007).

6.4. Holistic Early Childhood Development Index (2013)

UNESCO's Holistic Early Childhood Development Index (HECDI 2014) developed to “help spur the creation and widespread collection of indicators necessary for holistic assessment of young children's well-being” (HECDI, 2014, p. 9), it was identified as a model that made immense strides in including a number of previously overlooked indicators, toward accurately identifying targets consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Education for All (EFA) and “suggesting indicators to help track progress, inform policies and guide practices in early childhood care and education (ECCE)” (HECDI, 2014, p.9). This thus demonstrated an inclusion of aspects such as the impact of

maternal depression and maternal subjective well-being; presence of policies and programmes to lift families out of poverty; children entering Grade 1 with ECCE experience; amongst others. Its mandate is asserted in the following statement:

“At present, the status of young children is often measured using only a few indicators that address health, nutrition or access to pre-primary education (PPE). While these indicators are undeniably important, more comprehensive approaches to measurement are needed to ensure that children’s rights to holistic services are upheld” (HECDI 2014, p.9).

With the focus of the report being on ensuring that each child achieves his/her development potential, the HECDI presents its indicators with more of a more strengths-based approach, than that of the typical deficit-focused measurements; indicators are linked to targets and subtargets, which are established goals identified as best enabling the achievement of child holistic development. Thus, the HECDI model embraces the resilience approach, of how and why children and families are able to resist/adapt to vulnerabilities; it also embraces a stronger rights-based approach, over that of purely developmental. And although, not entirely sufficient perhaps, the HECDI model is a lot more subjective than that of other models identified in this paper.

However, despite its notable advances in holistic child well-being measurements, the HECDI still reflected similar critique as UNICEF’s State of the World’s Children, the CDI and the OECD reports; it was viewed as being primarily based upon economic and statistical measurements, did not include a sufficient reflection of subjective indicators; further critique was also delivered regarding its inadequate consideration of family relationships, cultural and/or language contexts and appropriateness, the impact of welfare benefits, as well as children in warzones, and the differing indicators required to adequately assess and measure vulnerability and well-being in such settings (Wuermil *et al.* 2015).

7. DISCUSSION

Through the reflections and discussions offered above, there is evidence that the dominant international models, although all holding some significant value, demonstrate gaps when compared to theory and literature on child well-being and development. The following key observations can be made:

- Although with some variations, the four models represent a primarily political economy-based, material approach to defining and understanding child well-being;
- Elements from the developmental and deficit approaches are more apparent than that of the rights-based and strengths-based approaches;
- The use of subjective data, although raised and discussed in recent literature and even some reports from the models presented in table 2, is still severely lacking;

- As a result, indicators are still predominantly focused on a child's needs and rights, over that of his/her will and desire;
- All four of the dominant international models have failed to adequately incorporate indicators which reflect on civic and life participation, human rights and discrimination, war and peace and environmental hazards and degradation.
- existing models is difficult to fit only one definition or theoretical approach of well-being.

As can be seen above, measurements of child well-being are most commonly understood and measured in negative terms. Therefore, it is predominantly viewed as the risk or event of negative impact, as opposed to focusing on positive or strengths-based development. This was highlighted by Schues and Rehmann-Sutter (2013, p.197) when reflecting on the UN Convention on Children's Rights. Here, the authors recognised the fact that many of these rights were negative in nature, being measured when they were not adequately attained, meaning that "the child's well-being and best interests therefore remain vague and are not positively defined in national legislation" (2013, p.197-198). There is a growing discourse surrounding the traditional means of measuring such phenomena, with an increasingly evident dissatisfaction over the 'reductionist monetary poverty line approach' and GDP per capita (Saith and Wazir 2010). According to Schues and Rehmann-Sutter (2013, p.198), "'well-being' more directly refers to ideas about the 'good life' of a child in a biographical context and emphasises health and happiness -or disease, impairment, and pain...". However, although some models such as the HECDI do demonstrate elements of such an approach to well-being, the authors feel this is still insufficient.

Within the context of increasing dialogue and discussion around such insufficiencies, new and alternative models have been developed in recent years to counteract the deficit approach and offer a more holistic picture of well-being, both for children and for adults. Examples of such models that deserve attention and critical reflection, highlighting new and/or more indicators required to sufficiently measure well-being. Those recognised by the author's as particularly valuable include *Cain's Life-cycle model (2009)*, which recommends wider analysis of risk and vulnerability across the life-cycle to inform the design of social protection mechanism in order to upgrade people's resilience and effectiveness for inhibiting social exclusion and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty; *Wilkinson and Pickett's Spirit Level (2010)*, which linked the major health and social problems directly to levels of income inequality through a scientific analysis of the richest countries in the world; *OECD's Better Life Index (2011)*, which focuses on developing statistics to capture aspects of life that matter to people and that shape the quality of their lives; the *Social Progress Index (SPI, 2013)*, developed by the non-profit, Social Progress Imperative, as an alternative means of country performance management that is not based upon the traditional GDP measurements; Ben-Arieh et al.'s *Handbook of Child Well-being (2014)*, which offers extensive insight into the need to critically review indicators used for measuring child well-being; and the *European Happiness Equality Index (2015)*, which aimed to shed light on the overlooked dimension of well-being inequality.

Although a thorough analysis of, and reflection on these models and reports is outside of the remit of this paper, the authors feel that they offer a perspective and insight into measuring and understanding well-being that are of critical significance, fill the gaps between existing dominant models and theory as noted above, and need to be more actively integrated into child development and well-being analyses and policy decision-making. The incorporation of subjective data has been recognised as both necessary, and plausible; this was outlined by UNICEF and OECD, for example:

"...reducing the overview to a single score or number would undermine the emphasis on children's well-being as a multidimensional issue requiring a wide range of policy responses. Sometimes the whole can be less than the sum of parts" (UNICEF 2007, p.39).

"An increasing body of evidence has shown that subjective well-being can be measured in surveys, that such measures are reliable, and that they can inform policy making" (OECD, Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being, 2013, p.10).

The notion that child well-being can no longer be linked primarily to economic and GDP-related measurements is also fast being adopted by many researchers, as demonstrated in the alternative models and reports mentioned above, as well as that of larger international groups such as UNICEF (see for example, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre's, report on *Child poverty in perspective, an overview of child well-being in rich countries*). It has been recognised, however, that measurements of child well-being are found to be more advanced in countries with developed economies, "where the focus has widened and shifted progressively towards full recognition of the non-monetary dimensions of child well-being" (Saith and Wazir 2010, p.385). This inequality in data collection and availability is something that needs to be discussed and debated at an international and national level.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thus, it is evident that there are some gaps between the indicators recognised by the models presented in tables 1 and 2, and what is highlighted in literature as being important in such determinations. That being said, the author's understand that the primary aim of many of these reports is to offer broad, statistical references for informing government, policy decisions and further advocacy movements. And thus, rather than to critique the models themselves for being insufficient, we would much rather suggest that the models and data offered hold high value, yet are insufficient for determining holistic child well-being when used in isolation, and such awareness is important within the international community when basing child-policy and advocacy decisions on this data alone. Rather, international (and local) determinants of child well-being need to be much more comprehensive and incorporate a wide range of models, data and perspectives. However, that is not to say that these traditional and dominant models cannot and should not be critically reviewed and altered where possible to best represent a holistic overview. Reflections on the dimensions, indicators and discussions from alternative models, such as those suggested earlier, should be undertaken by the international community and policy decision-makers. Finally, of utmost importance, the understanding and measuring of child well-being are fluid, ever-changing concepts that need to continue to be discussed, critiqued, debated and broadened to ensure that we are best enabling a child's achievement of their needs, rights and desires.

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