

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Impact of National Cultural Dimensions on Child Rights Policy Management: A Cross-Country Study

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**Abstract**

Efforts to improve children's welfare are guided by international frameworks like the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, the implementation of these rights varies significantly across countries due to the influence of cultural factors. This study explored the relationship between national cultural dimensions and the Child Rights Index (KRI) through a cross-country comparative analysis. Using Hofstede's cultural dimensions as an explanatory framework, data from 78 countries spanning 2015-2022 were analyzed. The KRI evaluates countries' performance in upholding children's rights across five domains: the right to life, health, education, protection, and an environment that promotes children's rights. A multiple regression model was employed to assess the impact of cultural dimensions on KRI scores. The findings revealed that cultural dimensions such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation significantly influence KRI scores. These results underscore the importance of integrating cultural factors into child rights policies to develop effective strategies for promoting and protecting children's well-being globally.

**Keywords:** Culture, child rights, hofstede, kidsrights index, multiple regression analysis

**Öz**

Çocuk refahını iyileştirmeye yönelik çabalar, 1989 tarihli Birleşmiş Milletler Çocuk Haklarına Dair Sözleşme gibi uluslararası çerçevelerle yönlendirilmektedir. Ancak, bu hakların uygulanması, kültürel faktörlerin etkisi nedeniyle ülkeler arasında önemli ölçüde farklılık göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, ulusal kültürel boyutlar ile Çocuk Hakları Endeksi (KRI) arasındaki ilişkiyi ülkeler arası bir karşılaştırmalı analiz yoluyla incelemiştir. Hofstede'nin kültürel boyutlarını açıklayıcı bir çerçeve olarak kullanan araştırmada, 2015-2022 yılları arasını kapsayan 78 ülkeden elde edilen veriler analiz edilmiştir. KRI, çocuk haklarının yaşama, sağlık, eğitim, koruma ve çocuk haklarını destekleyen bir ortam sağlama gibi beş alandaki uygulanma performansını değerlendirmektedir. Kültürel boyutların KRI skorları üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmek için çoklu regresyon modeli kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, güç mesafesi, belirsizlikten kaçınma ve uzun dönemli yönelim gibi kültürel boyutların KRI skorlarını önemli ölçüde etkilediğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuçlar, çocukların refahını koruma ve teşvik etmeye yönelik etkili stratejiler geliştirmek için çocuk hakları politikalarına kültürel faktörlerin dikkate alınmasının ülkelerin çocuk hakları politikaları geliştirilmesine ve yönetimine olan etkilerini vurgulamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kültür, çocuk hakları, hofstede, çocuk hakları endeksi, çoklu regresyon analizi

## Introduction

Children have faced various forms of hardship, neglect, and abuse since ancient times throughout the world. Historically, various legal arrangements have been made at the international level to improve the situation of children. The most recent of these is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child dated November 20, 1989, signed by all member states of the UN except the USA. It is not possible to say that the provisions of the Convention have been implemented at the same level in all state parties. There are significant differences among the countries that have signed the Convention in terms of the social adoption of the understanding of children's rights and the related policy and legal changes. One of the main reasons for this situation is likely to be socio-cultural characteristics. As a matter of fact, child rights researchers state that the meaning given to childhood in Eastern and Western cultures differs, and that while in Eastern cultures childhood is not attributed a special meaning and is seen as a period that should end quickly, in Western societies a special and privileged fiction of childhood independent from adults is developed (see Holt, 2000; Doğan, 2000; Tan, 2019).

Childhood researcher Heywood (2003) emphasizes the cultural determinants in societies' perceptions, understandings, and practices concerning children, asserting that the investigation of childhood perceptions in different times and places should be conducted within the context of the cultural conditions of that era and location. Furthermore, as technological advancements continue to accelerate cultural change (Postman, 1992), childhood itself is undergoing a transformation. Therefore, when evaluating the status of children's rights in societies, it is imperative to take into consideration the phenomenon of 'culture'.

Culture is a commonly employed concept to underscore the variety among nations. The shared cognitive framework that differentiates individuals in one group or classification from those in other groups or classifications serves as an illustration of culture (Hofstede, 2011). In this respect, culture serves as a commonly utilized

concept to emphasize the diversity among nations. It entails the shared cognitive framework that sets apart individuals belonging to a specific group or category from those in different groups or categories, as articulated by Hofstede (2011:3). Culture, given its influence on the behaviors of individuals constituting a society (Needle, 2004), stands as one of the most potent factors shaping human conduct (Soares et al., 2007) and holds the potential to significantly impact the stance of societies and institutions regarding children's rights. It is well-established that culture permeates various domains and that many issues are influenced by cultural contexts. Cross-cultural studies, in particular, are frequently employed to expound upon diverse topics. The objective of this research is to comparatively analyze which cultural characteristics of societies affect the realization of children's rights.

Among the significant contributions to cross-cultural differentiation studies are those conducted by Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961), Hall (1976), Hofstede (1984), Schwartz (1992), and Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (2008). In this study, Hofstede's model serves as the primary framework.

## Theoretical Framework

The concept of culture is multi-dimensional and expansive, making it challenging to arrive at a universally agreed-upon definition (Goodenough, 1970). Nevertheless, various definitions provided by scholars shed light on the understanding of the concept. One such definition, presented by Hault (1969), elucidates the etymological origin of the term. According to this perspective, the word 'culture' is derived from the Latin verb 'cultura' or 'colere,' which in classical Latin signifies 'to care for' or 'to cultivate.' In an agricultural context, it describes the act of planting, tending, and growing crops (Hault, 1969). DiStefano & Maznevski (2000) define culture as 'the assumptions and norms that determine how interactions within a society or a specific group will occur and the approach they will exhibit in their endeavors'. Conversely, culture denotes a societal way of life characterized by regularly repeated patterns of thinking, feeling,

behavior, shared values, and dissemination through symbols (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). In other words, culture encompasses the thinking patterns that individuals convey to each other in all facets of society (Hofstede, 1984). Similarly, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) conceptualize culture as “a set of rules and methods developed by a society over time to address the problems they encounter in their interactions”. Latouche (1993) asserts that the fundamental function of culture is to provide meaning to individuals' and societies' psychological worlds and concrete experiences. Geertz (1973) also emphasizes that individuals can only live in conjunction with cultural patterns. According to Fichter (2002), culture encompasses four fundamental characteristics. Culture consists of signs and symbols that differentiate societies from each other. Culture not only includes the values of the society in which it exists but also interprets them; it forms the elements of social solidarity; for these reasons, culture consists of elements that dominate the development and progress of a society. Therefore, culture is composed of factors that exert influence over a society's development and progress. Adler (1991) categorizes these elements of culture as 'knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, customs,' and 'all the characteristics and habits that an individual possesses as a member of a society.' According to Parker (1998), the components of culture encompass behaviors, norms, customs, language, and symbols, along with the values, beliefs, and assumptions that elucidate them.

Recently, cultural differentiation studies have been frequently used to explain situations on different subjects. These studies were pioneered by the most important intercultural differentiation studies, Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961), Hall (1976), Hofstede (1984), Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993). Hofstede's research is the most frequently referenced among these studies. He analyzed various cultures in his cross-country study, focusing on six dimensions (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Power distance refers to the degree to which less powerful members of a society accept the unequal distribution of power and the authority of one person over others,

representing a fundamental anthropological and societal concept linking social inequality. The second dimension is individualism-collectivism, which describes a culture's bipolar structure. Individualism emphasizes an individual's self-preservation and the welfare of their immediate family, while collectivism necessitates individuals to maintain loyalty to the groups or collectivities they belong to. As the third dimension, femininity-masculinity reflects the prominence of values such as assertiveness, materialism, self-confidence, independence, ambition, competitiveness, dominance, obedience, aggression, and authoritarianism in a culture. If values related to interpersonal relationships and the importance placed on individuals are less emphasized, it signifies a masculine-oriented culture. Values that prioritize the overall quality of life and human relationships are indicators of a feminine culture. Another dimension is uncertainty avoidance, which explains the beliefs created by individuals in response to feeling threatened in ambiguous situations and a society's ways of dealing with conflict and threats. The fifth dimension is short-term versus long-term orientation, which elucidates how much a culture's members are willing to delay gratifying material, social, and emotional needs. The final dimension is called as indulgence defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called "Indulgence" and relatively strong control is called "Restraint". Cultures can, therefore, be described as indulgent or restrained.

In this research, the cultural dimensions determined by Hofstede were used to evaluate the differences between countries concerning their practices of children's rights. Hofstede's cultural dimensions offer a framework for discerning variations among cultures using a national culture's profile and the specified dimensions. Through this framework, explanations can be sought for the characteristic behaviors exhibited by culturally diverse groups. Hofstede's interpretation underscores the importance of comprehending the typical characteristics associated with a particular dimension's low or high score. For instance, a high score in the Power

Distance Index (PDI) dimension signifies that a substantial portion of individuals in the society (country) are prone to exhibit certain characteristic behaviors. Given that all scores are derived from calculated statistical means, they are applicable for analyzing larger groups of individuals (samples) who share a common cultural background. Consequently, it is not feasible to employ Hofstede's scores to predict the behavior of individual members in a small, diverse team but it revolves around shared cognitive frameworks that set individuals within a particular group or category apart from those in other groups or categories (Hofstede, 2011). On the other hand, McSweeney (2002) critiques Hofstede's methodology, arguing that using national averages to represent cultural values overlooks within-country variations and individual differences. Likewise Moussetes (2007) argues that Hofstede's research lacks representation of women's perspectives, leading to a skewed understanding of cultural dimensions.

However, the key concept governing the study and presented in the theoretical perspectives is culture. The concept of culture is complex, and there is a wide range of literature and discussion related to perspectives on culture. Childhood perceptions vary widely across cultures, shaped by societal norms, values, and cultural practices. Kurt (2021) emphasizes that these cultural differences significantly influence how childhood is understood and valued, reflecting broader societal expectations. Emotional understanding is also culturally shaped, as evidenced by Möller, Bull, and Aschersleben (2022), who found that emotion socialization practices play a critical role in children's emotional development. In the realm of education, Zhang and Pelletier (2022) note that global early childhood education trends, such as learning through play and child-centered curricula, are increasingly integrated with traditional cultural emphases, balancing innovation with accountability. Furthermore, Gaygısız (2013) underscores the positive association between long-term orientation and developmental outcomes, suggesting that culturally driven future-focused values contribute to more effective child development strategies.

These findings collectively highlight the intricate interplay between cultural factors and the shaping of childhood experiences, demonstrating the need for culturally sensitive approaches in child rights and education policies.

### **The KidsRights Index (KRI)**

The 20th of November 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, aimed at improving children's rights worldwide, guarantees children's rights to life, development, protection, and participation, while also assigning the responsibility to states parties to provide these rights to children. The compliance of states parties with the provisions of the Convention is overseen by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. Various indices developed in this field serve a significant function in monitoring the situations in countries. One of these indices is the KidsRights Index (KRI) which is a global ranking that measures how children's rights are respected worldwide and the extent of countries' commitment to improving children's rights annually. The index includes rankings of all 193 United Nations member states that have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and have sufficient data available. This study examines how cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede relate to children's rights rankings in different countries, highlighting disparities in children's rights situations globally.

The KRI collates information from three credible sources: current statistical data provided by UNICEF and UNDP, and qualitative data delivered by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Besides various child rights concerns, such as underage marriages or the challenges faced by children in conflict zones, display significant disparities among different countries, making it difficult to conduct fair comparisons when integrating these issues into an index. Additionally, the scarcity or absence of data on specific topics like violence against children or the treatment of refugee minors poses challenges in quantifying and achieving meaningful comparability in these areas. As a result, the KRI focuses on broader themes that are universally

relevant to all states parties to the CRC (Child Rights Convention) and for which reliable data is generally accessible.

The KRI results show that there are differences in scores on both a regional and country-specific level. The KRI evaluates different aspects of children's well-being, such as life quality, health, education, protection conditions, and the overall environment that supports children's rights in each country. It aims to create a combined score reflecting each country's efforts in promoting children's rights. Additionally, it offers a strategic plan to help children meet their present and future needs. Due to the complexity of calculating child development scores which involve numerous factors across various topics, research on child development often focuses on social and economic issues. Moreover, analyzing the KRI allows for comparing sustainable development progress among different countries and regions.

KRI comprises a total of twenty indicators that collectively assess and evaluate the five domains whereas the thirteen indicators are based on quantitative data while seven are derived from qualitative information. The collected data undergoes a systematic evaluation for all countries in the Index, using a consistent calculation method. Each country is assessed across five Domains, leading to an overall ranking. These domains include the Right to Life (e.g., child mortality, life expectancy, maternal mortality), Right to Health (such as malnutrition rates, immunization coverage, access to sanitation and clean water), Right to Education (including schooling years for girls and boys), Right to Protection (covering issues like child labor and birth registration), and Enabling Environment for Child Rights (assessing how well countries adhere to children's rights principles). Scores are based on assessments by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in areas like non-discrimination, child participation, budget allocation, etc. These indicators reflect the broader context needed for children's rights globally. With its focus on these five domains, the KRI stands out as a unique annual global measure of nations' dedication to enhancing children's rights (Gray, 2023).

Hence, the objective of this study is to elucidate how the cultural structures of national countries affect their KRI scores. This will be accomplished through an analysis employing a multiple regression, utilizing a cross-sectional dataset encompassing 78 countries. This approach aims to shed light on certain cultural attributes that may help elucidate why some nations achieve higher KRI scores than others, which is one of the main questions of this study. In other words, disparities in KRI scores among countries, reflecting variations in their success in areas such as child care, education, nutrition, and other dimensions of sustainable development, may be attributed to cross-cultural distinctions.

Consequently, this study investigates the influence of national cultural dimensions on KRI scores through explanatory modeling, in accordance with hypotheses that have been tested using KRI scores collected for 78 countries during the period spanning 2015 to 2022. This study is expected to provide valuable knowledge for nations as they strive to create and enforce policies that enhance child development while being in line with their own cultural values.

### **The Research Model and Hypotheses**

Efforts to improve the welfare of children are regulated by international legal frameworks such as the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, how these rights are put into practice differs from country to country since culture plays a significant role in shaping the implementation and effectiveness of child rights policies. Culture is a widely utilized concept that underscores the diverse distinctions existing among nations. This study focuses on Hofstede's cultural diversity model as a means to capture and analyze these cultural variations. Hofstede's model comprises six distinct dimensions. In developing hypotheses about the potential influence of these cultural dimensions on the KRI, we thoughtfully consider the possible consequences of various countries' cultural orientations, particularly concerning individuals, with a particular emphasis on children.

In Hofstede's model, the first dimension is power distance (PWDS), ranging from zero for low PWDS to 100 for high PWDS. This dimension measures a country's accepted level of inequality. Low scores indicate a culture that tolerates minimal differences, while high scores show a society where significant hierarchical relationships are considered natural. In high PWDS cultures, social hierarchy is well-defined and unquestioned, whereas in low PWDS cultures, there is a tendency to question authority and seek to distribute power more evenly. Countries that prioritize citizen equality and individual autonomy tend to focus on developing social welfare policies, ensuring that essential services such as education and healthcare are accessible to all regardless of social status or wealth. In societies characterized by high power distance and hierarchical structures, equal access to basic social services is not expected, as these services often hinge on an individual's social status (Triandis, 1984; Khatri, 2009). Less industrialized societies with lower education levels, reduced urbanization, and high-income inequality tend to show more hierarchical cultural traits (Basabe & Ros, 2005). Consequently, these countries are less likely to offer equal opportunities for education, healthcare, and nutrition to all children. Thus, countries with lower PWDS scores are anticipated to provide equal access to education, safety, healthcare, and nutrition, irrespective of a child's family social status..

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** *Hofstede's Power Distance dimension has a significant and negative effect on KRI's score.*

Hofstede's second cultural dimension, individualism (INDUV) versus collectivism, is measured on a scale from zero to 100. Individualism reflects independent actions while collectivism emphasizes group-oriented behaviors. Individualistic cultures value personal independence and achievement, while collectivist cultures stress duty to the group. Interpersonal bonds are weaker in individualistic cultures compared to strong group connections in collectivist cultures, affecting societal structures like education and healthcare. Higher levels of

economic development in countries usually correspond to stronger support for human rights and equality, reinforcing the relationship between development and individualism. Individualistic cultures prioritize children's well-being by offering access to education, healthcare, and nutrition. Individuals in these cultures mainly focus on their immediate family unit, especially their children, striving for a better future. Therefore, nations scoring high on the individualism dimension (INDUV) are likely to prioritize sustainable child development.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** *Hofstede's Individuality dimension has a significant and positive effect on KRI's score.*

The third dimension, known as Masculinity (MSCL) versus femininity is measured on a scale from zero to 100. In cultures that are considered masculine, traits such as confidence, competitiveness, the pursuit of wealth, and material goods are highly regarded. On the other hand, societies with a feminine orientation place importance on qualities like empathy, collaboration, modesty, unity, and aiding others. Societies that lean towards femininity prioritize the well-being of individuals, especially children, more than those leaning towards masculinity. They offer significant support for child growth by addressing various needs. According to research conducted by Rodrigues and Blumberg (2000), feminine societies allocate more resources to programs focused on human development compared to masculine ones. As a result, nations with lower levels of masculinity are expected to score higher on the KRI.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** *Hofstede's Masculinity dimension has a significant and positive effect on KRI's scores.*

The fourth dimension, known as uncertainty avoidance (UNAV), ranges from zero to 100, indicating weak to strong uncertainty avoidance in a culture. It measures how much a society tries to lessen anxiety by reducing uncertainty and dealing with ambiguity and unpredictability. In essence, it

reflects society's inclination to grapple with ambiguity and unpredictability, as elucidated by Wennekers et al. in 2010. Furthermore, it signifies people's preferences for structured versus unstructured environments. As noted by Hofstede & McCrae (2004) high UNAV scores indicate a preference for clearly defined and comprehensible rules to minimize the occurrence of unforeseen and non-standard situations. Conversely, low UNAV signifies a more open, adaptable, and tolerant approach to ambiguous circumstances. In high UNAV cultures, individuals may harbor concerns about potential future changes, both for themselves and their children, motivating them to provide enhanced education, healthcare, safety, and nutrition to ensure resilience in the face of potential catastrophic shifts. In cultures where uncertainty is strongly disliked, individuals may aim to provide their children with education, safety, and nourishment to ensure their future. As a result, countries with high UNAV rankings are predicted to also perform well in KRI.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** *Hofstede's Uncertainty avoidance dimension has a significant and positive effect on KRI's score.*

In Hofstede's classification, the fifth dimension measures a society's temporal perspective. Long-term orientation (LNGT) reflects adapting traditions to change and focus on saving, investing, and determination for long-term goals. Short-term orientation (SHRT) emphasizes immediate results, honoring traditions, and fulfilling social duties. Studies indicate that SHRT may overlook health compared to LNGT societies which invest in increasing life expectancy. As a result, long-term-oriented societies prioritize the future and strive for its improvement. In light of this, it can be inferred that LNGT cultures value the welfare and enduring development of their children, recognizing them as crucial elements of the future. Studies also indicate positive relationships between long-term orientation and social and economic development. Hence, countries with high LNGT scores are anticipated to achieve high scores in KRI scores. Every society must balance preserving connections to its history

while facing current and future challenges, with different priorities for these goals. Societies that rank low on this aspect tend to cling to traditional customs and rules, showing skepticism towards societal changes. Conversely, societies ranking high on this dimension adopt a more practical stance by promoting saving and advancements in contemporary education to prepare themselves for what lies ahead. To realize the long-term focus, Moss & Petrie (2002) argue that physical, social, cultural, and discursive spaces need to be created for children to interact with others in society.

**Hypothesis 5 (H5):** *Hofstede's Long Term Orientation dimension has a significant and positive effect on KRI's score.*

The sixth and final dimension, known as Indulgence (INDLG) versus restraint, is assessed on a scale ranging from zero, signifying cultures with restraint, to 100, signifying cultures characterized by indulgence. This dimension focuses on how people within a community find ways to fulfill their core longings for a satisfying existence. Cultures that rank high in indulgence tend to support the unrestricted pursuit of innate human wants, valuing pleasure and amusement. These societies prioritize the pursuit of happiness and the fulfillment of desires, encouraging individuals to seek joy and excitement without too many limitations or constraints placed upon them. In contrast, restrained societies impose stringent social norms that limit individuals' ability to satisfy their desires. In restrained societies, many citizens often perceive themselves as constrained by rigid rules and norms. Consequently, in societies characterized by high indulgence, individuals are likely to prioritize the well-being of their children due to the more permissive and open-minded atmosphere. They are more likely to view the development of future generations as a fundamental component of a free and liberated society. According to Percy-Smith (2010), children and young people should have opportunities to interact with others, to discover and learn about themselves in public spaces, schools, neighborhoods, associations, and organizations, thereby increasing their capacity to shape and

influence their lives and futures. Consequently, they might encounter limited opportunities to ensure a more promising future for their descendants. This trend is observed in nations characterized by rigorous rules and lower progress in sustainable growth. Therefore, nations scoring higher on the Indulgence Index are anticipated to demonstrate more favorable results in the advancement of children.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6):** Hofstede's Indulgence dimension has a significant and positive effect on KRI's score.

## Data and Methods

In the study, for examining the hypotheses stated above, KRI points are used, as the only global ranking that measures how children's rights are respected worldwide and countries' commitment to improving children's rights. The KRI is created

was conducted with a subset of valid data from 78 countries. This subset was chosen due to the absence of NCD and KRI data for certain countries spanning the years from 2015 to 2022. Since the scores of NCD of the countries do not change over time, the average of the KRI values of each country for the 2015-2022 period was calculated. Table 1 provides details on the data's definition and descriptive statistics of NCD and MKRI scores.

In this research, it is aimed to assess our hypotheses by investigating the influence of National Cultural Dimensions [Power Distance (PWDS), Individualism (INDUV), Masculinity (MSCL), Uncertainty Avoidance (UNAV), Long-Term Orientation (LNGT), and Indulgence (INDLG)] on the MKRI through an explanatory modeling approach (Shmueli, 2010). To evaluate the possible effects of independent variables on dependent variable, a multiple regression model was proposed, and the formulation of the multiple regression model is elucidated in

**Table 1 Data Definition and Descriptive Statistics**

Variable Name	Abbr.	Source	Unit of Measurement	Descriptive Statistics			
				Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Mean of Kids Rights Index	MKRI	Kids Rights Foundation, in cooperation with Erasmus University Rotterdam	Mean of Index Score (0-1) Covering 2015-2022 Term	0.401	0.940	0,748	0.123
National Culture Dimension	Power Distance			11	100	64.756	21.044
	Individualism			10	90	40.231	21.817
	Masculinity	Hofstede Insight's CEO (Cultural Executive Ownership) Program	Dimension Score (0-100)	5	100	47.590	19.254
	Uncertainty Avoidance			8	100	68.782	21.174
	Long-Term Orientation			4	88	44.987	24.426
	Indulgence			10	100	45.128	22.819
Countries (N=78)	Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, and Zambia						

by the KidsRights Foundation, in collaboration with the Erasmus School of Economics and the International Institute of Social Studies.

The NCD data were collected for each country from the Hofstede-Insights Centre's (HIC) website, which hosts an extensive dataset covering numerous countries. In this research, the analyses

Equation 1.

$$MKRI_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PWDS_i + \beta_2 INDV_i + \beta_3 MSCL_i + \beta_4 UNAV_i + \beta_5 LNGT_i + \beta_6 INDL_i + \varepsilon_i$$

$MKRI_i$  : The mean score of the KRI value of the  $i^{th}$  country covering the term of 2015-2022  
 $PWDS_i$  : The PWDS score of the  $i^{th}$  country,

- $INDUV_i$  : The  $INDUV$  score of the  $i^{th}$  country,
- $MSCL_i$  : The  $MSCL$  score of the  $i^{th}$  country,
- $UNAV_i$  : The  $UNAV$  score of the  $i^{th}$  country,
- $LNGT_i$  : The  $LNGT$  score of the  $i^{th}$  country,
- $INDLG_i$  : The  $INDLG$  score of the  $i^{th}$  country,
- $\varepsilon_i$  : The error term in the regression model.

## Results and Findings

For exploring the possible effects of independent variables (PWDS,  $INDUV$ ,  $MASC$ ,  $UNAV$ ,  $LNGT$ , and  $INDLG$ ) on the dependent variable ( $MKRI$ ), a correlation analysis (CA) and a multiple regression analysis were performed and the summary of regression analysis and hypotheses result is illustrated in Table 2..

Table 2 The Outline of CA and Multiple Regression Analysis

CA							
	MKRI	PWDS	INDUV	MSCL	UNAV	LNGT	INDLG
MKRI	1						
PWDS	-0,29700*	1					
INDUV	0,25400*	-0,71400*	1				
MSCL	-0,13054	0,09882	0,04258	1			
UNAV	0,14792	0,35000*	-0,28100*	-0,00602	1		
LNGT	0,37100*	-0,00572	0,24100*	0,04801	0,08592	1	
INDLG	-0,10580	-0,37500*	0,10588	0,04088	-0,20463	-0,47000*	1

(\*): Correlation coefficients are significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(a) The regression model and the coefficients of independent variable are significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level.

(b) Since the tolerance value  $> 0.1$  and  $VIF < 10$  in the multiple regression model it can be expressed that there is no multicollinearity in the models (Hair et al., 2014).

(c) The result of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test indicates that the error term of the model is distributed normally ( $p > \alpha = 0.05$ ).

(d) The result of White Homoscedasticity Test indicates that there is no heteroscedasticity in the model ( $p > 0.05$ ).

may influence  $MKRI$ . While  $PWDS$  has an impact on  $MKRI$  in reverse directions,  $UNAV$  and  $LNGT$  have impacts on  $MKRI$  in the same direction. By using the SPSS statistics program, it is found that whereas one percentage change in  $UNAV$  and  $LNGT$  induces 0.00140 and 0.00173 percentage change, respectively, in  $KRI$  at the same (positive) direction, one percentage change in  $PWDS$  causes 0.00248 percentage change in  $KRI$  in the reverse

Multiple Regression Analysis <sup>c,d</sup>												
Dependent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	SE	F	p	Independent Variables Coeff.	Unstand. Coeff. $\beta_i$	t	p	Collinearity Statistics		Hyp. ID	Hypothesis Result
									Tol.	VIF		
MKRI	0.29343	0.10731	4.91427	0.00000 <sup>a</sup>	(Constant)	0.78845	7.05889	0.00000 <sup>a</sup>			-	-
					PWDS	-0.00248	-2.60289	0.01125 <sup>a</sup>	0.37057 <sup>b</sup>	2.6985 <sup>b</sup>	H <sub>1</sub>	Accepted
					INDUV	-0.00032	-0.36644	0.71513	0.41560 <sup>b</sup>	2.4061 <sup>b</sup>	H <sub>2</sub>	Rejected
					MSCL	-0.00063	-0.96673	0.33696	0.94334 <sup>b</sup>	1.0600 <sup>b</sup>	H <sub>3</sub>	Rejected
					UNAV	0.00140	2.25146	0.02745 <sup>a</sup>	0.86025 <sup>b</sup>	1.1624 <sup>b</sup>	H <sub>4</sub>	Accepted
					LNGT	0.00173	2.86538	0.00548 <sup>a</sup>	0.68598 <sup>b</sup>	1.4577 <sup>b</sup>	H <sub>5</sub>	Accepted
					INDLG	-0.00024	-0.34572	0.73058	0.61699 <sup>b</sup>	1.6207 <sup>b</sup>	H <sub>6</sub>	Rejected

(negative) direction.

Analyzing the outcomes derived from multiple regression model computations reveals that the regression model is statistically significant overall at a 95% confidence interval (CI). The coefficients of external factors ( $PWDS$ ,  $UNAV$ , and  $LNGT$ ) within this regression model are notably significant at a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ . These results support the idea that three National Cultural Dimensions ( $PWDS$ ,  $UNAV$ , and  $LNGT$ )

Moreover, it can be concluded that the most effective NCD is  $PWDS$  according to regression results.

On the other hand, contrary to expectations, the coefficients of other external factors ( $INDUV$ ,  $MSCL$ , and  $INDLG$ ) are not statistically significant at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level. Also reported  $R^2$  value of 29.3%

indicates that the model explains a moderate portion of the variance in the dependent variable, leaving 70.7% unexplained. This suggests there may be additional factors or variables influencing the outcome that are not captured by the current model.

Consequently, the observed signs of the exogenous variables (PWDS, UNAV, and LNGT) align with the theoretical framework underpinning our research, as previously discussed in earlier sections, and grounded in the literature. Furthermore, the regression model upholds the fundamental assumptions of regression analysis, including but not limited to addressing issues of multicollinearity, normality, and heteroscedasticity (Table 2). In this manner, the results derived from the regression analysis serve to bolster the overall statistical rigor of our study, affording us the capability to provide informed commentary on these findings in the subsequent conclusion and discussion sections.

## Discussion & Conclusion

Taking into account the cultural factors that impact children's rights since culture plays a significant role in shaping the implementation and effectiveness of child rights policies in different countries, understanding and addressing the influence of culture on child rights is crucial for developing effective strategies to protect and promote the well-being of children. Culture allows for a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by children in different countries. For instance, countries with a strong collectivist culture may prioritize communal harmony and group cohesion over individual rights, leading to potential challenges in promoting and protecting the rights of every child on an equal basis. Furthermore, cultural norms and traditions may perpetuate harmful practices such as child labor, early marriage, or female genital mutilation, hindering the realization of children's rights and resulting in lower rankings on the KRI.

The findings showed that PWDS considerably and adversely affects MKRI scores. Additionally, the results have shown that UNAV and LNGT have respectively significant and favorable

influences on the MKRI scores of countries. On the other hand, because their coefficients in the regression models are not statistically significant at the 95% CI, the null hypotheses regarding the effects of INDUV (2nd hypothesis), MSCL (3rd hypothesis), and INDLG (6th hypothesis) on the MKRI are rejected.

To the best of our knowledge, no prior research has been conducted that specifically examined the influence of cultural orientations on the KRI scores of nations except a study by Faygan et al. (2022) examining the impact of national cultural dimensions on the Sustainable Child Development Index (SCDI). The study revealed that PWDS and MSCL negatively predict SCDI scores, while LNGT positively predicts SCDI scores in countries.

In light of the research findings, it is conceivable to assert that societies characterized by a higher level of Long-Term Orientation (LNGT) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UNAV) with lower levels of Power Distance (PWDS) tend to exhibit higher KRI scores. These conclusions find support in the existing interdisciplinary literature which backs up these findings, with empirical proof supporting our observations. Woldarsky et al. (2019) found that in societies with high power distance, mothers tend to prioritize their children's adjustment to the environment rather than their desires and needs, unlike mothers in low power distance cultures who focus more on their children's growth. Besides, Finkelhor et al. (2013) found that an increase in crimes against children is observed when chaos, uncertainty, and crisis disrupt the established order with regard to the uncertainty avoidance dimension. Similarly, Figlio et al. (2019) proved that students from long-term-oriented countries perform better academically compared to those from short-term-oriented nations.

Regarding hypothesis #1 (Hofstede's Power Distance dimension has a significant and negative effect on KRI's score.); it can be noted that in societies characterized by high power distance, the prevalence of patriarchal relationships is observed. In these relationships, there exists a hierarchy in which the state holds authority over the individual, the employer over the employee, the teacher over the student, the elderly over the young, and men over women. The patriarchy

establishes superiority based on authority and power, legitimizing itself through the assumption of being larger, richer, holier, and more powerful than the "other" with whom it interacts. In this unequal relationship shaped by power, the "weak" is considered worthy of "protection" only when they submit, approve, and unquestionably show respect to the "strong and sacred." However, the duration, nature, and extent of this "protection" remain within the purview and rights of the "powerful." Obedience, arbitrariness, and dependency are fundamental elements in this hierarchical system, extending from the political realm to all aspects of social life and ultimately into family life. Children build their own autonomous and creative cultures when they spend time and interact together (Danby & Baker, 1998; Corsaro & Streeck, 1986; Mayall, 1996 cited in Cobb, Danby and Farrell, 2005).

In the political arena, those who endorse political power or belong to the needy population conditionally benefit from social services and protection provided by the state. Meanwhile, in family life, the representation of authority and power lies with the male figure, who establishes his hegemony over the women and children within the household, conditional upon endorsing the political power. In situations where the hierarchical presence of a male figure is absent, authority is wielded by women over children. Although children are protected within this hegemonic and hierarchical family structure, the quality, adequacy, and terms of this protection are not widely questioned by society or political authority unless a problem arises that disrupts the status quo.

Within families, teachers also hold the right to establish authority over children during their school years. (Mendel, 1971) This pattern of relationships based on authority, obedience, and power is further ingrained in a child's socialization process, shaping their adulthood experiences in the workforce and other societal processes. In this system, children are disciplined through strict methods while their capacity for thinking, development, and freedom of expression is overlooked. They are seen as beings to be protected, and this protection must be provided

according to the expectations of the protector, with children being expected to meet these standards and remain grateful for the protection. While the duty of "protecting the weak" assigned by patriarchy may seem to provide a strong foundation for the protection of children's rights, it should not be forgotten that this duty is often arbitrary and conditional, particularly when it comes to children. In reality, the protection claimed by the powerful can often be nothing more than a discourse of superiority based on sometimes, if not frequently, unfounded assumptions, such as being "smarter," "more experienced," or "more knowledgeable" than the children. Moreover, the authority granted to adults for "protection" may not always result in the actual protection of children. This discourse often ends up entrusting children to their perpetrators. In societies with high power distance, where relationships are hierarchical and the powerful are favored and protected, the situation of children representing the weak is not widely acknowledged socially or politically. Since children do not possess voting rights (Wall, 2008), they are not given priority in resource allocation. Consequently, in societies with a high power distance, unequal, vertical, and rigid relationship patterns hinder the implementation of children's participation rights, such as the right to think and express themselves freely. The authority granted to the powerful, with the weak expected to comply, also hinders the development of children's protection rights. Unless protection is provided to children in the form of services within the framework of a "rights" perspective, jointly delivered by parents and the state, it is not easy to claim that children can be fully protected.

Considering hypotheses #4 and #5 (Hofstede's Uncertainty avoidance and Long Term orientation dimensions have a significant and positive effect on KRI's scores) it can be concluded that, in paternalistic societies with high power distance, resistance to change and low levels of long-term orientation are common. Paternalism inherently encompasses conservatism and resistance to change, as preserving power is one of its primary objectives. Additionally, change can entail rebellion and a shift in power dynamics. In a

system where adults are favored and perceived as powerful, little attention is paid to the needs of children as evolving and changing entities that the established order does not cater to adequately. Furthermore, the ability to adapt to changing conditions can sometimes elevate children above adults, potentially leading to a shift in power. Consequently, in societies that prioritize preserving the existing order, the ideas, needs, and desires of future generations, represented by children, are not given priority. Therefore, in such societies, the well-being of the current order and the preservation of the powerful take precedence over the future conditions of children. These societies often direct their resources toward maintaining the status quo rather than allocating them for the benefit of future generations. For example, the concept of sustainable development anticipates the use of resources without endangering the future needs of children. In countries with high power distance and a low long-term orientation, such as Türkiye and Malaysia, efforts to implement this approach fall short compared to countries with a high long-term orientation like Finland.

One of the prominent theories in criminology pertains to disruptions in the socialization process. According to this theory, individuals who have not acquired socialization properly are more likely to engage in criminal activities. Unwritten rules such as traditions and customs prepare individuals for living in societal harmony, while written legal rules, such as laws, punish those who act contrary to this order, ensuring societal security. Factors like rapid urbanization, population growth, migration, technological advancements, economic crises, and environmental crises disrupt social control processes within society and increase the risk situations individuals may encounter. In situations where legal regulations are not swiftly and comprehensively enacted, and the functions of monitoring and punishment are not carried out effectively to ensure security, vulnerable individuals are more prone to becoming victims of crime, particularly children. In most societies, an increase in crimes against children is observed when chaos, uncertainty, and crisis disrupt the established order (Finkelhor et. al, 2013). Different

forms of vulnerability among children are exacerbated in such circumstances. The inability to access sufficient resources and appropriate environments for growth and development, an inability to nurture their abilities, and dependency on adults in various aspects are among the prominent factors. In situations where legal regulations aimed at preserving societal security are in place, social control processes are operational, societal institutions fulfill their functions effectively, and regulations that address potential risk factors for children are implemented, children's protection rights can be more fully realized.

The research indicates that the overall cultural orientations of countries influence their child-rearing methods and perspectives significantly. Hence, cultural diversities can give rise to distinct manifestations in the realms of educational systems, healthcare, social services, and the allocation of economic resources within a nation. Policy implications for child rights and protection systems must be informed by cultural contexts to ensure their effectiveness and acceptance. In high power distance cultures, training programs for authorities are critical to fostering equitable treatment of children, addressing societal norms that may perpetuate hierarchical inequities. Likewise, in hierarchical societies with high power distance, the society is not anticipated to offer the same chances for basic social services to everyone on an equal basis because having these services mostly depend on individual's social status" (Khatri, 2009; Triandis, 1982, as cited in Fayganoğlu et al., 2022, p. 473). For societies with high uncertainty avoidance, implementing clear and comprehensive guidelines for child protection services helps to reduce ambiguity and enhance adherence to policies. In long-term oriented cultures, embedding children's rights into educational systems can cultivate enduring respect for these rights and promote intergenerational awareness. Tailored educational programs on children's rights should reflect the cultural values and beliefs of the target populations to enhance their relevance and impact. In this sense, regarding KidsrighIndex reports, it can be said that the countries with the highest index values have

similar characteristics when compared to the countries with the lowest index values, by having higher levels of long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance with lower levels of power distance. This shows us that Hofstede's cultural dimensions highlight the central role of cultural dimensions in shaping attitudes and practices around child rights, underscoring the need for culturally sensitive and context-specific policy frameworks.

To enhance the practical application of child rights policies, several strategies can be recommended. First, policymakers and practitioners should undergo cultural sensitivity training to better understand the nuanced cultural factors influencing child rights. Second, actively engaging local communities in the development and implementation of policies ensures cultural relevance and promotes acceptance. Finally, fostering collaboration between international organizations and local governments can facilitate the creation of culturally appropriate frameworks. Policies must adapt to local and community-specific contexts, reassess frameworks to reflect globalization's impact, and address intra-national diversity to ensure effectiveness in settings like child rights and education. Consequently, it is reasonable to execute that cultural values exert a notable influence on the development of child rights policies, as culture forms the bedrock upon which society is established.

### **Limitations and future research**

The primary focus of this study centers on cultural dimensions, with the KRI outcomes being solely associated with these dimensions. This restricts the analysis to factors directly related to cultural dimensions, neglecting other potential influences. Besides, several limitations should be acknowledged in the present study. Firstly, the analysis relies on data from 78 countries, and therefore, any generalizations should be made within the context of these specific countries. When interpreting the results derived from the analysis of KRI data from years between 2015 to 2022, this limited coverage should be kept in mind. It is important to note that with the availability of

updated data, the results may potentially manifest different patterns.

Another noteworthy limitation pertains to the quality and reliability of the data used to construct the KRI scores. Specifically, issues such as the absence of data for certain countries and the reliability of data sources for others are critical considerations when developing indices of this nature. However, it is imperative to underscore that the KRI is the pioneering and sole global ranking system that annually assesses the observance of children's rights on a global scale and evaluates the extent to which countries are dedicated to enhancing these rights.

Future research endeavors could address these limitations by utilizing updated KRI and Hofstede's National Cultural Dimensions (NCD) data, covering a broader spectrum of countries. This would enable the examination of countries with diverse cultural attributes or from various geographical regions. Such investigations would facilitate the identification of potential primary cultural determinants of KRI scores and may allow for cross-country comparisons within the context of cultural dimensions. Hofstede's framework, while influential, faces criticism for outdated data, overgeneralization, and a static cultural view (McSweeney, 2002). It oversimplifies cultural complexity and underrepresents non-Western values (Tung & Verbeke, 2010). Incorporating alternative models like Schwartz's Theory may offer nuanced insights, enhancing cultural analysis and policy applications (Schwartz et al., 2012).

In future studies, alternative frameworks (e.g., Schwartz's Values Theory) could provide additional insights and robustness. In this regard, Schwartz's theory of basic human values allows for different levels of analysis, with the 10 basic values reliably assigned to four higher-order dimensions: Openness to Change, Conservation, Self-Transcendence, and Self-Enhancement (Cieciuch, Davidov, & Algesheimer, 2024). Besides, Harkness and Super (2020) discuss the evolution of cultural perspectives in human development, emphasizing the need for integrating contemporary frameworks to enhance understanding. Likewise, Lancy (2015) provides a comprehensive analysis of childhood across cultures, offering alternative frameworks

that challenge conventional developmental theories.

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Appendix A: The Compounds of Kidsrights Index (KRI)		
Domains	Indicators	Data sources
<i>Right to Life</i>	Under-five mortality Life expectancy at birth Maternal mortality ratio	The KidsRights Index pools data from three reputable sources: quantitative data published and regularly updated by UNICEF and UNDP, and qualitative data published by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the detailed individual country assessments that it adopts for all States Parties to the CRC (the so-called Concluding Observations). Twenty indicators together cover and measure these five Domains. Thirteen indicators are quantitative and seven are qualitative. The data collected is systematically rated for all the countries included in the Index, by applying a standard calculating method. Countries are ranked on each of the five Domains, which in turn generates a comprehensive overall ranking. Domain 5, or the 'Enabling Environment for Children's Rights', is an important and unique Domain of the KidsRights Index. Closely based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it reveals to what extent countries have operationalized the Convention's general principles and the state of their basic 'infrastructure' for making and implementing children's rights policies. The scores on Domain 5 are derived from the Concluding Observations (COs) adopted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. These COs are the final product of the state reporting procedure that monitors how states are doing in implementing the Convention.
<i>Right to Health</i>	% of under-five-year-olds suffering from underweight Immunization of one-year-old children % of the population using improved sanitation facilities (urban and rural) % of the population using improved drinking water sources (urban and rural)	
<i>Right to Education</i>	Expected years of schooling of girls Expected years of schooling of boys  Gender inequality in expected years of schooling (absolute difference between girls and boys)	
<i>Right to Protection</i>	Child labour Adolescent birth rate  Birth registration	
<i>Enabling Environment for Child Rights</i>	Non-discrimination Best interests of the child Respect for the views of the child/child participation Enabling legislation Best available budget Collection and analysis of disaggregate data State-civil society cooperation for child rights	