

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHILDREN

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Abstract:

The primary purpose of this study was to analyse children's perspectives on how their rights are respected. Of course, children have their rights, just like any being on earth. Awareness of one's rights is part of everyone's duty.

Seventy-four children aged 11 to 18 were surveyed for mixed research. The results showed that children know their rights and believe that they are respected. However, although they learn about their rights at school, this is not where they believe their rights are best respected.

Children feel protected at church and in the family, but their answers show that the education they are exposed to is a quality one. In addition, the assessment made by the children demonstrates maturity, understanding and awareness.

Keywords: *human nature, human rights, child's rights,*

Introduction

The study of human nature and the analysis of the implications arising from it emphasise that all people share the same structure in which different values, aspirations, ideals, specific beliefs, personality patterns, tools of intellectual and artistic analysis or motivations for spontaneous planned actions are intertwined. Thus, regardless of age, culture, gender or nationality, humanity shares common elements of life that allow the development of similar behaviours for similar situations and bring into question the idea of equality, freedom and rights¹.

Man has always fought for his rights. He defended life, tried to meet his primary survival needs, and as soon as they were met, he took care of

1 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, *Om-Demnitare-Libertate (Man-Dignity-Freedom)*, Cluj-Napoca, Risoprint Publishing House, 2019, p. 271.

higher, more refined needs, such as security, belonging, development, aesthetic and spiritual needs. In the early stages of history, the preservation of rights was generally guaranteed only to solid people and those with different alliances. Over time, ordinary people began to be protected by law. Their rights began to be equal to the rights of rich people or placed on a larger social scale.

Once the barrier of property and social origin was overcome, people could be considered the same in terms of rights. Then gender equality of rights was taken into account. Over several decades, this problem has also been resolved. The result was the adoption of equal rights for men, women, the poor, the rich, intellectuals, politicians or workers.

However, what would be the situation regarding the age difference? Are children's rights necessary? The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child² is one of the most important documents signed by states that have pledged to protect the child's rights. This document defines who can be called a child, his rights, and the responsibilities of states to support the observance of children's rights. All rights are of equal importance and are interrelated.

The existence of an official document adopted by most countries of the world implies the need for an implementation system for the provisions of this document. Each country has its vision and strategy on how to implement this international agreement. How does the information in this vital document reach the primary beneficiaries? Are education systems ready to provide appropriate training for this area? What do children know about this topic?

Recent research focused on child's rights

Early years are crucial for the implementation of child participation in education. Unfortunately, despite significant acceptance for the positions, this issue remains a challenge for early education³. Herczog⁴ analysed the con-

2 Convention of the rights of the child, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (accessed at 18.07. 2021).

3 Maryanne Theobald, Danby, Susan, & Ailwood, Jo, "Child participation in the early years: Challenges for education", in *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 3/2011, pp. 19-26.

4 Marian Herczog, "Rights of the child and early childhood education and care in Europe", in *European Journal of Education*, 4/2012, pp. 542-555.

nection between child's rights and early childhood education in Europe, considering definitions, approaches, official documents, practices, specific types of education, vulnerable groups, and particular policies. Sarong and Lubis⁵ examined the same issue in Islamic law because it has become a global concern. Finally, Polonko and Lombardo⁶ valued the implication of the non-Governmental organisation in child protection from violence, revealing their importance for the subject.

Research in 26 European countries on the introduction of children's rights education in schools has highlighted some necessary steps taken by some Western countries, focusing mainly on such issues: initial teacher training in Scotland. A reform model is introduced that places children's rights education at the heart of professional practices. Germany and Israel have specific procedures for monitoring children's rights education, including checking and improving quality⁷.

Vaquero, Urrea, and Mundet⁸ analyse the concept of resilience from an ecological perspective and analyse how it can be promoted through technology, art, and using a child-centred approach. Joining the two concepts of resilience and children's rights means awareness of rights and responsibilities, allowing early recognition of abandonment, abuse, neglect and avoidance. It protects human dignity, well-being, health and development.

Child forced marriage is another important topic in general discussions in this context. However, some elements maintain problems in this area: social divergence in conceptualisation, legal policies, education, and economic factors⁹. In addition, other authors emphasise the health prob-

5 Hamid Sarong & Lubis, Nur Ahmad Fadhil, "The Child Rights In Islamic Law With A Special Focus On Aceh", in *Petita Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Syariah*, 1/2019, pp. 81-92.

6 Karen Polonko & Lombardo, Lucien, "Non-Governmental Organisations and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child", in *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 23/2015, pp. 133-153.

7 Lee Jerome, Emerson, Lestey, Lundy, Laura & Orr, Karen, "Teaching and learning about child rights: A study of implementation in 26 countries". Project Report. UNICEF PFP & Queen's University Belfast, 2015, available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/18078/> (accessed at 15.07.2021).

8 Eduard Vaquero, Urrea, Aida & Mundet, Anna, "Promoting resilience through technology, art and a child rights-based approach", in *Revista de cercetare si interventie sociala*, 2014, pp. 144-159.

9 Alexia Sabbe, Oulami, Halima, Zekraoui, Wahiba, Hikmat, Halima, Temmerman, Marleem & Leye, Els, "Determinants of child and forced marriage in Morocco: stake-

lems associate with this practice¹⁰. Girl child abuse can take many forms. The study conducted by Thapa, Pun, Raut, Silwal and Chaudhary¹¹ (2018) analysed if awareness programs could be recommended for mothers. The results show that the mothers had an average level of awareness regarding child abuse.

Each country has specific problems in the child rights matter. The research highlights different aspects, providing an extensive series of difficulties. For example, Grugel and Peruzzotti¹² paid attention to the domestic politics on international human rights law in Ecuador, Chile, and Argentina. In Nigeria, street children are considered¹³ by examining existing legislation, agencies activities, poverty impact, job-creating influence. Another problem in Nigeria was the differential treatment of girls and boys. Alabi, Bala, and Labi¹⁴ suggest that holistic education for girls can reduce discrimination. Liebel¹⁵ analysed the rights of working children in Bolivia, inspecting the Code for Children and Adolescents, its history and benefits. Heimer, Nasman and Palme study children participation, Sweden social services help, and their relationship¹⁶. They concluded that a

holder perspectives on health, policies and human rights" in *BMC international health and human rights*, 2013, pp. 1-12.

10 Muazzam Nasrullah, Zakar, Rubeena, Zakar, Muhamad Zakria, Abbas, Safdar, Safdar, Rabia, Shaukat, Mahwish, & Krämer, Alexander, "Knowledge and attitude towards child marriage practice among women married as children-a qualitative study in urban slums of Lahore, Pakistan", in *BMC Public Health*, 1/2014, pp. 1-7.

11 Taniya Thapa, Pun, Khangi Maya, Raut, Krisna Bahadur, Silwal, Kalpano & Chaudhary, Rajendra Kumar, "Awareness on girl child abuse among mothers of a selected community", in *JNMA*, 212/2018, pp.86-70.

12 Jean Grugel & Peruzzotti, Enrique, "The Domestic Politics of International Human Rights Law: Implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Ecuador, Chile, and Argentina", in *Human Rights Quarterly* 1/2012, pp. 178-198.

13 Elizabeth Folake Owolabi, "Street Children as Threat to National Security and Peace in Nigeria: Can the Child Rights Act serve as a Panacea?", in *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 2/2017, pp. 91-99.

14 T. Alabi, Bahah, M. & Alabi, S. O, "The girl-child: A sociological view on the problems of girl-child education in Nigeria", in *European Scientific Journal*, 2/2014, pp. 393-409.

15 Manfred Liebel, "Protecting the rights of working children instead of banning child labour: Bolivia tries a new legislative approach", in *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 3/2015, pp. 529-547.

16 Maria Heimer, Näsman, Elizabet, & Palme, Joakim, "Vulnerable children's rights to participation, protection, and provision: The process of defining the problem in Swedish child and family welfare" in *Child & Family Social Work*, 2/2018, p. 316-323.

child-focused system is more convenient than a family orientation to the Convention on the Child's Rights. Finally, integrating children's human rights and child poverty is considered for Ethiopia and India¹⁷.

Child Rights and his dignity are also discussed in terms of bullying. Bullying is a form of power manifestation with profound effects such as anxiety, damage of dignity and depression¹⁸. This problem can attract language difficulties¹⁹. Discussion about child dignity leads to different action directions: respecting dignity in the family, at school, in the community, in the mass media, in the church²⁰. Inclusive education can provide specific solutions for maintaining the dignity of children with low chances of integration²¹. The dignity of all children must be respected.

Present Research Methodology

The primary purpose of this research is to find out the children's perspective on their rights. What are the disciplines to which they have had access to this information? How many rights do they know? Are their rights obeyed? These are some of the main questions of the study. Regarding the type of research, there are both quantitative and qualitative elements. The analysis is descriptive, diagnostic.

The main objective was to find out the children's opinions about their rights through a questionnaire. The questionnaire gathered information on the disciplines in which children discussed children's rights, the rights they know, the institutions in which children's rights are respected and their levels. Among the information gathered was added age, place of residence, and type of school attended.

17 Virginia Morrow & Pells, Kirrily, "Integrating children's human rights and child poverty debates: Examples from young lives in Ethiopia and India", in *Sociology*, 5/2012, pp. 906-920.

18 Ramona Simona Kiru, "The influence of bullying on the dignity of the child", in *Journal for Freedom of Conscience*, 1/2019, pp. 632-638.

19 Laura Maftai, "Language development in early education", in *Journal of Educational Studies*, 2/2019, pp. 74-103.

20 Eliza Mihaela Spătăreanu, "Uphold child dignity in primary education", in *Journal for Freedom of Conscience*, 2019, pp. 608-616.

21 Gianina Estera Petre, "Challenges and solutions in inclusive education. A case study with Group Investigation", in *Symposion* 1/2019, pp. 129-145.

The research was attended by 74 children aged 11 and 18, participants in the Biblical Knowledge Olympiad, 2021, in Cernica. The age distribution was as follows: 9 children 11 years old, 16 children 12 years old, 16 children 13 years old, ten children 14 years old, five children 15 years old, nine children 16 years old, four children 17 years old and five 18-year-old children (Figure 1). In terms of origin, the children come from all parts of the country (Figure 2).

Presentation and interpretation of research results

The children investigated reported several disciplines in which children's rights were integrated. Usually, in Romania, children's rights are taught in civic education. However, their responses indicate that this content has been integrated into several disciplines. This aspect is essential because it demonstrates that Romanian education can take over integrated teaching and use it in children's interests. Furthermore, integrated teaching is significant because it presents reality in a holistic way, in which the child can solve specific life problems taking into account a much more comprehensive range of factors in a natural context.

As shown in Figure 3, the most frequently mentioned discipline and civic education is religion. In this discipline, children learn about human nature, about the fact that in the Bible children have value, about the attitude of Jesus towards children, those who will be called great in the Kingdom of God must be like children, and children have their place in the plan of salvation.

History offers a field close to study to civic education and religion and was expected to be on the children's list. However, the Romanian language, geography and mathematics have an unexpected presence; the teachers of these disciplines have probably developed over time the ability to bring exciting applications regarding the reality of daily life.

Figure 4 shows the extent to which children's rights are known. Thus, 37 children mentioned the right to education, 25 children mentioned the right to a family, 17 discussed the right to an opinion, 14 the right to health, 12 the right to life, 9 the right to vacation and food, 5 the right to freedom, 4 the right to play and religion, 3 the right to protection and equality.

The frequency of mentions also shows the importance that children give to each right. Education comes first, and that is a good thing. In the

distant past, the right to education was guaranteed only to children from wealthy families. The level of education is a good indicator for prosperity and well-being, and the level of development of a nation has strong correlations with the level of education of a population.

Family comes after education; children intuit that this is the leading environmental factor that imposes an essential direction for life. Finally, the mention of the right to an opinion in the third place brings essential information about the thirst of children to be heard, understood and promoted. It is notable and attention paid to health. It demonstrates a remarkable maturity of the young generation, which gives health the right place in life.

Another objective of the research was to find out where children believe their rights are most respected: in the family, school, or church? Figure 5 shows the frequency of children who responded affirmatively to each statement. Most children believe that their rights are respected at church. Those who feel that their rights at home are respected are pretty close. However, children show some restraint towards school. The results are explicable in how the research subjects are represented by children interested in religion, who value the family. Because school is a place where the level of frustration is higher, it is understood children's attitude towards school.

Figures 6, 7 and 8 provide additional information on this by assessing the level of respect for children's rights through a score. School is again the place where children feel less respected. Although this is where they learn especially about children's rights, ironically, they believe that these rights are less respected.

Conclusion

The subject of children's rights is a current one; most states are concerned with creating particular policies to ensure no violations in this area. An optimistic view on this subject begins with a healthy view of human nature in general and the fundamental values of humanity: equality, freedom, respect, the right to an opinion and social protection.

The children present at the National Adventist Olympiad represent a particular group of children interested in the spiritual world with specific values. They reported specific views on respect for their rights, with shared views demonstrating maturity, a high level of education and awareness.

Their references to education have shown that they have to deal with a teaching style that involves integrated teaching, a refined way of approaching learning. Thus, they became acquainted with children's rights in disciplines dedicated to this field and in more or less related disciplines.

As expected, children have a unique attitude towards the church but show a certain restraint towards the school, where they consider that their rights are less respected. School has always been the most significant source of frustration. In this context, the attitude towards the family is better than towards the school. The explanation may be that in the family, children feel protected, and the school's stress is removed.

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Appendices

Figure 1. The ages of the subjects

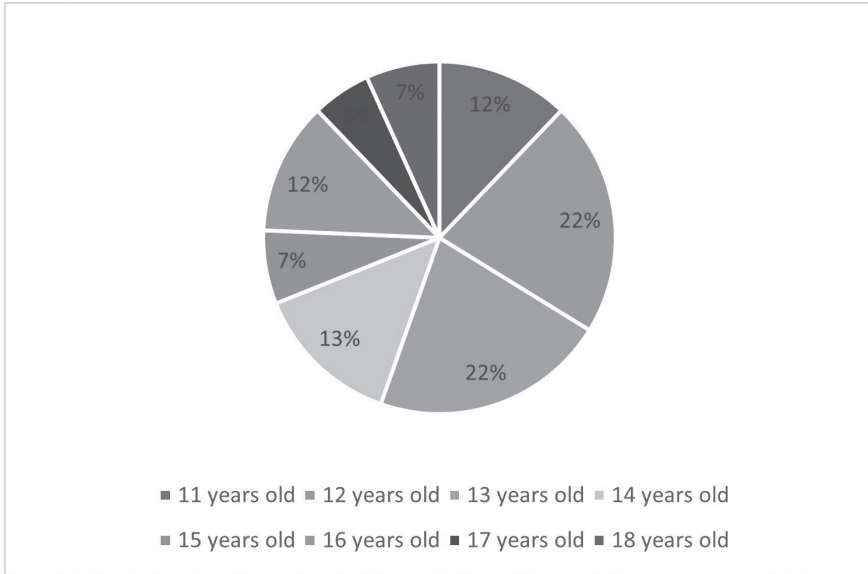


Figure 2. The origin of the subjects

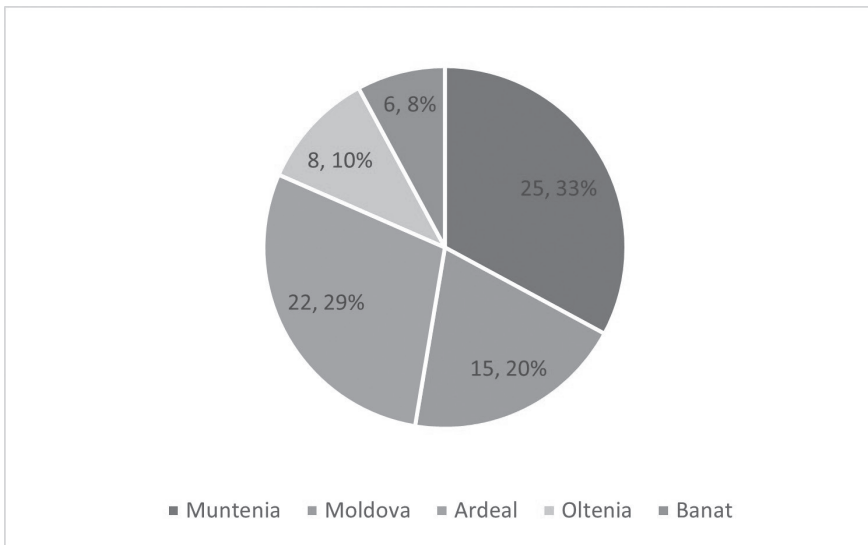


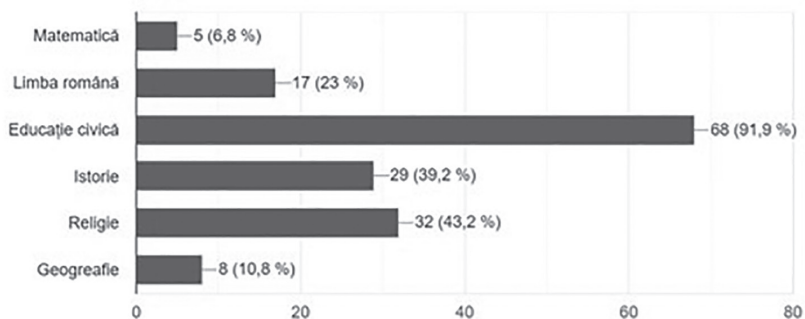
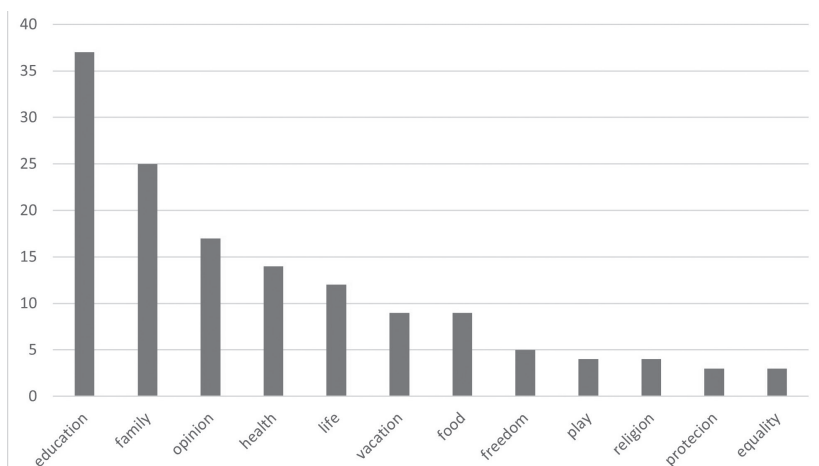
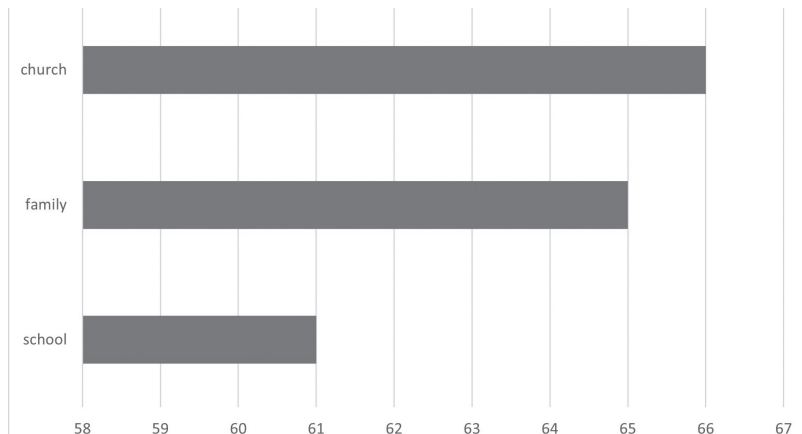
Figure 3. Disciplines in which children's rights have been integrated**Figure 4. Frequency of rights mentioned by children****Figure 5. The place where children's rights are respected**

Figure 6. Children give grades to respect their rights at home

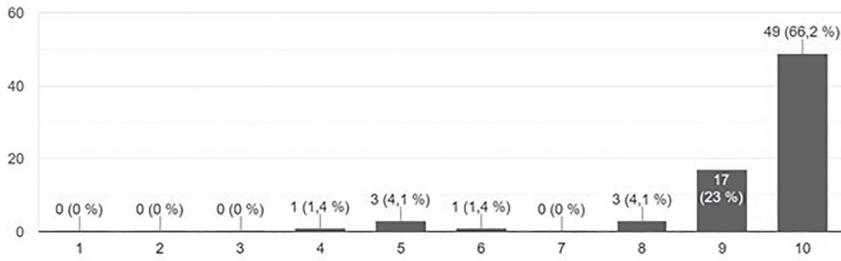


Figure 7. Children give grades to respect their rights at school

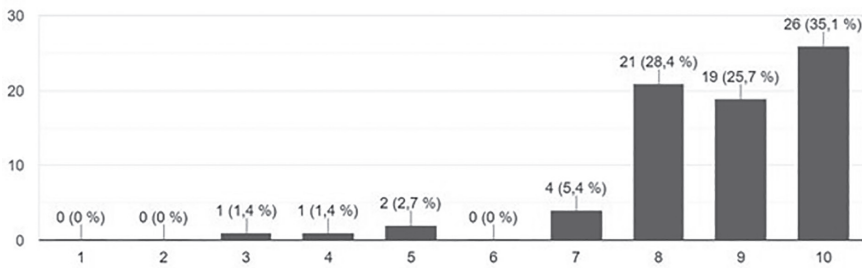
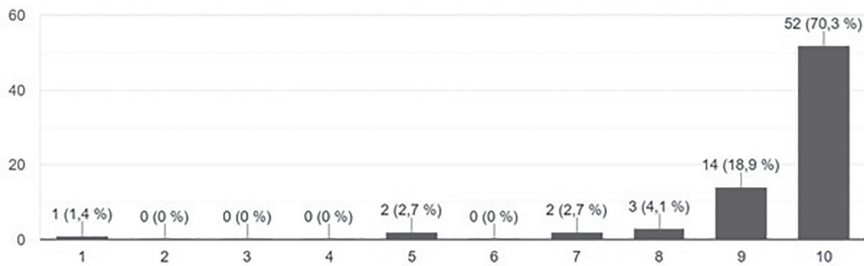


Figure 8. Children give grades to respect their rights at church



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