



Research with children regarding the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child - An international comparison during the COVID-19 pandemic -

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Background: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 12, states that children should be encouraged to express their opinions freely and that adults must consider these opinions seriously. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, various restrictions were imposed on children in many countries, including school closures, and their voices were ignored in governments' decision-making processes.

The direct impact of COVID-19 is limited on children. For example, the death rate in positive cases was only 0.001% for teens in Japan. On the other hand, the indirect impact was significant for vulnerable children. E.g. in Japan infant mortality rate (IMR) in jobless families increased to more than ten times the national IMR. Also, in Japan, the suicide rate per 100,000 became more than 2.0 in the ages 10-14 years and more than 10.0 in the ages 15-19 years.

Methods: This international project was conducted as an extension of the Global Child Rights Dialogue (GCRD) carried out in 2019 (see below). Children were recruited from South Korea, Sweden, Tanzania, and Japan. GCRD have been carried out in all four countries, and the analyses of the data are in progress.

Facts about GCRDs : 1. Children's ages between nine and eighteen years; 2. Number of groups between three and ten per one GCRD; 3. Duration, around one hour for each CRC article; 4. Period: between June 2022 and October 2023; 5. Articles: We selected ten articles out of a total of 54 articles. Each group discussed one or two articles.

Procedure: 1. Children read each article of CRC, which is written in a child-friendly version; 2. Children understand what kind of rights the article implies; 3. They give specific examples of who is not receiving these rights, who is depriving them, and what rights are being violated; 4. They show their feeling when the violation occurred; 5. They discuss what can be done to protect those rights and make their proposals to the government. In order to get our children to have a free discussion, we provide hints for discussion but do not interrupt them as much as possible and do not lead their discussion.

Selected articles: These ten articles are the same GCRD articles in four countries. Article 2: No discrimination, Article 3: Best interests of the child, Article 6: Rights to live and grow, Article 12: Right to express opinions, Article 23: Rights of children with disabilities, Article 24: Right to health and medical care, Article 26: Right to social security, Article 27: Social support to keep living standard, Articles 28+29: Right to education and purpose of education, Article 31: Rights to rest and play

Results:

Area	Gangwon				Gender	Total	Boy	Girl	
	Wonju city (YMCA)								
					Number	48	19	29	
Age	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	18	19
Number	2	4	8	7	6	9	6	4	2

South Korea



- Article 2: Expand rights education to eradicate discrimination and violation
- Article 12: Give the right to children to vote for the chair of a board of education
- Article 23: Guarantee an optimised examination environment for the child with disabilities
- Article 24: Recommend and disseminate good Korean health insurance system to other countries
- Articles 28 & 29: Restrict cram schools open operation until 10 p.m.
- Article 31: Get rid of the "No Kids Zone" at restaurants and public facilities, which is a typical example of child rights violation

Area	Västerbottens län				Gender	Total	Boy	Girl
	Umeå city (Junis)							
					Number	35	21	14
Age	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Number	3	3	9	7	5	5	2	1

Sweden



- Article 2: Deepen language learning to help children from different backgrounds connect with each other
- Article 3: Allow the child to access and play with toys, etc freely.
- Article 12: We do not need any other new options to have our voices heard by the government
- Article 26: Continue to share attitudes to solve problems without causing fear or stress to the child (policies to COVID-19)
- Article 27: Prepare places where the child in trouble can talk to reliable adults and the same generations
- Article 31: Lower prices of sporting goods, game software, etc.

Area	Dar es Salaam, Ilala				Gender	Total	Boy	Girl
	Kinyerezi Secondary School, Tambaza Secondary School, Azania Secondary School, Jangwani Girls Secondary School, Tamnaza High School							
					Number	102	54	48
Age	13	14	15	16	17			
Number	8	16	26	27	25			

Tanzania



- Article 2: Educate parents to avoid giving girls too much housework, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Article 12: Establish a special day when children can come together and express their opinions beyond the differences in schools
- Article 24: Ensure the child to access medical services even if having COVID-19 symptoms
- Article 26: Establish laws that do not allow rights violations and pay attention to child rights
- Article 27: Provide education on family planning to avoid teenage pregnancy
- Articles 28 & 29: Create a system for providing information to confirm whether children's rights to education are being interfered with

Area	Saitama	Kyoto	Osaka	Wakayam	Kagawa	Miyagi.									
	Kumagaya city	Kyoto city	Toyonaka city Osaka city Tondabayashi city Yao city	Wakayama city	Takamatsu city	Ishinomaki city									
Gender	Total	Boy	Girl	Others	Age	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Number	105	55	48	2	Number	3	13	16	17	14	7	21	4	7	3

Japan



- Article 2: End education that separates boys and girls, and eliminate gender itself
- Article 6: Create a society where the child can think, "It's okay for me to be alive, and I can feel happy to be alive.", rather than only guaranteeing one's life.
- Article 23: Don't deny me; be kind to me and give me a warm response.
- Article 24: Explain medicines in a way that the child can understand
- Articles 28 & 29: Support the child in knowing that it's okay to be different from others and that the ability to think by oneself and keep learning is important.
- Article 31: Become free the child from looking after siblings, and make him or her play and have free time

Discussion: CRC consists of a total of 54 articles, out of which ten articles on health and welfare were included in this project. The GCRDs with children from our four participating countries are almost completed. The results are comprehensive and will be able to influence policy recommendations based on the voices of children. We are convinced that research with children, conducted together with children, is an innovative research method. A wide age range of boys and girls was included, from 9 and 19 years. By discussing articles by themselves, they could understand the issues and the meaning of the rights contained in the article. And then, to advance these rights, they could look beyond the issues that need to be addressed by themselves and their close society. Children sometimes found magical ways to proceed with the rights, which had seemed difficult for them to imagine how they dealt with. They can make proposals based on ideas that adults do not understand. For example, when discussing Article 2 (No discrimination) in Japan, they recommended "eliminate gender itself." Indeed, it can be said that this is a fundamental response to the LGBTQ issues and the inequality in the division of housework between girls and boys, as raised also by children in Tanzania. Regarding Article 12, children concluded, "We do not need a new mechanism to have our voices heard in policy" in Sweden. It can be said that Sweden's policy stance, which in 2020 brought all domestic laws into line with CRC, is reflected in their opinions. About the standard of living in Article 27 in Tanzania, children made reference to teenage pregnancy, and proposed active efforts to educate about sexuality in schools and the dissemination of contraceptive methods.

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