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Israeli children less satisfied with school than kids abroad

Study shows majority of 2nd, 4th, 6th graders satisfied with home and family life, while half worry about money

• By LIDAR GRAVÉ-LAZI

Israeli children are less satisfied than their international counterparts with regard to their overall schooling experience, according to a report presented Monday at the Beersheba Conference on the Wellbeing of the Child at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

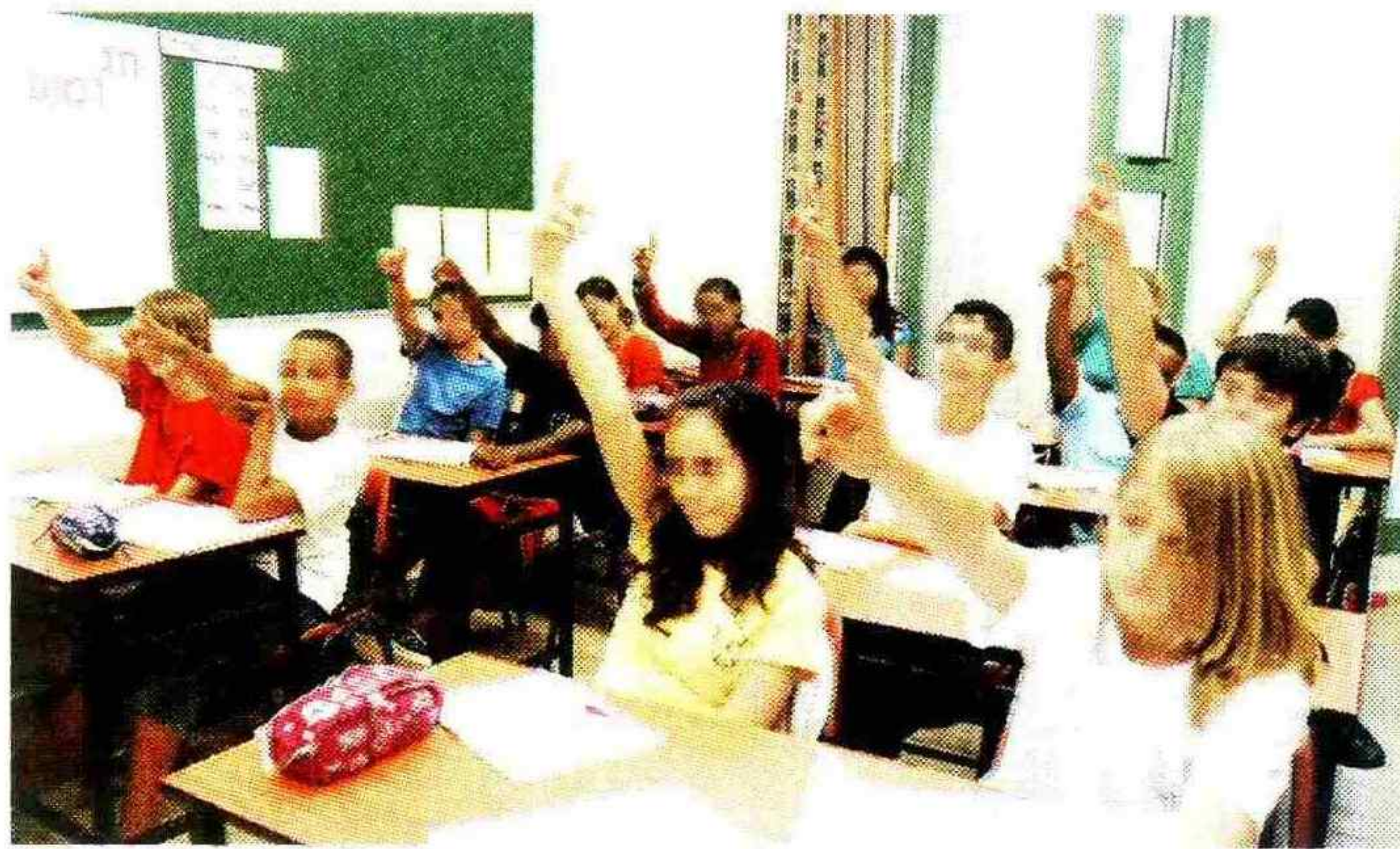
Dr. Yitzhak Kadman, director of the National Council for the Child, presented the study, which aimed to examine children's' perceptions about their personal welfare in various areas of life and their overall life satisfaction.

The research encompassed some 45,000 children in 15 countries; including, Algeria, Colombia, England, Estonia, Ethiopia, Germany, Nepal, Norway, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, and South Korea.

In Israel, some 3,000 children in second, fourth, and sixth grades participated in the study, which took place from 2013 to 2014.

The study was headed by a team of international researchers led by Prof. Asher Ben-Aryeh from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who is also CEO of the Haruv Institute. The study in Israel was headed by Ben-Aryeh and Dr. Avital Kai-Tzadok.

"The study is doubly important - first, collecting information directly from the children and using a 'proxy,' and secondly because it gives us a fascinating perspective on what is important to children, where they feel safe, what activities they take part in and so on; and most of all, what needs to be done to improve their lives," said Ben-Aryeh.



SCHOOLCHILDREN in Rishon Lezion raise their hands to answer a question. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

According to the findings, in comparison to the other countries in the study, Israel ranked 11th out of 15 with regard to the children's "sense of love to go to school" and 13th place with regard to satisfaction with the overall "school experience."

More specifically, the data revealed that only some 55% of children in Israel said they like to go to school and the satisfaction with the education system declined with the older the child; satisfaction levels of 63.7% for second graders, 52.3% for fourth graders, and 50.1% of sixth graders.

Despite this, a majority of 70% of pupils said they like their teachers and two thirds of children said they feel safe to go to school. The study also found that Arab children are on average more satisfied than Jewish children in their school experience and in the relationships with their teachers.

When it comes to family, Israel ranked first place with regard to children's feelings that their parents listen and acknowledge them and sec-

ond place with regard to children's sense of safety at home.

The majority of Israeli children, some 75%, said they are very satisfied with numerous aspects of family life, including the home they live in, their family members, and their overall family life.

Despite this, the findings indicated that half of children in Israel worry about money: 11.4% of children said they are constantly worried about their financial situation, 27.8% said they often worry, and only 9.3% of children only worry occasionally.

Israeli children also reported high levels of hope: 75.4% of children said that when they have a problem they can figure out a way to solve the situation on their own, while 76.5% of children said that, even if others give up, they feel they can find solutions to the problem. The study further found that Arab children reported higher levels of hope in comparison to Jewish children.

Dr. Kadman said that there are "many points of light" with regard to the positive attitudes of Israeli children to their living situation and their environment.

Nevertheless, he added, "We must not ignore the unflattering aspects revealed by the study and in particular must not ignore the groups of children (even if they are a minority) in all aspects of the study that indicated considerable difficulties in their lives and well-being."