

Korean Children's Subjective Well-Being: An International Comparison Study



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How do children's SWB differ across countries?

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Decomposition of Children's Subjective Well-being by Countries: What Matters to Whom?

Introduction

- Increased interest in children's quality of life, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being
- Recent studies report variations in children's subjective well-being among the different countries.
- Many recent studies, including this one, report that Korean children's levels of happiness and subjective well-being are among the lowest. Why?
- No 'firm' explanations why and how are these differences in SWB

Introduction

- The primary purposes of this study are threefold
 1. How do children's SWB differ across countries?
 2. And Why?
 3. Can we explain what makes Korean children's subjective well-being lower than other countries?

Part 1

How do children's SWB differ across countries?



Data (ISCWeB dataset: 8YO, 10YO, 12YO)

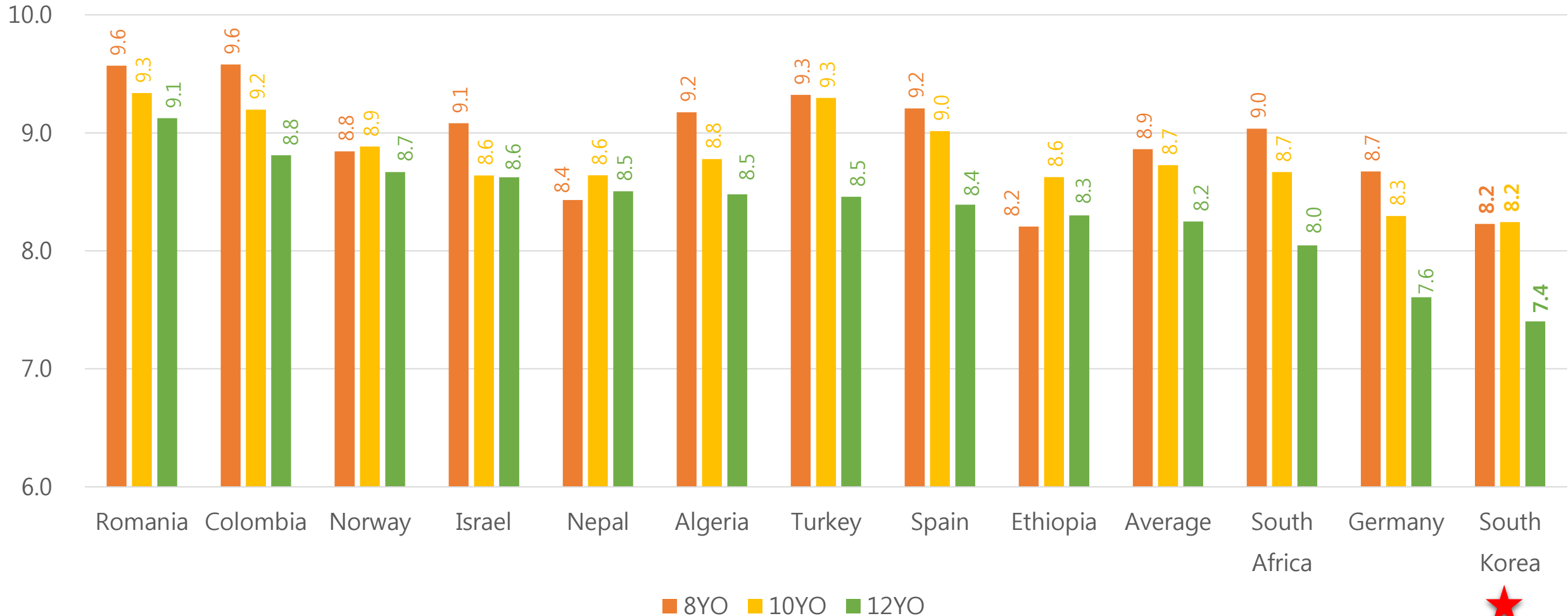
	8YO	10YO	12YO	Total
Algeria	1,244	1,149	1,283	3,676
Nepal	975	983	995	2,953
Estonia	1,076	1,014	1,029	3,119
Spain	1,032	1,057	1,712	3,801
Colombia	902	939	975	2,816
Turkey	959	1,047	1,018	3,024
Ethiopia	953	944	980	2,877
South Korea	2,432	2,438	2,597	7,467
Germany	1,056	1,101	852	3,009
England	990	989	1,319	3,298
Israel	886	988	903	2,777
Romania	1,249	1,359	1,507	4,115
Norway	930	960	974	2,864
Poland	1,021	1,119	1,017	3,157
South Africa	996	1,061	1,131	3,188
Total	16,701	15,999	17,009	52,141

Mean Comparison: Various Subjective Well-being Measures

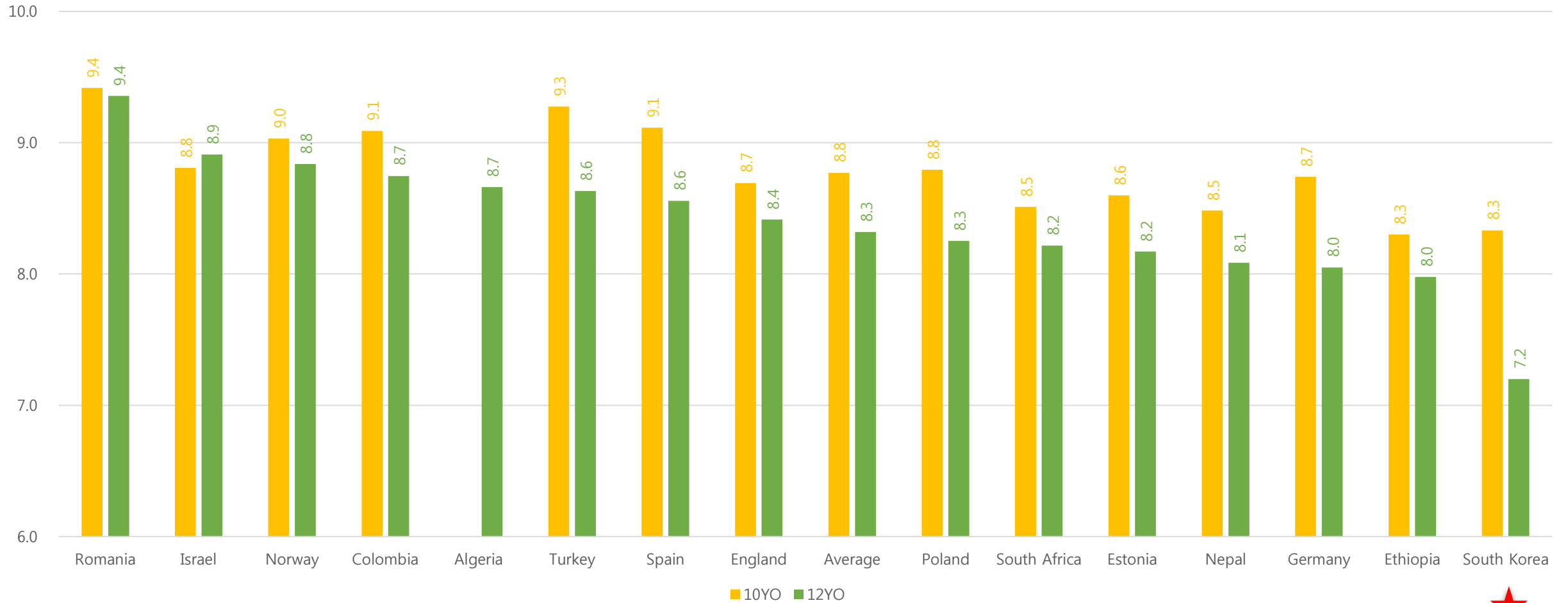
- Happiness
 - How happy have you been during last 2 weeks (1 item, 0 to 10 point)
- Life Satisfaction
 - Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS, 4 items, 0 to 10 point)
 - Personal Well-being Index School Children (PWI, 9 items, 0 to 10 point)
- Positive Affect
 - Russel's Core Affect (short-version, 6 items, 0 to 10 point)

Happiness: (1 item, 0-10, 11point scale)

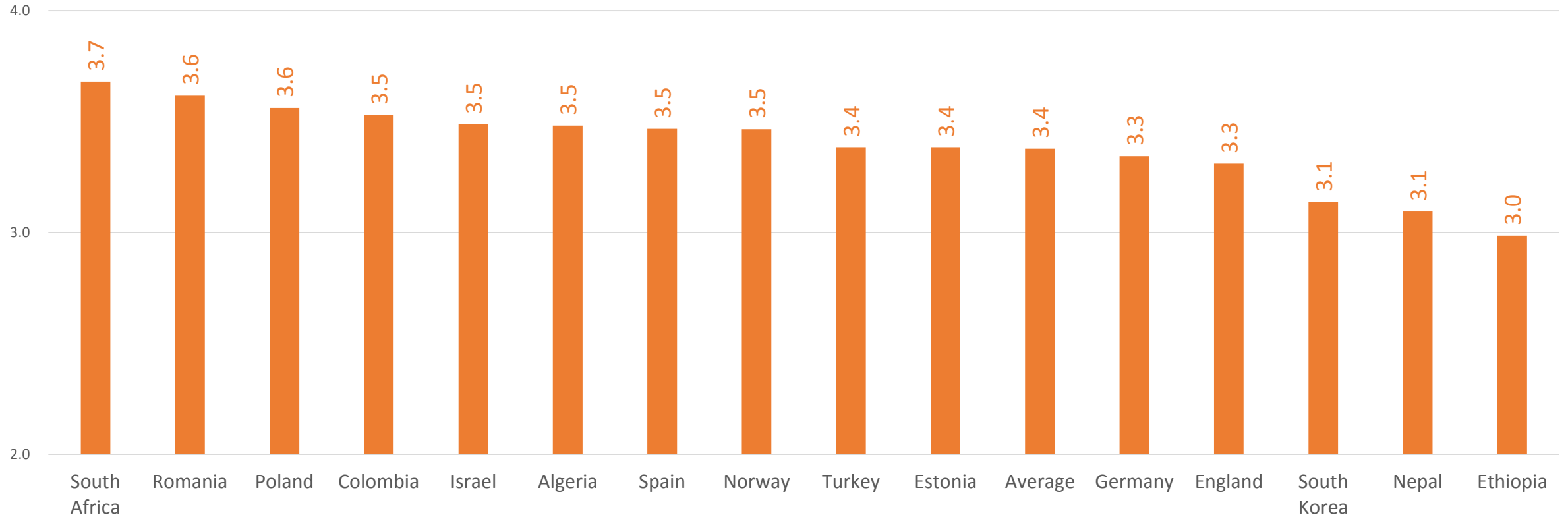
(Overall, how happy have you been feeling during the last two weeks?)



Life Satisfaction: SLSS (4 items, 0-10, 11point scale)



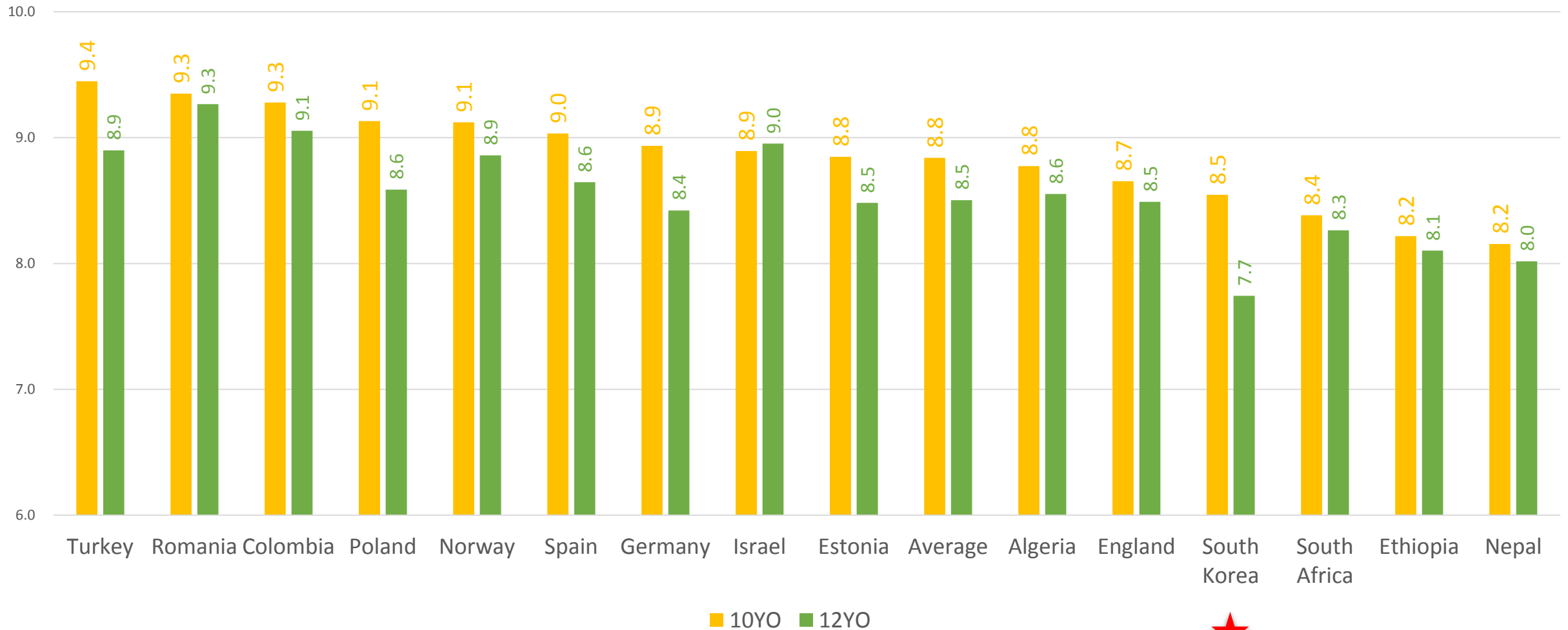
Life Satisfaction: SLSS (4 items, 0-4, 5point scale)



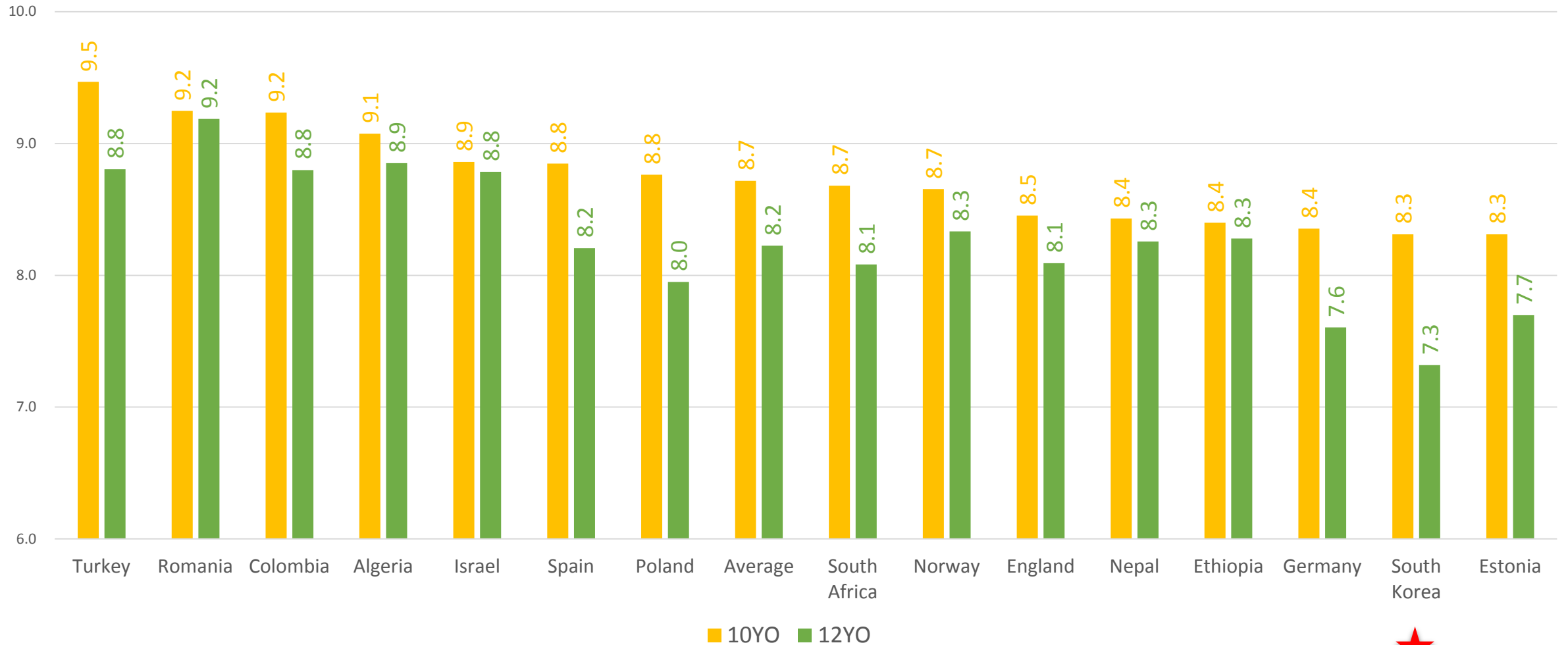
8YO



Life Satisfaction: PWI (9 items, 0-10, 11point scale)



Emotion: Positive Affect (6 items, 0-10, 11point scale)



Domain Comparison: Various Subjective Well-being domains

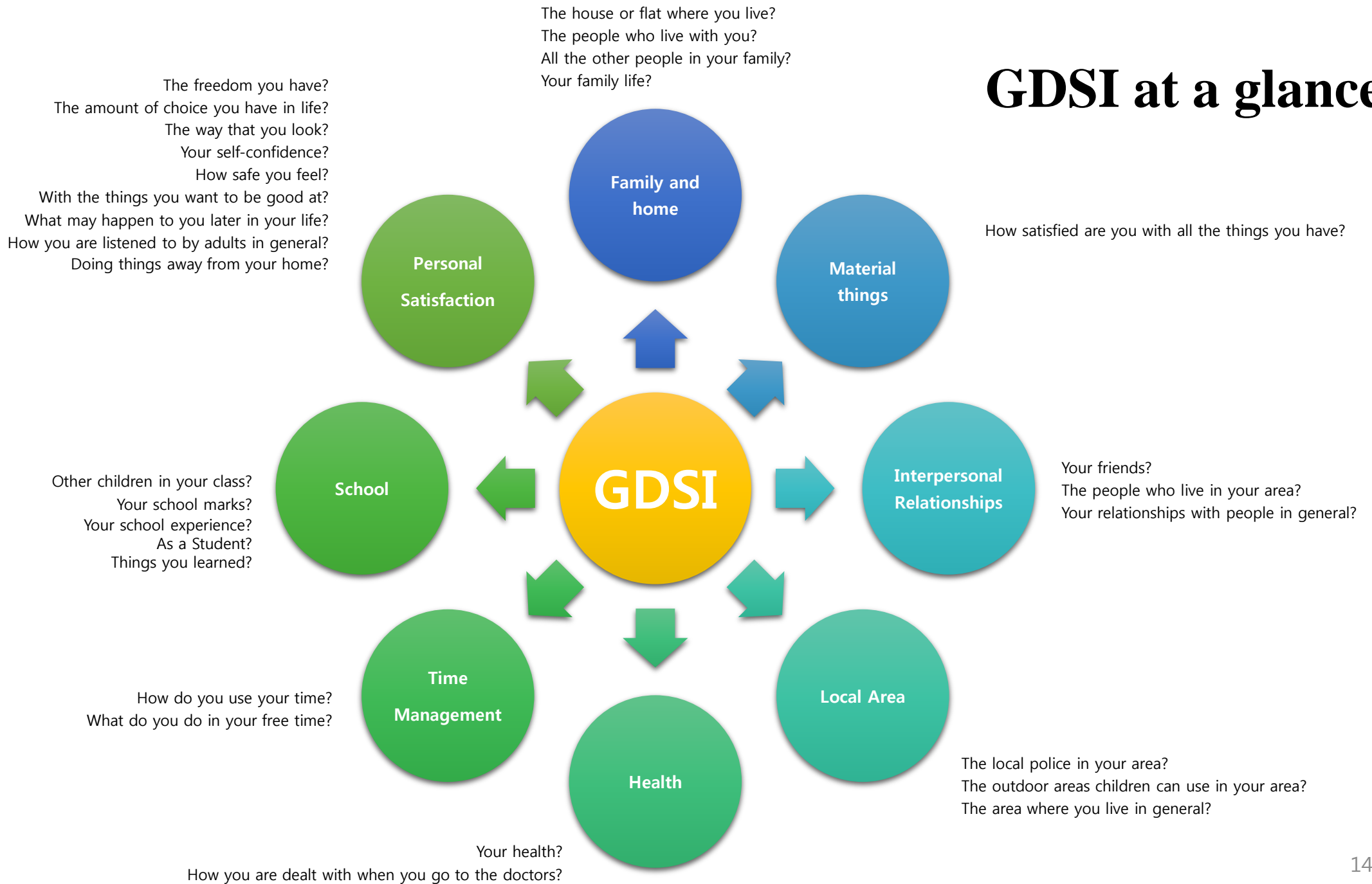
- Domain Satisfaction

- GDSI: General Domain Satisfaction Index (29 item, 0 to 10 point)

- Eight Domains

- Satisfaction with...
 - Family and home
 - Material Things
 - Interpersonal Relationships
 - Area of Living
 - Health
 - Time management
 - School
 - Self

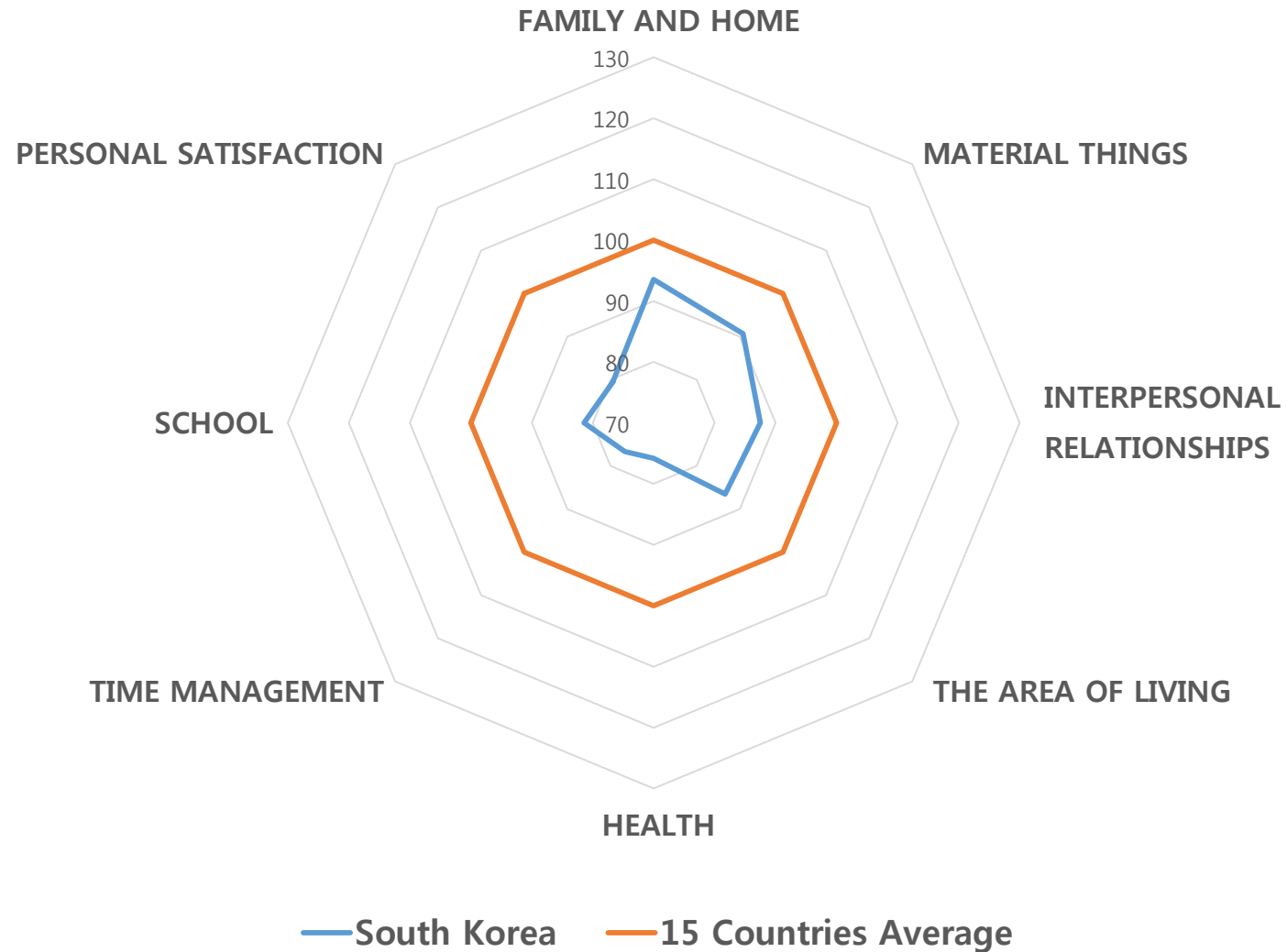
GDSI at a glance



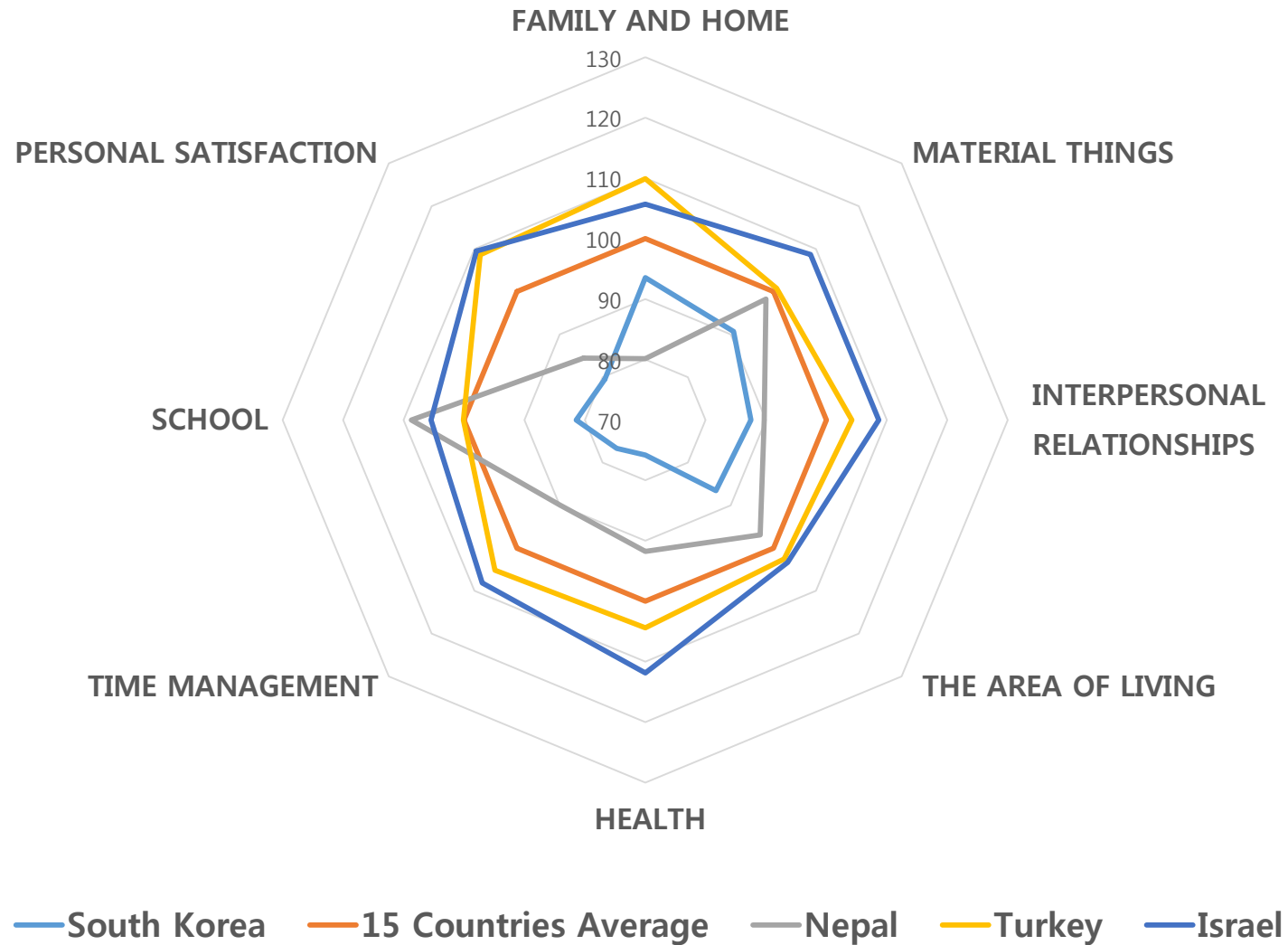
Results of GDSI at a glance

	FAMILY AND HOME	MATERIAL THINGS	INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	THE AREA OF LIVING	HEALTH	TIME MANAGEMENT	SCHOOL	PERSONAL SATISFACTION	GDSI
Romania	115.79	110.49	116.31	114.29	115.60	118.94	112.48	116.54	115.05
Norway	109.26	108.88	116.77	122.35	108.20	102.74	109.04	104.19	110.18
Colombia	107.99	107.91	99.85	102.70	108.35	113.96	108.48	113.12	107.79
Israel	105.68	108.67	108.63	103.34	111.85	108.13	105.45	109.53	107.66
Turkey	109.90	100.74	104.19	102.51	104.38	105.19	100.11	108.61	104.45
Spain	102.18	104.83	110.92	103.65	107.33	102.76	94.55	99.95	103.27
England	101.84	104.72	102.74	103.26	95.90	99.05	95.34	94.64	99.69
Poland	100.59	103.69	94.08	105.33	96.28	97.51	89.47	101.21	98.52
Algeria	102.51	85.59	99.79	87.77	99.90	94.07	110.04	103.59	97.91
Estonia	99.03	100.61	98.01	96.97	94.61	99.88	91.36	97.67	97.27
Germany	97.44	102.53	93.90	96.27	99.20	100.89	84.32	96.93	96.43
South Africa	93.27	98.99	84.10	86.25	100.44	96.31	102.07	96.10	94.69
Nepal	80.12	98.26	89.68	96.92	91.74	89.95	108.69	84.48	92.48
Ethiopia	80.87	73.38	93.57	91.81	90.42	93.93	107.21	93.96	90.64
South Korea	93.53	90.71	87.47	86.55	75.80	76.68	81.41	79.48	83.95

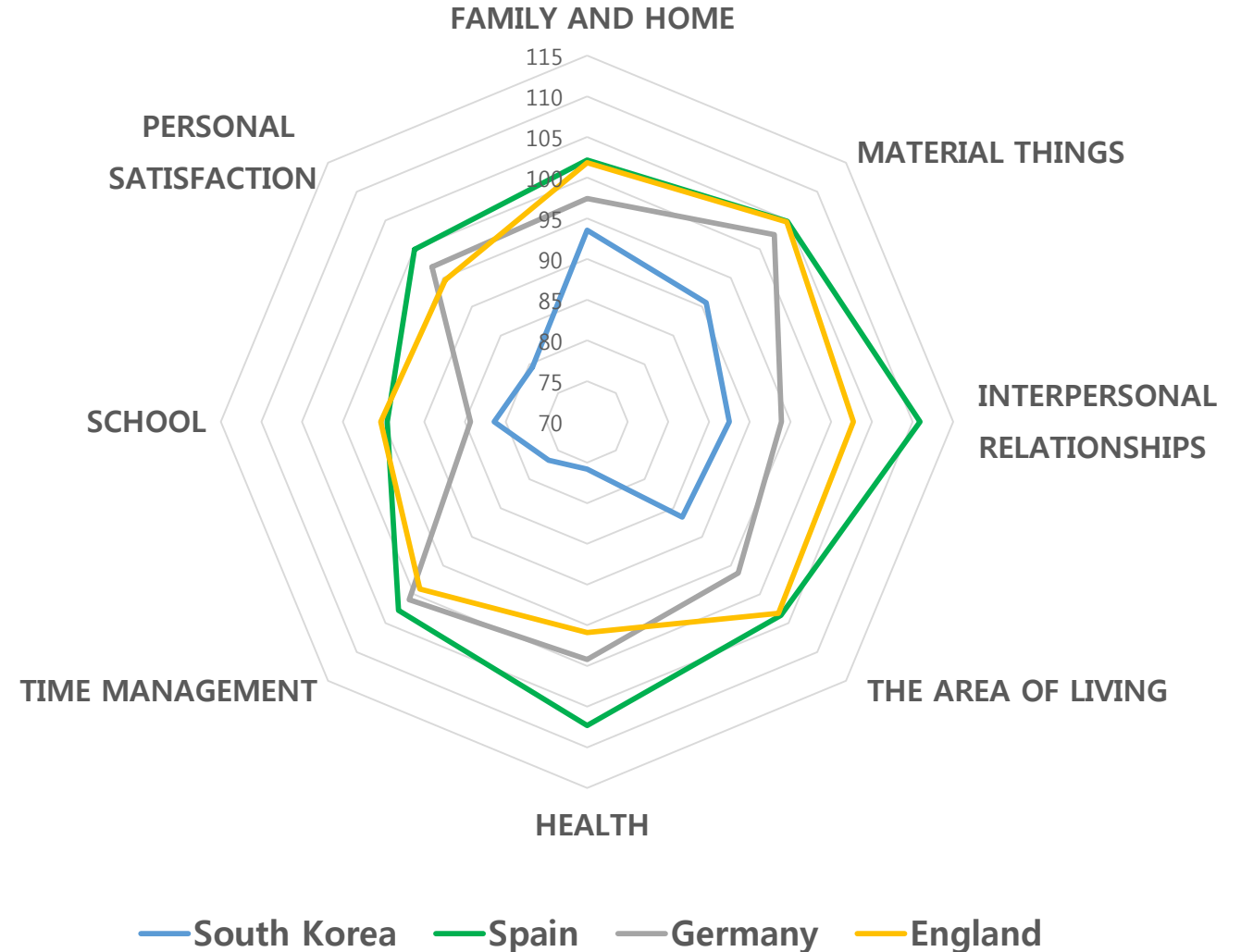
Korean Case (z-score)



Four Asian Countries (z-score)



Four selected OECD countries (z-score)



GDP per capita (Current US\$)

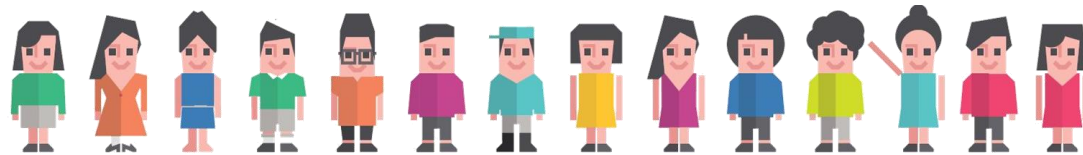
- Germany: 46,268
- Spain: 29,863
- Korea: 25,976
- U.K.: 41,787

Results

- Examined children's subjective well-being using various measures.
 - The results show that there are differences in SWB across countries regardless of the measures used.
 - On a somewhat consistent level, Korean children's SWB is among the lowest.
- Comparisons of the domains across the countries.
 - Within each country, there are differences in the satisfaction levels across the domains.
 - In many countries, children report higher level of satisfaction with family and lower level of satisfaction with community.
 - There are much variation in the satisfaction with schools across countries.
- In comparison, there are similarities and differences in children's subjective well-being across various countries.
 - We need to understand the complexities of children SWB using various methods.

Part 2

Decomposition of Children's Subjective Well-being by Countries: What Matters to Whom?



Goal of this study

- The primary purpose of this study is to examine what factors explain the SWB differences across the 15 ISCWeB countries.
- In order to do that:
 - We decompose the children's SWB by seven areas: self, environment, learning, leisure, money, relationships, and freedom to choose (Bradshaw, 2014+freedom to choose)
 - We examine what areas are accountable for the variations in the overall SWB.

For example:

Why is the level of Korean children's SWB lower than others?

- There are several possible explanations
 - Asian reporting bias?
 - Korean children are 'really' unhappy?
- If Korean children's SWB is lower than others, what 'factors' are accountable for that?

Methods

- Data: ISCWeB (14 countries) 12 years old dataset
 - Algeria, Nepal, Estonia, Spain, Colombia, Turkey, Ethiopia, South Korea, Germany, England, Romania, Norway, Poland, South Africa (Israel is not included because it didn't have the 'self' and 'freedom to choose' questions)
- Analysis: OLS decomposition

- Dependent variables

Scale	Definition	Items
SLSS	<p>Adapted version of the Student Life Satisfaction Scale</p> <p>11-point scale, from 'Not all agree' to 'Totally agree' is used. 4 items.</p>	<p>◆ Here are five sentences about how you feel about your life as a whole. Please tick a box to say how much you agree with each of the sentences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• My life is going well• My life is just right• I have a good life• I have what I want in line

• Independent variables

Domains	Definition	Items
Self	Have a positive view of themselves and an identity that is respected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like being the way I am • I am good at managing my daily responsibilities • People are generally pretty friendly towards me
Environment	Have a safe and suitable home environment and local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time • I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in • I feel safe at home • I feel safe at school • I have quiet place to study
Learning	The condition to learn and develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel that I am learning a lot • I like going to school
Leisure	Have opportunities to take part in positive activities to thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in organized leisure time activities (like youth movement, scout, ...) • Playing sports or doing exercise • Taking classes outside school time on matters different than at school
Money	Have enough of what matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothes in good condition to go to school in • Access to computer at home • Access to Internet • Mobile phone • Your own room • Books to read for fun • A family car for transportation • Your own stuff to listen to music • A television at home that you can use
Relationships	Have positive relationships with family and friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My parents (or the people who look after me) listen to me and take what I say into account • My friends are usually nice to me • My parents (or the people who look after me) treat me fairly • My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account • My teachers treat me fairly
Freedom to choose	Have enough choices for time use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have enough choice about how I spend my time

Descriptive Findings

Country	Leisure	Environment	Learning	Money	Relationship	Freedom to choose	Self	SLSS
Algeria	1.47	2.98	8.96	0.59	3.24	8.54	8.86	8.66
Nepal	1.70	3.05	8.99	0.52	3.19	7.76	8.46	8.01
Estonia	1.43	3.18	6.73	0.92	3.17	8.45	8.40	8.12
Spain	1.59	3.23	7.28	0.90	3.32	8.33	8.68	8.48
Colombia	1.74	3.25	8.50	0.72	3.17	8.88	8.89	8.76
Turkey	1.81	3.00	8.35	0.75	3.12	8.71	9.00	8.56
Ethiopia	1.26	2.45	8.99	0.21	3.08	7.73	7.94	7.98
South Korea	1.15	2.63	7.30	0.94	3.00	7.44	7.32	7.20
Germany	1.49	3.06	6.48	0.91	2.98	8.43	8.12	8.02
England	1.75	3.09	6.81	0.94	3.13	8.56	8.18	8.38
Romania	1.62	3.05	7.84	0.84	3.19	9.05	9.24	9.32
Norway	1.48	3.47	7.50	0.98	3.38	8.81	8.77	8.83
Poland	1.47	3.43	6.34	0.93	3.17	8.41	8.27	8.12
South Africa	1.95	2.76	8.12	0.76	3.01	8.24	8.38	8.13
Total	1.54	3.03	7.61	0.80	3.16	8.32	8.39	8.29

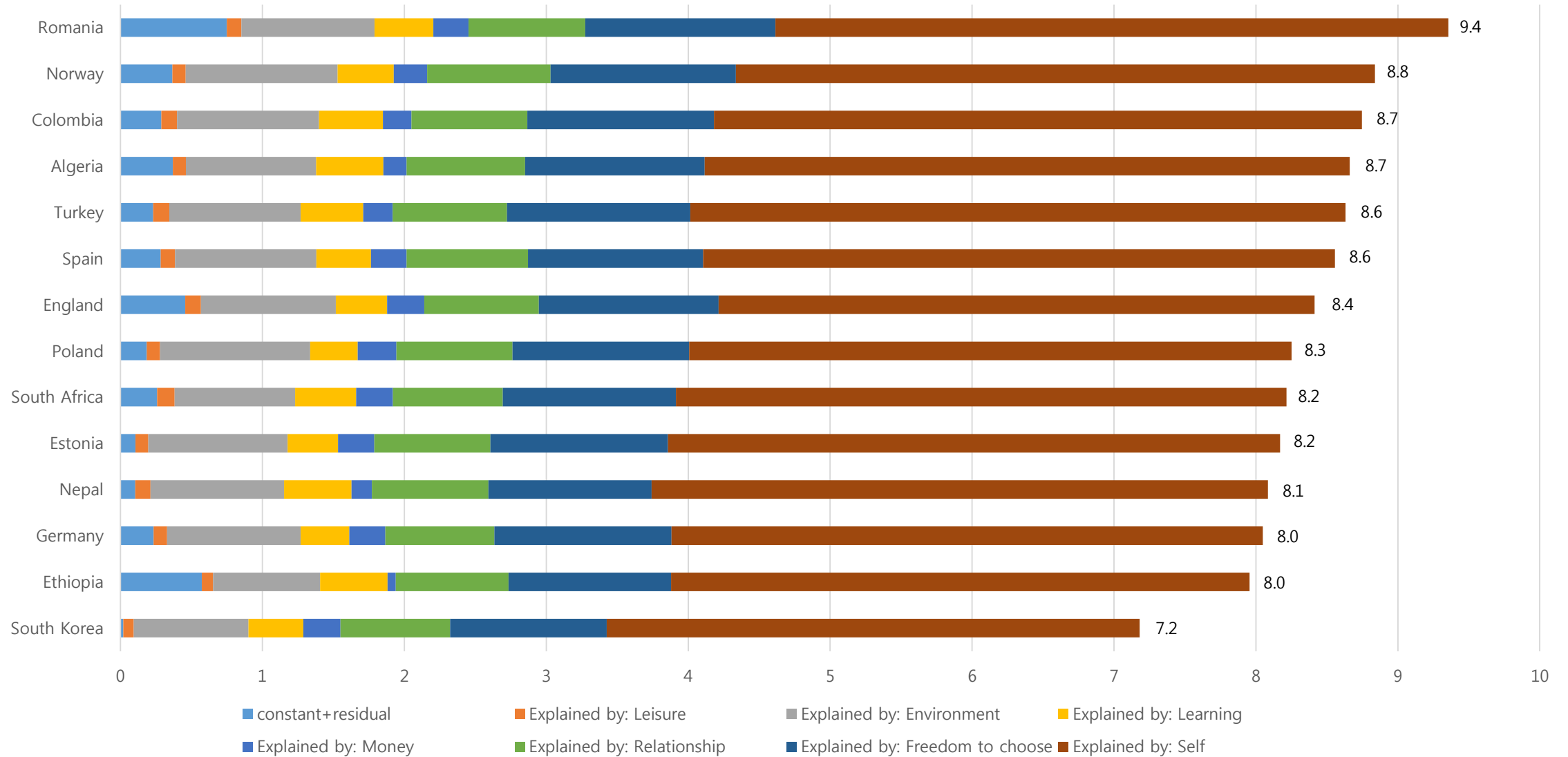
Results (Pooled-data)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable			
	B	S.E.	Beta	Sig.
Leisure	.063	.014	.024	.000
Environment	.308	.017	.121	.000
Learning	.053	.006	.059	.000
Money	.278	.043	.035	.000
Relationship	.258	.020	.089	.000
Freedom to choose	.148	.006	.167	.000
Self	.513	.008	.472	.000
N. Of observations	16,940			
Adjusted R-square	.576			

Note 1) Standard errors in parentheses

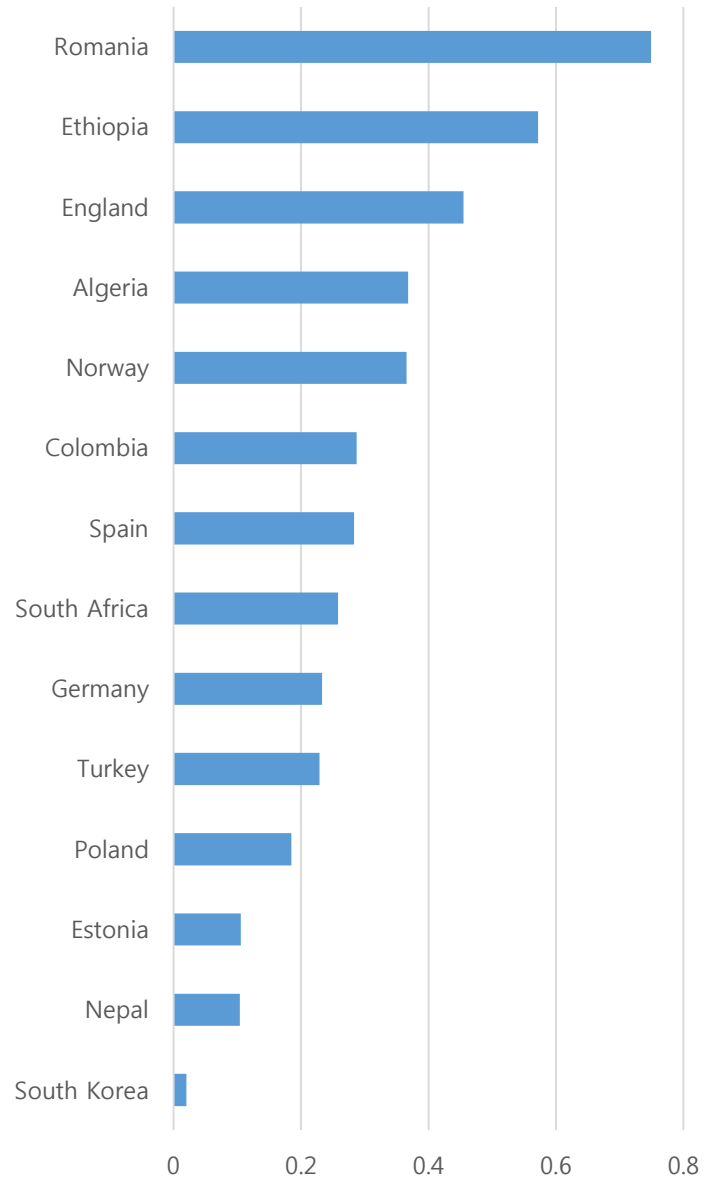
2) * p<.1 ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Decomposition of SWB by countries (SLSS)



Decomposition of SWB by countries

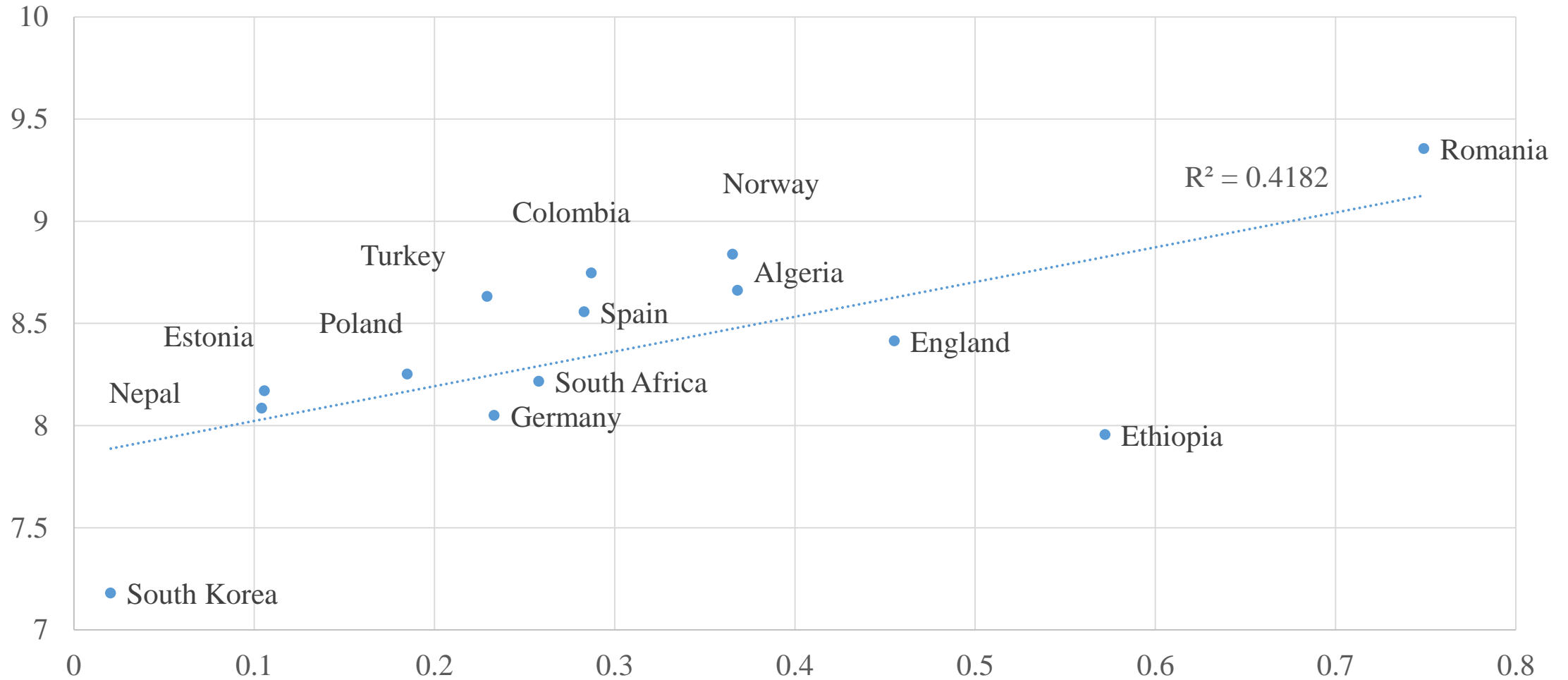
Constant + Residual



Variations in the 'unexplained'

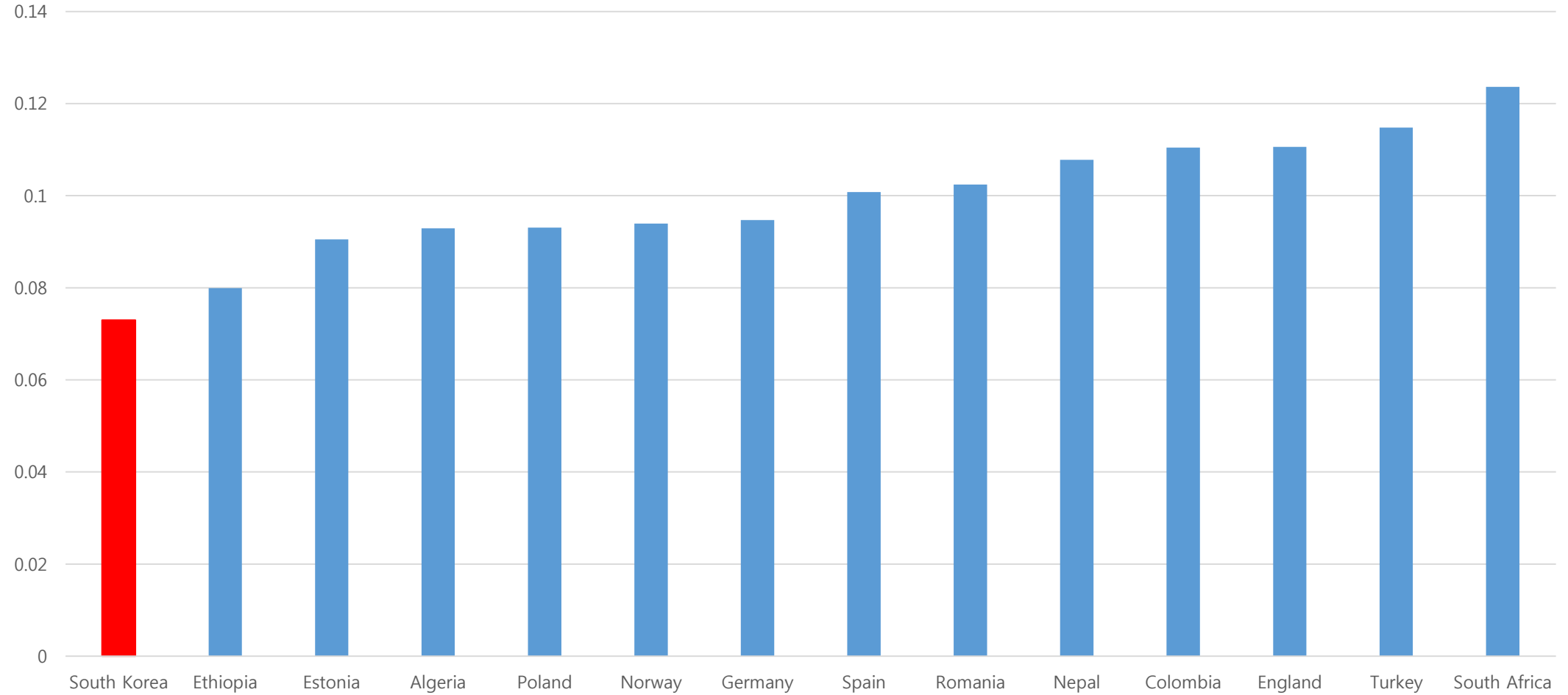
But, the 'unexplained' variations do not tell the whole story!

The relationship: Constant+Residual - SLSS

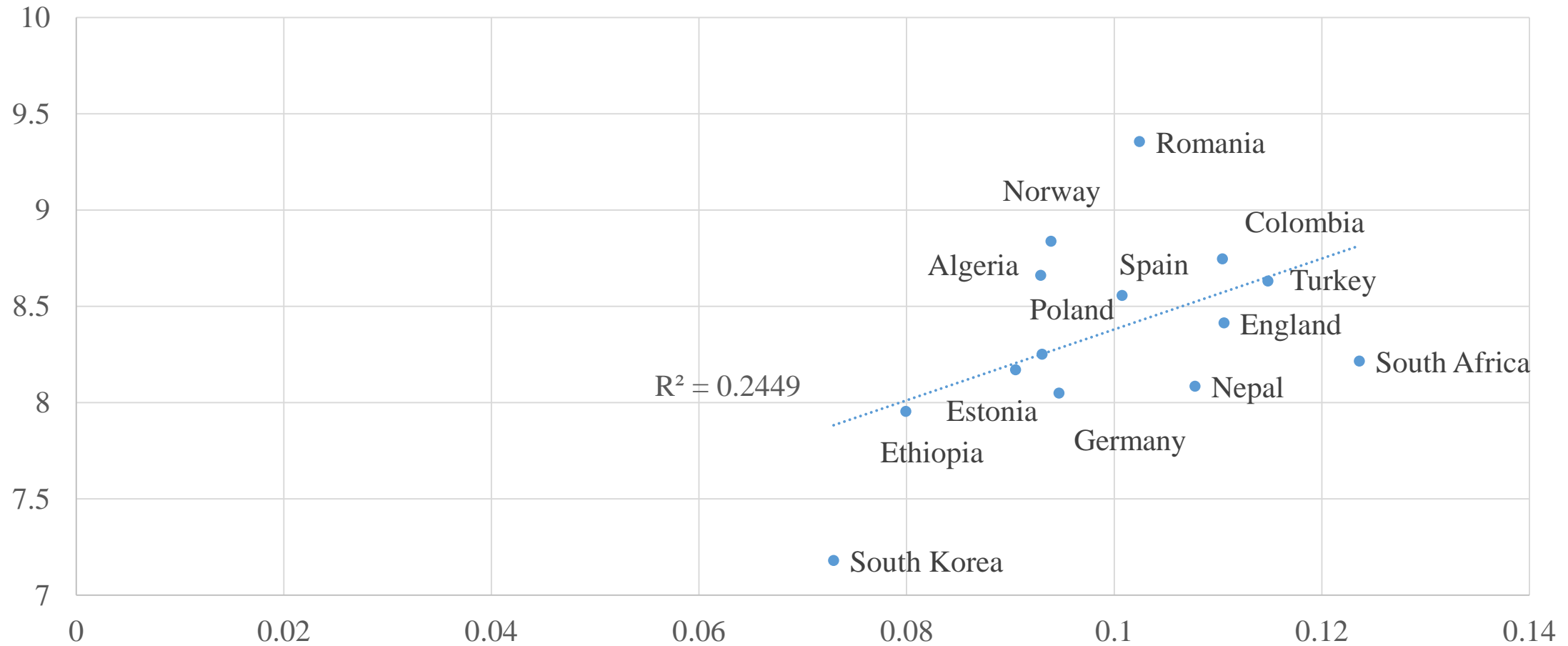


Leisure

- Participate in organized leisure time activities
- Playing sports or doing exercise
- Taking classes outside school time on matters different than at school

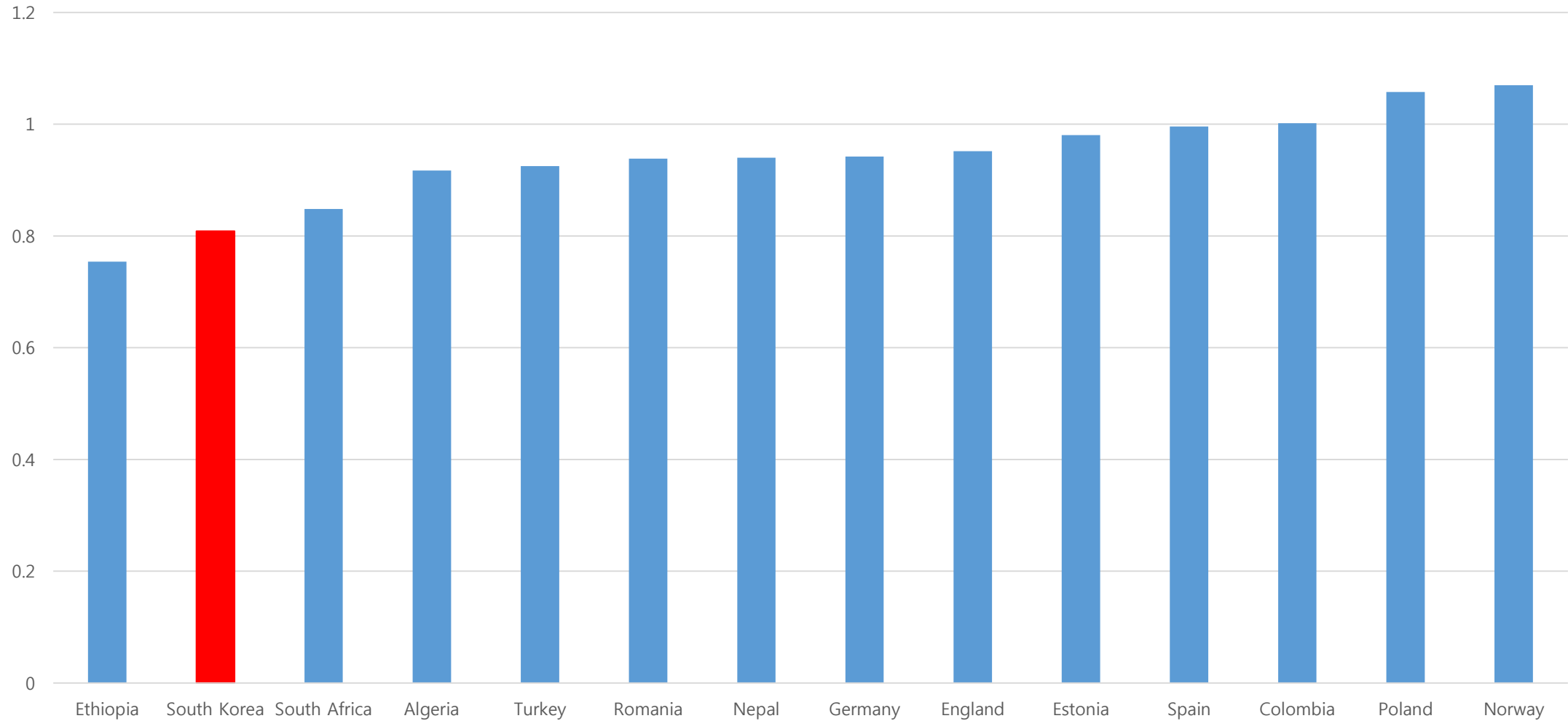


Leisure-SLSS

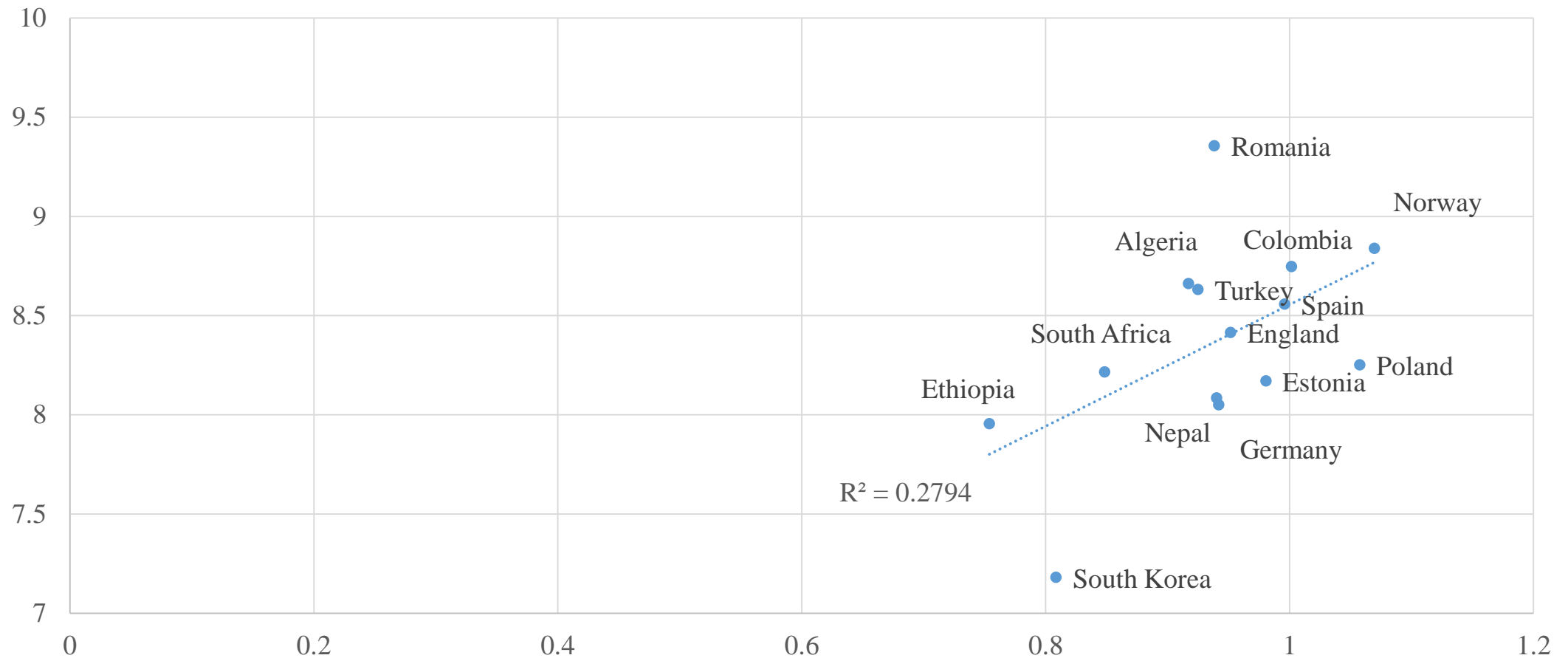


Environment

- In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time
- I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in
- I feel safe at home
- I feel safe at school
- I have quiet place to study

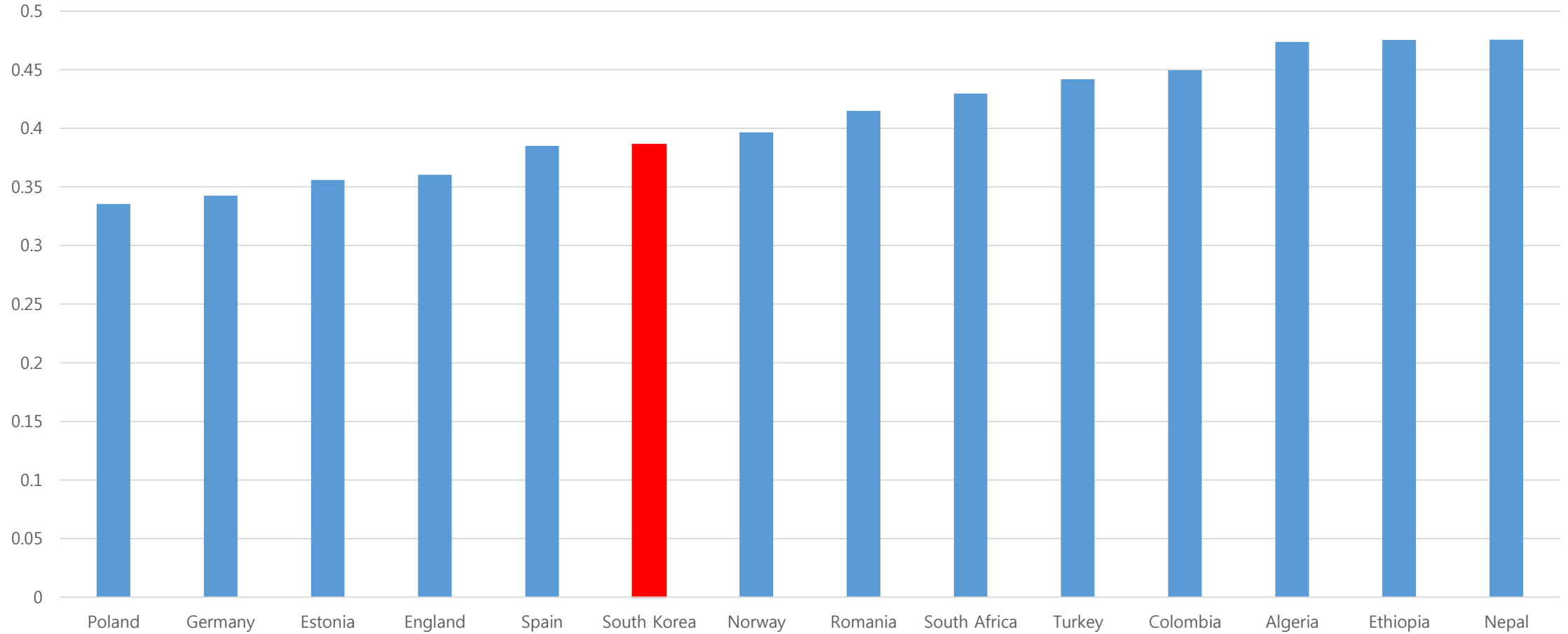


Environment-SLSS

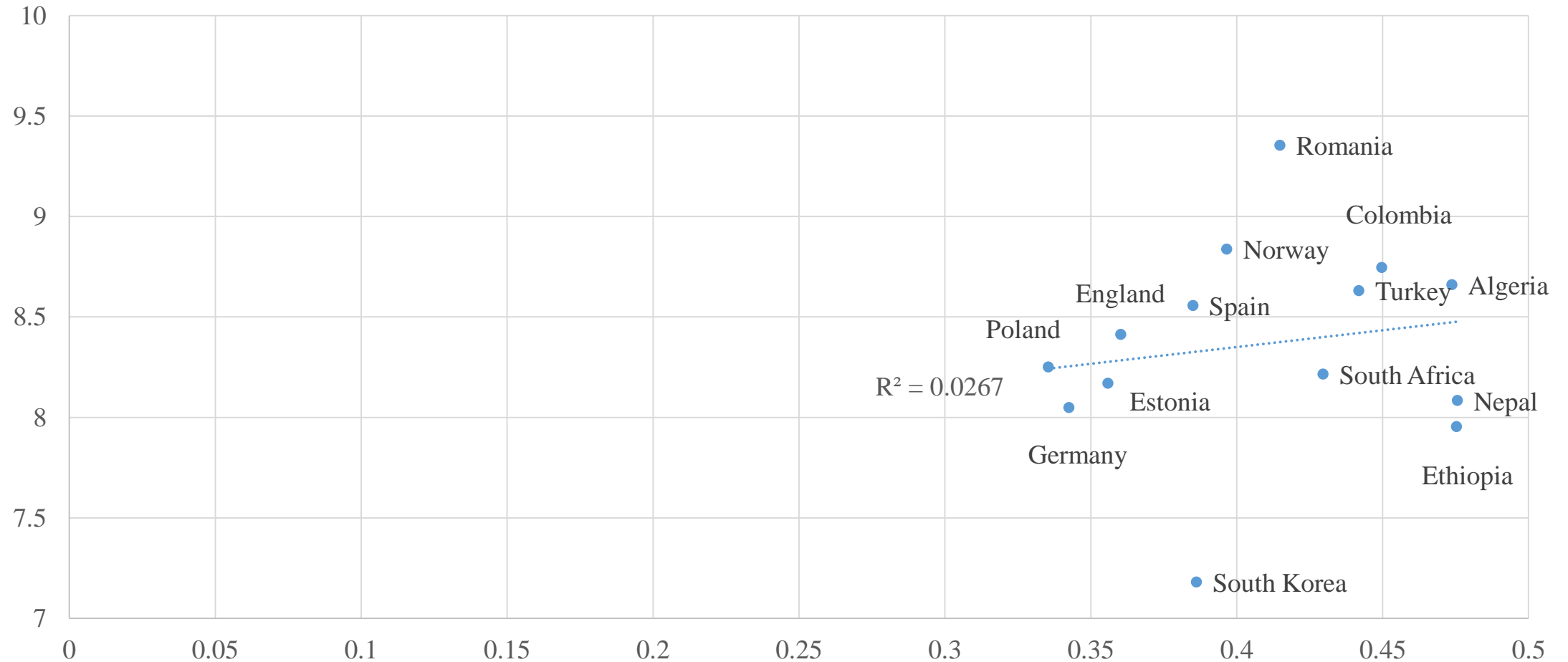


Learning

- I feel that I am learning a lot
- I like going to school

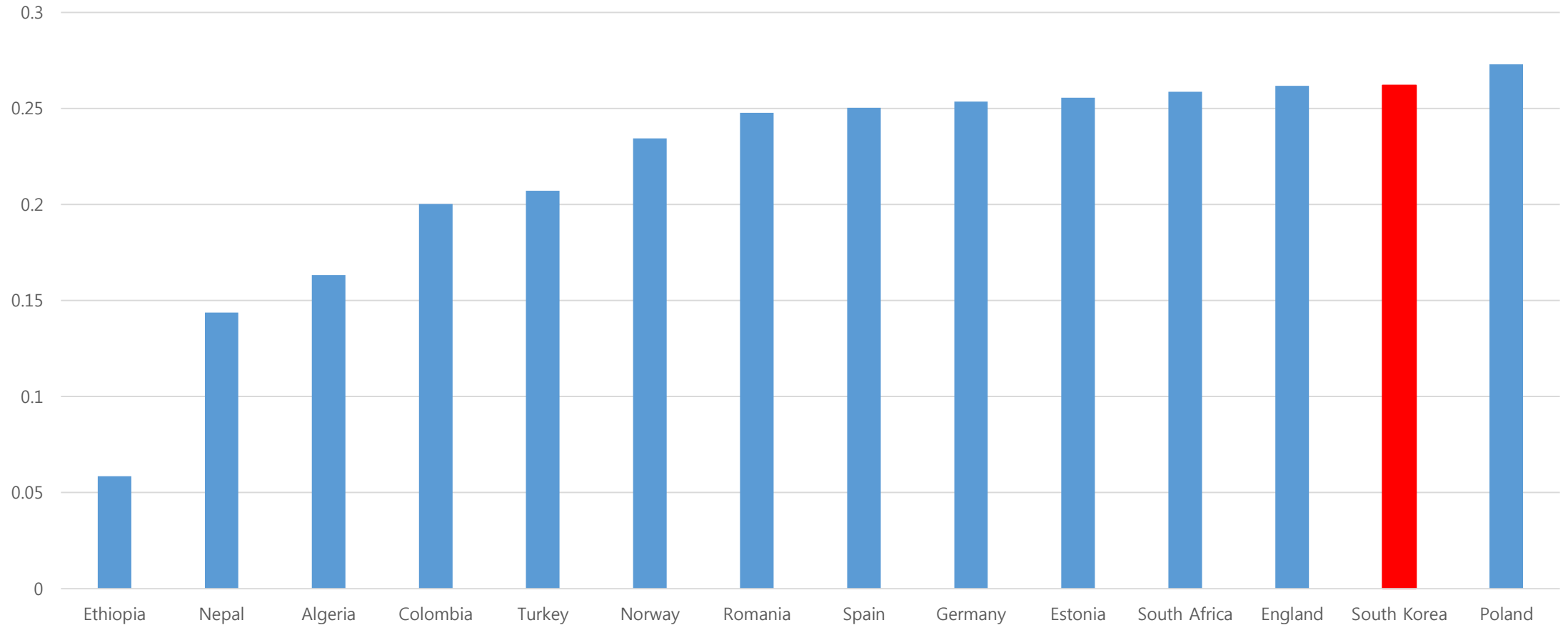


Learning-SLSS

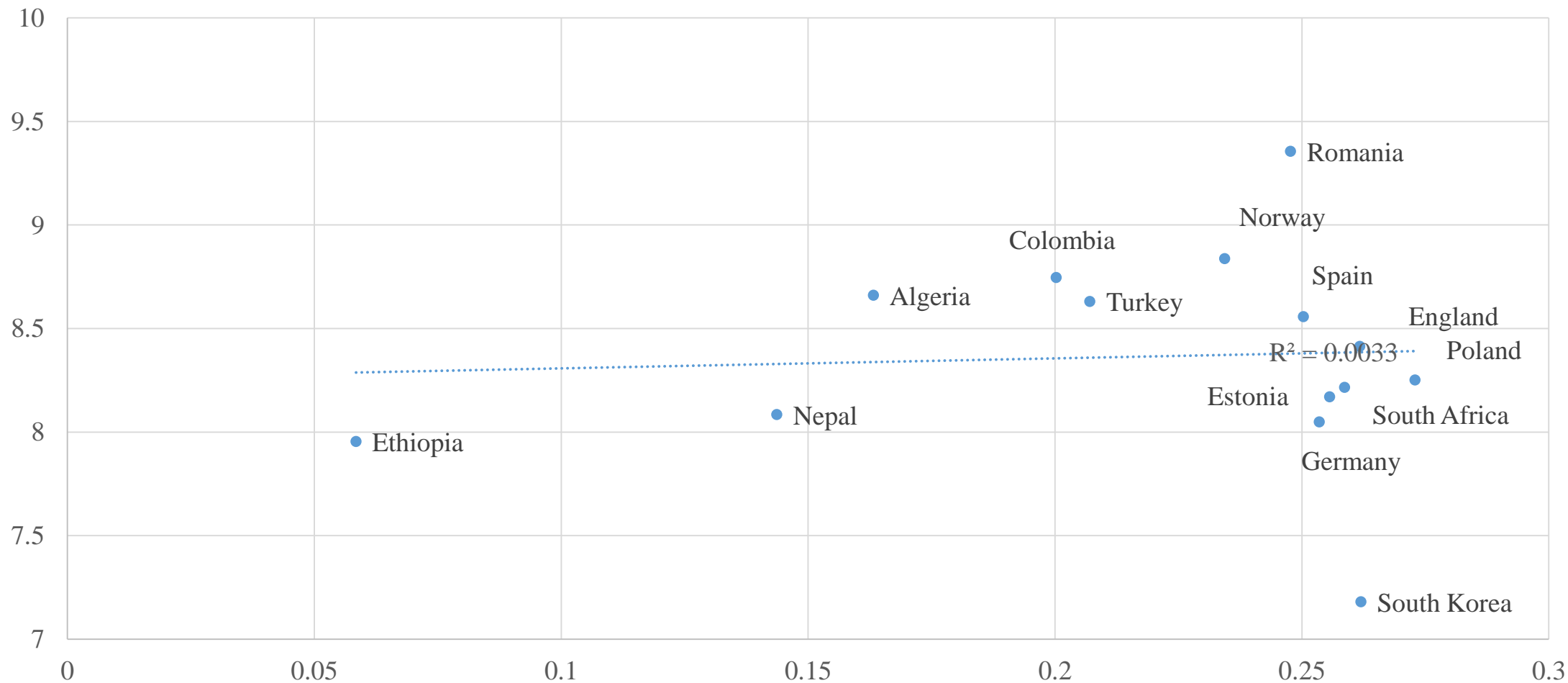


Money

- Clothes in good condition to go to school in
- Access to computer at home
- Access to Internet
- Mobile phone
- Your own room
- Books to read for fun
- A family car for transportation
- Your own stuff to listen to music
- A television at home that you can use

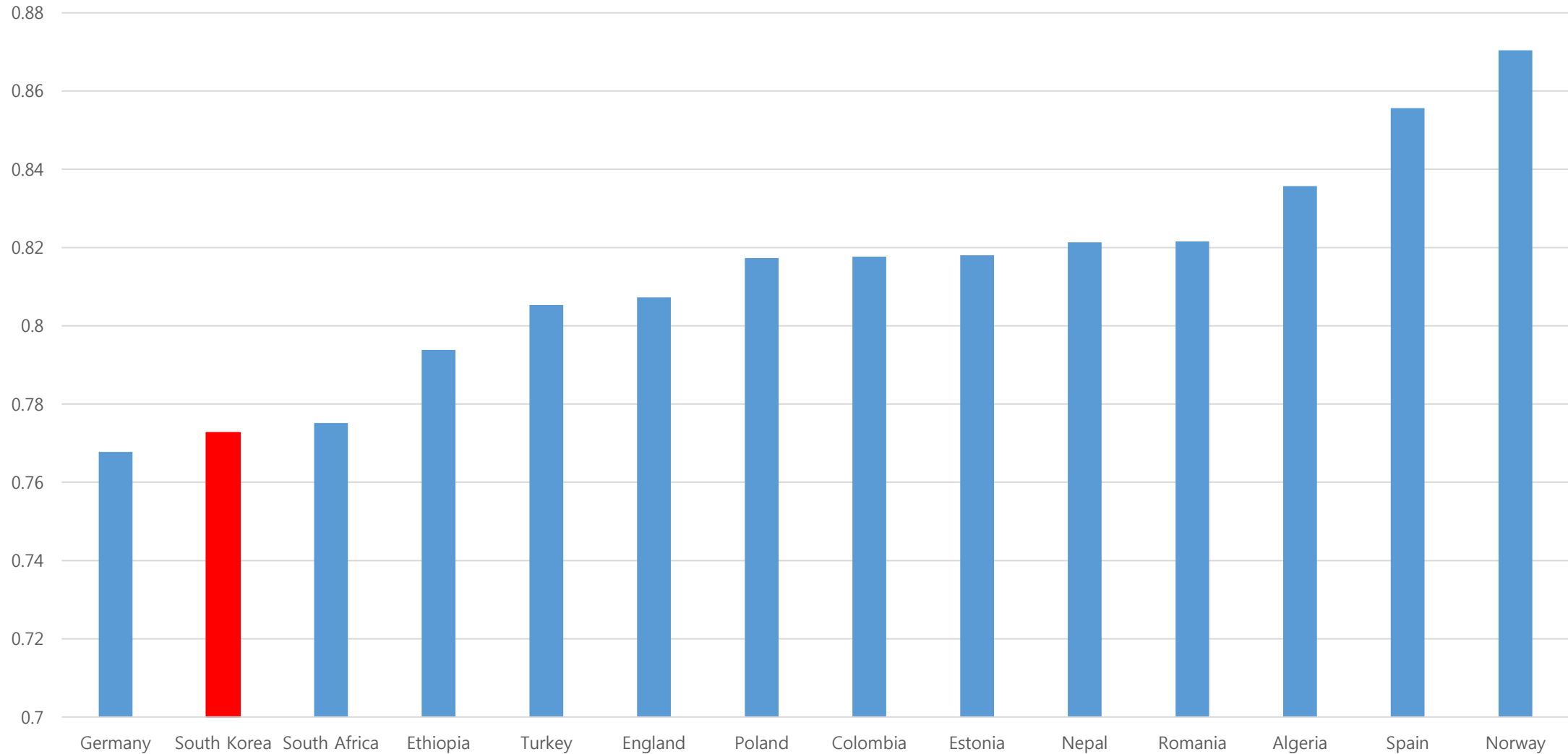


Money-SLSS

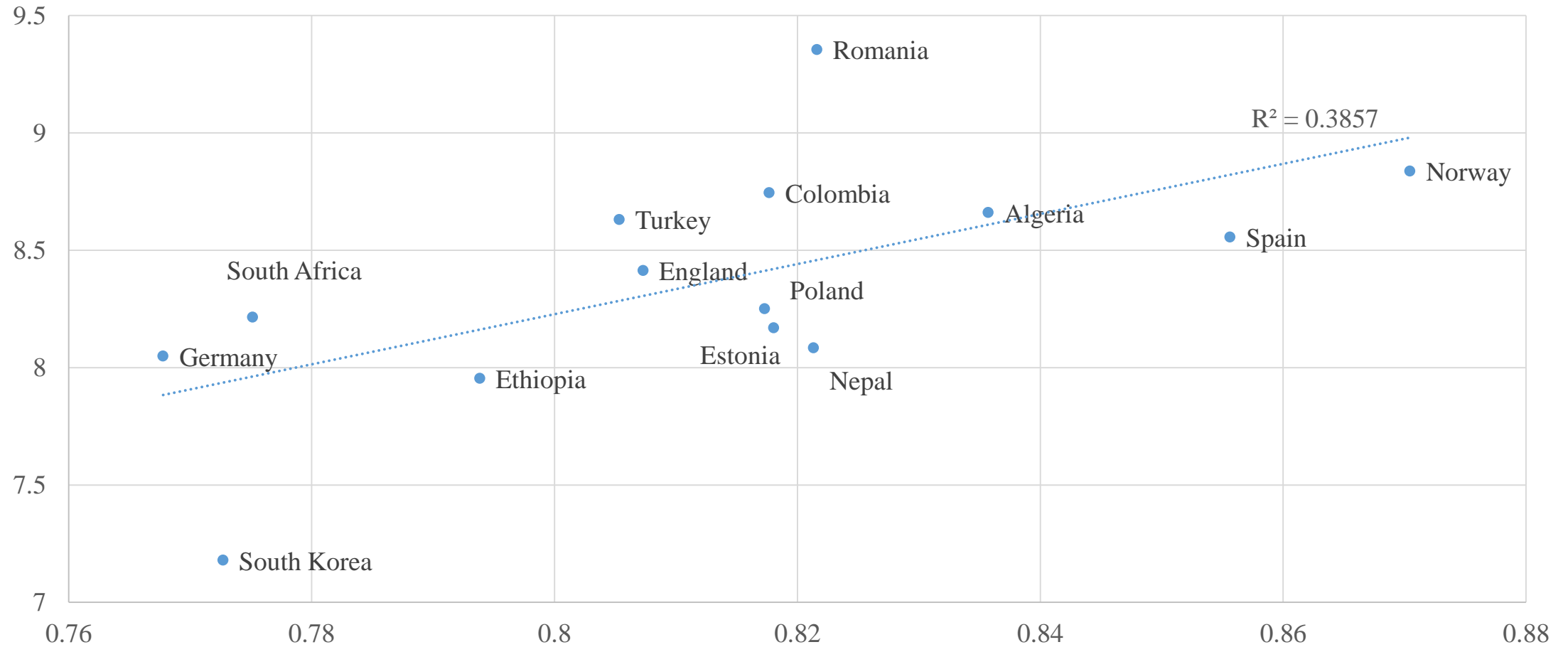


Relationship

- My parents (or the people who look after me) listen to me and take what I say into account
- My friends are usually nice to me
- My parents (or the people who look after me) treat me fairly
- My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account
- My teachers treat me fairly

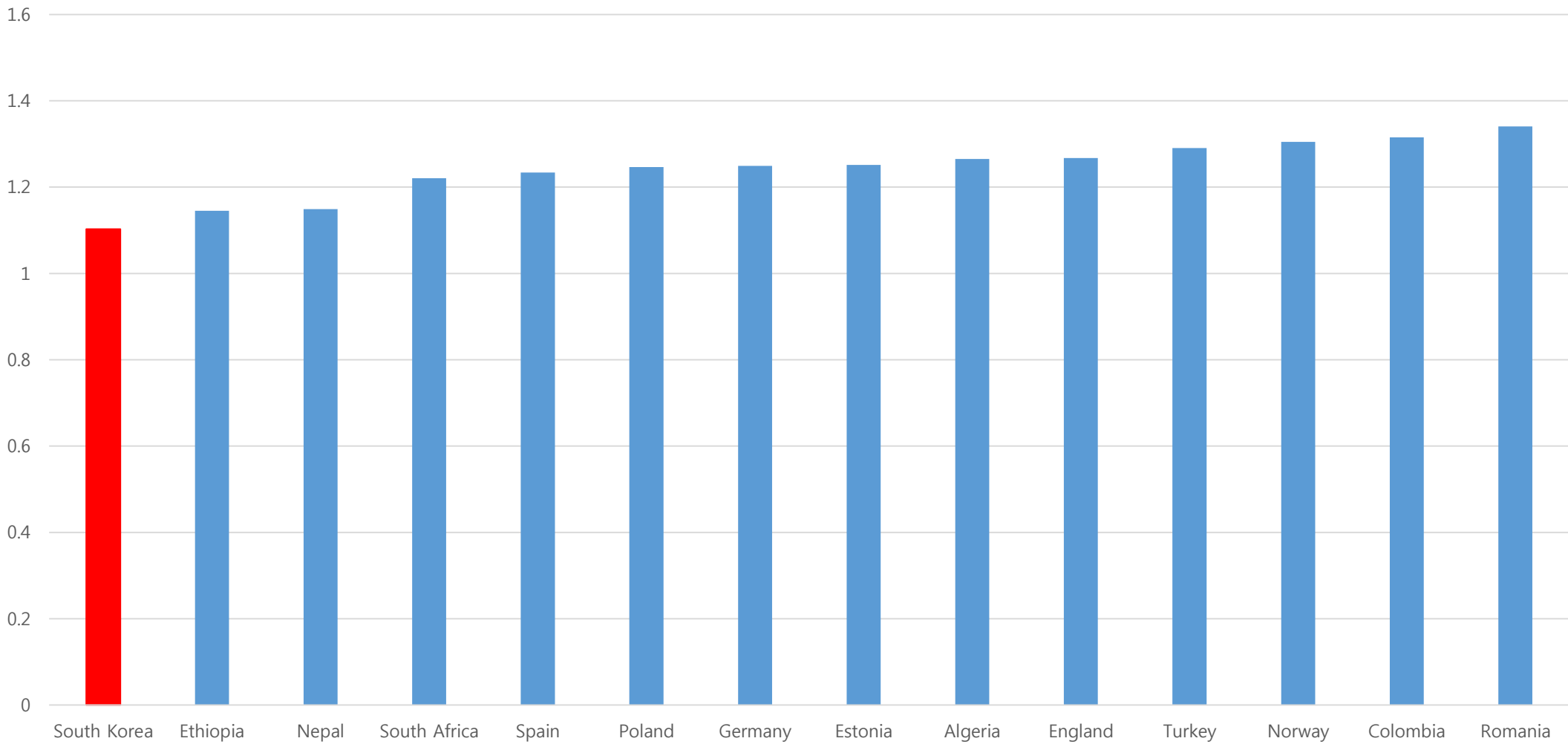


Relationship-SLSS

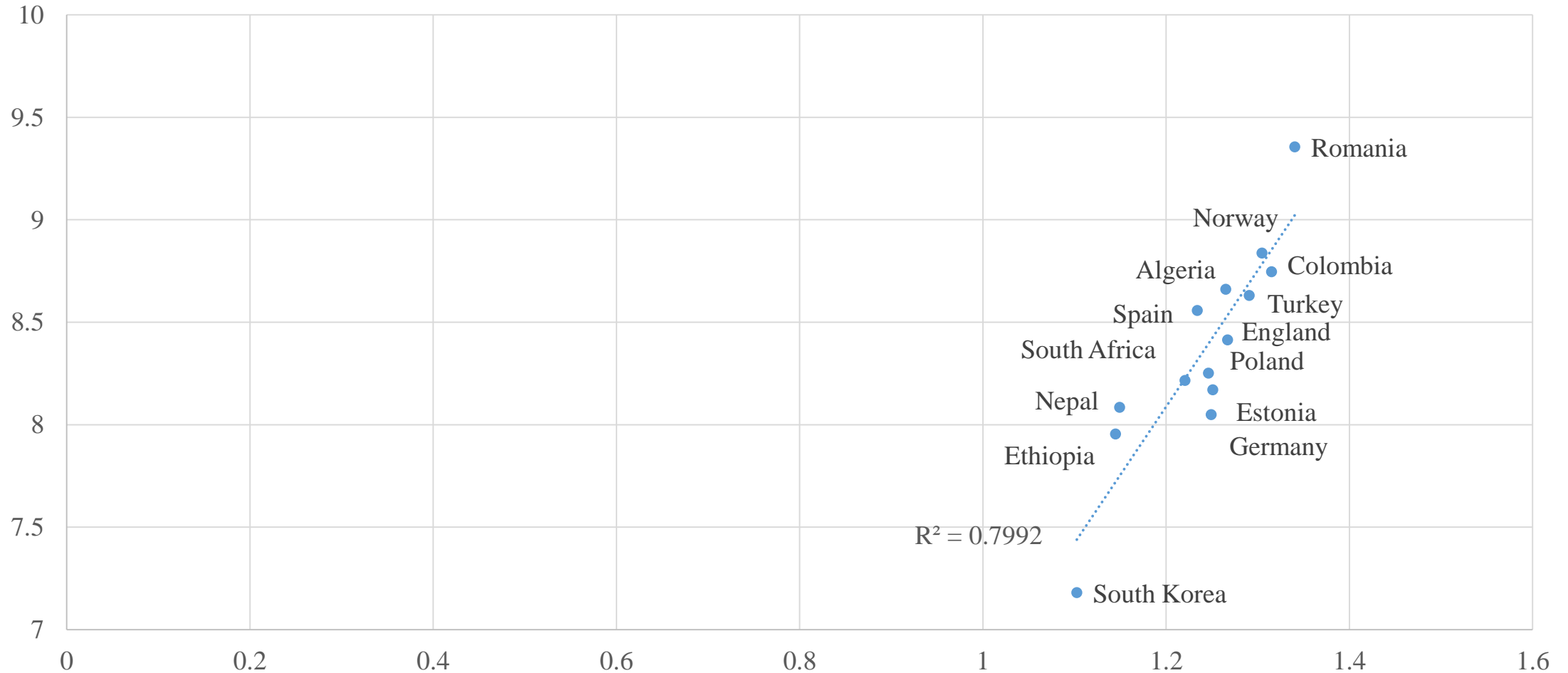


Freedom to choose

- I have enough choice about how I spend my time

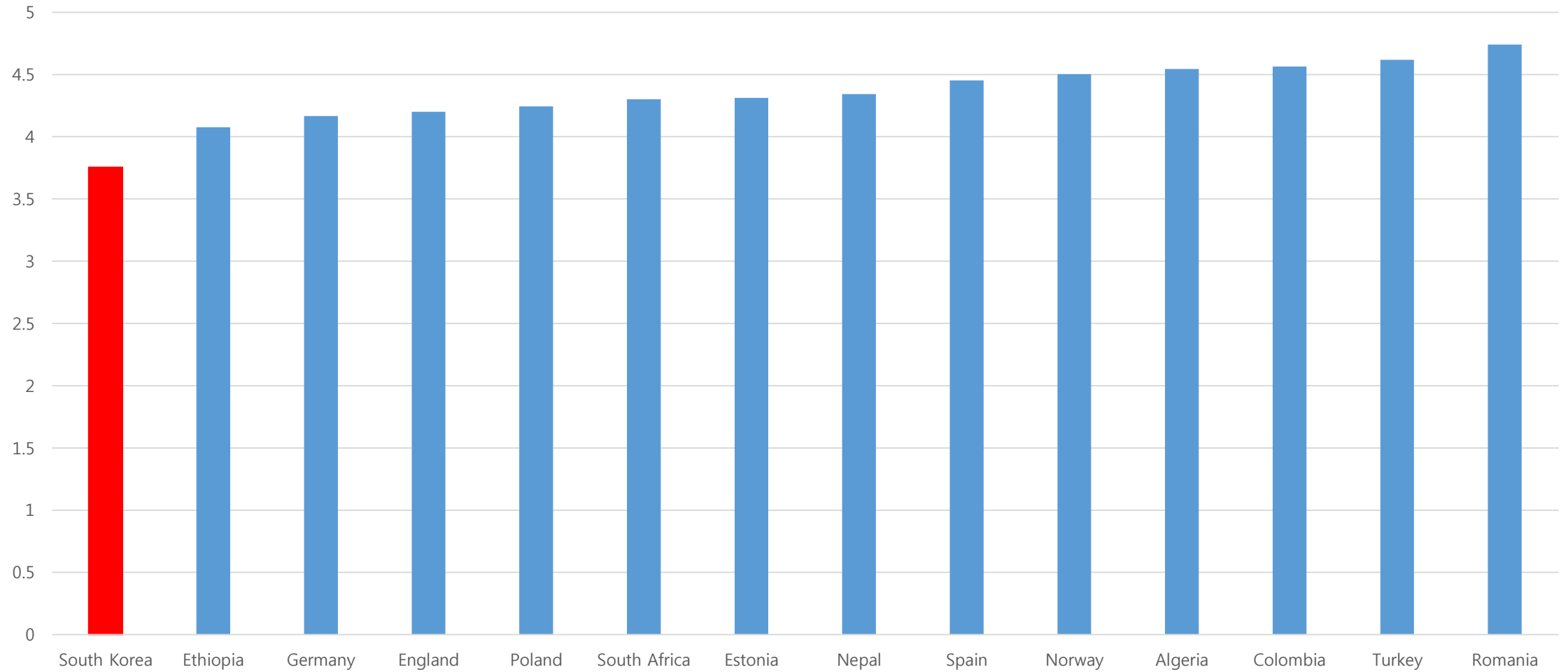


Freedom to choose-SLSS

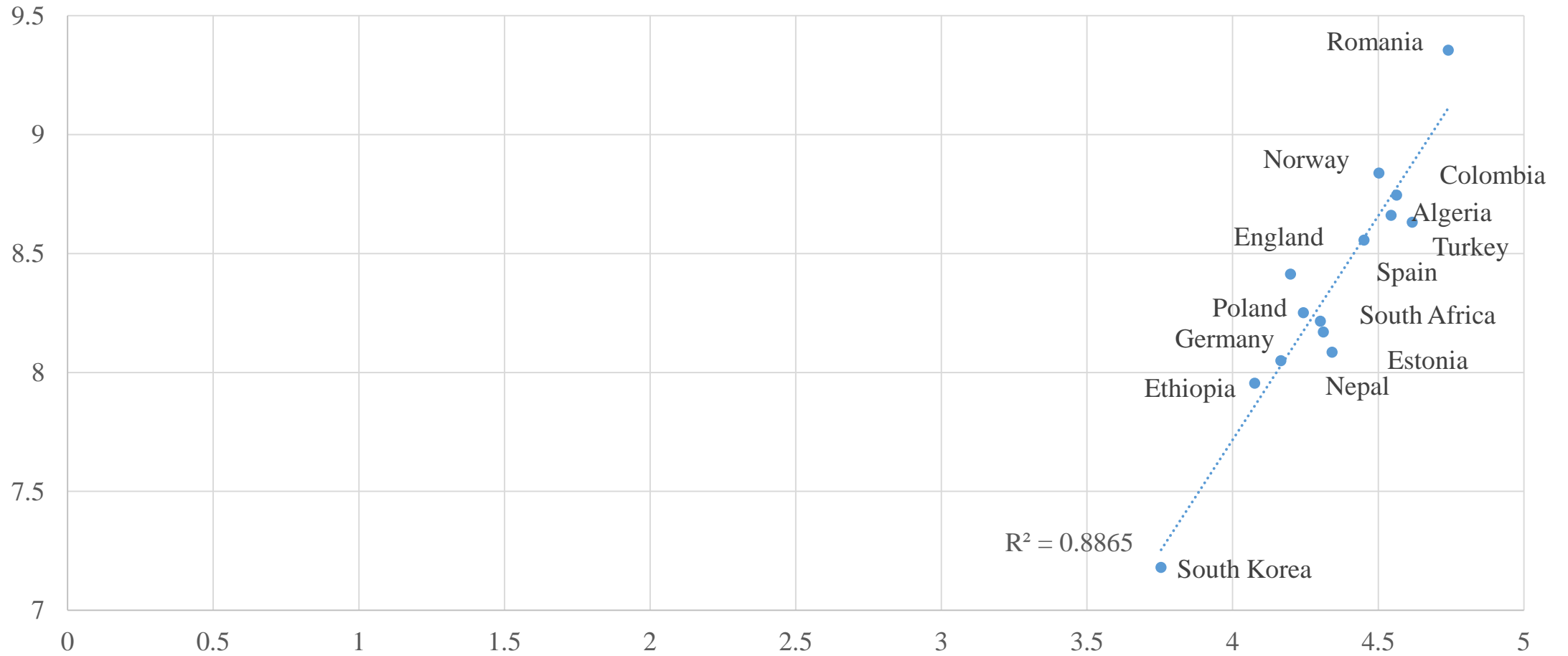


Self

- I like being the way I am
- I am good at managing my daily responsibilities
- People are generally pretty friendly towards me



Self-SLSS



Discussion

What matters to whom?



Discussion

- The results showed that the variations of children's SWB exist across countries.
 - South Korea, Nepal, and Ethiopia's children reported low level of SWB consistently.
 - But, why?
- Decomposition of SWB
 - We decomposed of SWB using the pooled-data, individual-level country data.
 - We divided differences of SWB between countries into the 'explained' and 'unexplained' portions.
 - The 'effects' of the 7 major factors are different across countries.

Discussion

- We can assume the ‘unexplained’ part (intercept and residuals) of SWB could be due to ‘reporting bias’.
- However, the differences in the ‘unexplained’ parts do not fully account for the observed SWB variations.
- Then, what matters really?

Different level of influences to ‘determine’ children’s SWB

- ‘Weak’ factors
 - Learning
 - Money
- ‘Moderate’ factors
 - The ‘unexplained’
 - Leisure
 - Environment
 - Relationship
- ‘Strong’ factors
 - Freedom to choose
 - Self

- In fact, the reason why Korea has the lowest level of SWB is due to the facts that Korean children have lower level of ‘self’ and ‘freedom to choose’
- Along with more obvious policy targets (such as learning, money, relationship, etc.), more attention is needed to how children view themselves and the choices they can make.



Thank you for your attention!

References

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