

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The role of valuing cultural diversity in children's endorsements of rights

Nana-Fatima T. Ozeto<sup>1</sup>  | Pascale Sophie Russell<sup>1</sup> | Martyn Barrett<sup>1</sup> |  
 Sonia Ingoglia<sup>2</sup>  | Nora Wiium<sup>3</sup> | Alida La Coco<sup>2</sup> | Cristiano Inguglia<sup>2</sup> |  
 Francesca Liga<sup>4</sup> | Maria Grazia Lo Cricchio<sup>5</sup> | Nicolò Maria Iannello<sup>6</sup> |  
 Harriet R. Tenenbaum<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK

<sup>2</sup>Psychology and Educational Science, University of Palermo, Palermo, Italy

<sup>3</sup>Department of Psychosocial Science, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

<sup>4</sup>Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Messina, Messina, Italy

<sup>5</sup>Department of Humanities, University of Basilicata, Potenza, Italy

<sup>6</sup>Department of Law, University of Palermo, Palermo, Italy

## Correspondence

Nana-Fatima T. Ozeto, School of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XH, UK.

Email: [n.ozeto@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:n.ozeto@surrey.ac.uk)

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## Abstract

Support for children's rights is greater among children raised in democratic environments. The present two studies examined children's endorsements and predictors of children's rights. Five democratic competences taken from the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture served as predictors. We tested the models in a sample of children raised in five European countries and a sample raised in an African country, seeking to extend our model beyond the Global North. In Study 1, we found four of these five competences, namely, higher valuing of cultural diversity, civic-mindedness, cultural openness and empathy significantly predicted higher endorsements of rights in children from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Romania and Spain (7–11-year-olds;  $N = 292$ ). In Study 2, we found higher valuing of cultural diversity significantly predicted higher endorsements of rights in Nigerian children (7–14-year-olds;  $N = 84$ ). Supporting Social Cognitive Domain Theory, children in both studies endorsed nurturance rights more than self-determination rights. Inclusion of children from the Global North and South enabled us to determine whether patterns of rights endorsements were similar for children from both samples. Overall, this research presents novel findings on the salience of valuing cultural diversity in support for children's rights.

## KEYWORDS

children's rights, social cognitive domain theory, valuing cultural diversity

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) aims to promote the rights of all children. Being the most ratified human rights treaty in history, it delineates the protection, provision

and participation of children, ensuring their best interests and the consideration of their evolving capacities (UNCRC, 1989). The UNCRC guarantees children's rights to nurturance and self-determination. Nurturance rights constitute rights involving child safety, provision for physical and psychological development, mostly provided for by

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authority figures (e.g., parents, schools, etc; Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008). Children's self-determination rights pertain to their autonomy and ability to make decisions concerning their lives (Ruck & Horn, 2008). These rights recognise children as autonomous, deserving of citizenship and having human rights, rather than being the property of their parents (Maillard, 2010). At the same time, children cannot advocate for their rights if they do not understand them. For this reason, we need to understand which rights children endorse and the predictors of these endorsements. The present research examines children's endorsements and predictors of children's rights in children from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Romania, Spain and Nigeria. Including children from a variety of countries may enable the development of models of children's rights endorsements relevant to children from more than one cultural community.

### 1.1 | Children's understanding of rights

Children begin to develop an understanding of rights typically between 6 and 8 years old (Helwig, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 1998; Melton, 1980, 1983). Young children (6–11-years old) often have misconceptions about what rights are, describing rights as privileges that can be removed (Melton, 1983; Ruck et al., 1998). By early adolescence, children begin to understand rights as fundamental entitlements (Ruck et al., 1998).

Although understanding rights varies with the developmental stages of childhood (late childhood to late adolescence), children support rights (Ruck et al., 2014). Younger children are more likely to prioritise nurturance rights over self-determination rights, while adolescents support both types of rights similarly (Ruck et al., 1998). These findings highlight that children endorse different types of rights at different developmental stages (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2006; Lahat et al., 2009; Ruck et al., 1998, 2002). According to Ruck et al. (1998), young children value protection over autonomy and may be more likely to prioritise nurturance rights over self-determination rights. Variations in endorsements suggest that support for rights depends on multiple factors, which may be explained by the Social Cognitive Domain Theory (SDT).

### 1.2 | Rights and Social Cognitive Domain Theory

The key theory that informs this research is the SDT (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 1983). SDT argues that children's reasoning about rights is domain-specific (Lahat et al., 2009; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2012). When choosing whether to endorse rights, children consider factors such as the type of right (nurturance or self-determination), identity of the child afforded the right and the context in which the right is embedded (e.g., home or school) (Ruck et al., 2017). Economic, social, cultural, political climate factors as well as their own experiences (e.g., family relationships) also play a part in children's endorsements of rights (Ben-Arieh et al., 2006; Peens & Louw, 2000; To et al., 2017). For instance, 9- to 13-year-old South African children endorsed rights

relating to child safety more than other rights, which might reflect heightened security risks in South Africa (Gilles et al., 2019). Children justified their endorsements based on the possible consequences of these rights not being met. Among maltreated children in Canadian state care, Peterson-Badali et al. (2008) found greater endorsements of children's rights to protection and access to basic needs than non-maltreated children. This difference reflected children's experiences of being deprived of such rights, indicating the importance of these rights in their lives.

### 1.3 | Predictors of children's rights

Despite recent attention to exploring children's understanding and endorsements of rights, less attention has been paid to the predictors of children's rights endorsements. So far, research exploring predictors has focused on the role of parental and school socialisation (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009; Peterson-Badali et al., 2004; To et al., 2017). For example, children who could voice their opinions at home were more likely to support rights, whereas children who reported having high parental authority in the home, showed less support (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009). Similarly, To et al. (2017) found children who reported more support of autonomy at school were more likely to support nurturance rights. Moreover, children who reported experiencing high maternal responsiveness at home were more likely to endorse both nurturance and self-determination rights (Peterson-Badali et al., 2004; To et al., 2017). Indeed, across 27 countries, adolescents' support for human rights was predicted by children's experience of democracy in their everyday lives (Torney-Purta et al., 2008). Thus, the more their environments, such as schools, embody a democratic climate, the more children endorse rights. Barrett et al. (2018) suggest that democratic climates should support the development of children's own democratic competences. However, whether children's own democratic competences predict their support for rights has not been studied.

### 1.4 | Democratic competences as predictors of rights endorsements

Democratic competences may be an arena for studying predictors of children's support for rights. Democratic competences are values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding required to perform civic duties and exercise rights effectively (Barrett, 2016). These competences underpin participation in democratic societies and provide a foundation for active citizenship. A benefit of studying children's rights from the perspective of children themselves is to facilitate their civic, legal and political engagement and recognise children as active citizens in a democratic society (Ben-Arieh et al., 2006; Melton & Limber, 1992). Although some researchers suggest no relationship between democracy and upholding human rights (Howard-Hassmann, 2005), Mihr (2009) argues that human rights are greater in societies that uphold democratic values. Supporting children's agency as active

citizens who understand and respect the rights of themselves and others begins in childhood (Flowers, 2009). Thus, children who possess higher democratic competences may have greater support for children's rights.

The Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) describes a set of 20 specific competences that individuals require for participation in democratic culture, which include *values*, *attitudes*, *skills* and *knowledge and critical understanding* (Barrett et al., 2018; for an overview, see Barrett, 2020a). The RFCDC postulates that adaptive behaviour in real-life situations usually requires the mobilisation, orchestration and application of a large set of the competences in a manner that is appropriate to the given situation. The RFCDC further posits that valuing human rights and cultural diversity lies at the heart of the 20 competences – without these two values, an individual will be unable to participate effectively in democratic situations. In other words, it is hypothesised that these two values form the core of the democratic competences. The present research investigates the extent to which the valuing of cultural diversity, as well as a subset of the other democratic competences postulated by the RFCDC, is empirically related to children's endorsements of rights.

For the characterisation of *values*, the RFCDC draws directly on the work of Schwartz (1992, 2006) and Schwartz et al. (2012). Values are general beliefs that a person holds about desirable goals in life. According to Schwartz, values are used as guiding principles that have trans-situational applicability that motivate action. People use their values as standards to evaluate actions, people and events across different situations (Barrett, 2020b). The present research examines children's rights in relation to the valuing of cultural diversity, which is represented in Schwartz's theory under the values heading of 'universalism-tolerance'. According to the RFCDC, valuing cultural diversity is entrenched in the belief that other cultural affiliations, cultural variability, pluralism of perspectives and practices should be appreciated (Barrett, 2016, 2021). Barrett (2022) argues that valuing cultural diversity should be a universal moral principle in intercultural relations because it underpins multiple rights, especially those that appear in declarations of human rights. This study examined the extent to which valuing cultural diversity predicts children's endorsements of rights.

From the perspective of the RFCDC, *attitudes* are the overall mental orientations that an individual adopts towards someone or something (e.g., a person, an issue, etc.). Attitudes consist of four components: a belief, a feeling, an evaluation (either positive or negative) and a tendency to behave in a way towards someone or something (Barrett, 2020b). Attitudes such as openness to cultural otherness, civic-mindedness and responsibility are posited by the RFCDC as democratic competences. These three competences are linked to human rights (Saavedra, 2016; MWhite, 2010) and may predict children's endorsements of rights. First, openness to cultural otherness consists of one's openness to differences in beliefs, cultural practices and views (Barrett et al., 2018). Positive attitudes to cultural otherness involve protecting the practices and perspectives of people who are culturally different from oneself (Nesdale & Todd, 2000). Second,

civic-mindedness is an attitude towards a community or social group and a willingness to be an active citizen contributing to the community (Smart et al., 2000). Third, responsibility relates to one's ability to recognise and act towards one's duties based on one's values and the ability to hold oneself accountable (Barrett, 2016). Responsibility also encompasses the ability to recognise the consequences of one's actions (Ballet et al., 2007). Civic-mindedness and responsibility are linked to the promotion of human rights through a justice orientation (Saavedra, 2016). Saavedra (2016) argues that civic-mindedness promotes people to embrace rights and civic duties related to reducing prejudice and inequalities as well as promoting rights and diverse perspectives in societies.

Accompanying values and attitudes, *skills* such as empathy may also predict endorsement of rights. Empathy is the ability to understand other people's feelings and perspectives (Hoffman, 2000). The RFCDC (Barrett et al., 2018) considers empathy as needed to understand the world from the perspectives of others. Empathy is central to understanding cultural differences across views, beliefs and interests (Batson & Ahmad, 2009). In relation to rights, dispositional empathy (i.e., the ability to imagine and experience others' feelings and cognitions) is significantly related to higher endorsements of human rights in adults (McFarland, 2010; McFarland & Mathews, 2005). In a review exploring cultural and individual differences in support for human rights, McFarland (2015) suggests that dispositional empathy may be a positive predictor of concern for human rights.

Although research suggests links between democratic competences and human rights (Donders, 2010; McFarland & Mathews, 2005; Saavedra, 2016; Skogly, 2009; White, 2010), most studies have been conducted with adult populations. Adults' democratic competences are linked to their human rights values. However, the role these competences play in children's endorsements of their own rights has not previously been explored, which is the focus of the present research.

## 1.5 | The present studies

Children in democratic environments support children's rights more than children in non-democratic environments (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009; To et al., 2017). Similarly, adults with higher democratic competences value human rights more than those with lower competences (McFarland & Mathews, 2005). However, the role of democratic competences in children's support for their own rights has not been explored. In the present studies, we investigated whether children were more likely to endorse nurturance or self-determination rights. Second, we examined predictors of the endorsement of children's rights, using the five democratic competences of valuing cultural diversity, openness to cultural otherness, civic-mindedness, responsibility and empathy. Considering reasoning about rights is situation-specific, we explore rights individually to understand situational variability (different scenarios/types of rights) in rights endorsements and predictors of these endorsements. In Study 1, we explore the contribution of democratic competences in a sample of children from five

European countries: Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Spain and Romania to their endorsements of four rights. In Study 2, we explore whether these democratic competences predict specific rights endorsements for children from Nigeria. We explored both samples to begin to develop theory about the predictors of children's rights that is not specific to children living in the Global North.

## 2 | STUDY 1

The modern conception of children's rights rapidly developed in the context of Western Europe and North America (Stearns, 2017). However, there is a global commitment to protecting the rights of children witnessed through the ratification of the UNCRC by almost all UN member states (Ruck et al., 2017). The near universal ratification signals the importance of understanding children's rights from multiple perspectives.

Study 1 explores the role of democratic competences in endorsements of children's rights in children from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Romania and Spain. The RFCDC (Barrett et al., 2018) was designed to be relevant to children residing in countries that are members of the Council of Europe, an international organisation promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These countries differ in many ways while still being members of the Council of Europe. For example, Bulgaria and Romania have similar socio-cultural factors, such as their experience of individualism and power distance. According to Hofstede's cultural dimension, Bulgaria and Romania have low levels of individualism (30) and high levels of power distance (Bulgaria, 70; Romania, 90) indicating the emphasis placed on family group systems and an uneven distribution of power (Castiglioni et al., 2016; Hofstede Insights, n.d.-a,n.d.-e; Kotzeva, 2020). Additionally, Bulgaria and Romania are both upper-middle-income countries with GDP per capita of approximately \$13,772 and \$15,892, respectively (World Bank, 2022).

In contrast, Spain reports a more moderate level of individualism (51), while Norway and Italy are considered individualist countries with indices of 76 and 69, respectively. However, Italy and Spain are more similar regarding power distance, having moderately uneven distributions of power (Italy, 50; Spain, 57; Hofstede Insights, n.d.-b, n.d.-f). Conversely, Norway reports low levels of power distance (31; Hofstede Insights, n.d.-d). According to the World Bank (2022), Italy, Norway and Spain are high-income countries with GDP per capita of \$34,158, \$106,148 and \$29,350, respectively.

In addition to socio-economic factors, politically, these countries have unique histories leading to their current democratic societies. Bulgaria and Romania share a history of communism and have only recently adopted a democratic style of government (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011). Spain has similarly had a recent transition to a democracy, with its history entrenched in a dictatorship (Tusell, 2011). Conversely, Norway and Italy have longer established democracies (La Malfa, 1977; Østerud & Selle, 2006).

Notwithstanding these socio-economic and political differences, these countries hold similar values in relation to human rights and

democracy. Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Spain and Romania are democratic countries and institutionally, operate similar styles of government as seen in the European Economic Area (European Free Trade Association, 2019). In addition, all five countries are members of the Council of Europe. Their membership signifies these countries' principles in relation to emphasising democratic values and protecting human rights.

The scope of children's rights in Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Spain and Romania is based on the UNCRC (Bainham, 2009; Cisneros & Vanina, 2013; Haugen, 2010; Todorova, 2009; Woodhouse, 2014). These countries have commitments to protecting children's rights, which is reflected in legislation aligned with the UNCRC. Some characteristics in these countries may create variations in how children's rights are actualised. However, each country is committed to protecting children's rights and has put in the effort to promote democratic competences in their educational systems (Malak-Minkiewicz & Torney-Purta, 2021). In Bulgaria, Italy and Spain, civic education is embedded in school curricula emphasizing teaching of active citizenship, democratic values and human rights (Petrova, 2021; Sanchez-Agusti & Miguel-Revilla, 2020). Norway emphasises an educational system that fosters key democratic competences such as cultural openness and valuing cultural diversity (Børhaug, 2014). Romania promotes the teaching of democratic values, human rights and active citizenship (Borovic, 2009).

In addition, the Ministers of Education in these countries have endorsed the RFCDC as a framework for citizenship education (Barrett, 2020a). These emphases on democratic competences and human rights provide a backdrop to explore how the democratic competences of children from these countries may predict their support for children's rights. Hence, we consider children from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Spain and Romania as one sample.

In Study 1, we explore children's endorsements of rights. In addition, we investigate whether five competences (valuing cultural diversity, cultural openness, civic-mindedness, responsibility and empathy) contribute to children's endorsements of rights. Differing from some previous research on predictors of rights (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009; Peterson-Badali et al., 2004), we explore rights individually. Given that reasoning about rights is domain-specific (Ruck et al., 1998), contributions may differ based on the context (e.g., self-determination or nurturance) by which each right is evaluated. We chose to explore rights that have been explored in previous research (Cherney, 2010; Cherney & Shing, 2008; Helwig, 1995a; Melton, 1980; Ruck et al., 2011). Specifically, we investigate children's endorsements of the right to parental emotional availability, right to protection, freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

Based on research (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2006; Lahat et al., 2009; Ruck et al., 1998, 2002), we expected that children's endorsements of nurturance rights would be significantly higher than their endorsements of self-determination rights. Second, we hypothesised that higher levels of democratic competences would predict higher endorsements of children's rights. Based on SDT (Turiel, 1983), we expected that democratic competence predictors would vary across different types of rights.

**TABLE 1** Nurturance and self-determination vignettes for Study 1.

Type of right	
<b>Nurturance rights</b>	<b>Self-determination rights</b>
<i>Right to parental emotional availability</i> Kelly had an argument with her best friend and was very upset. She wanted to talk to her parents about it, but they were too busy. Should Kelly's parents have to listen?	<i>Freedom of expression</i> Mark wrote a story for the school newspaper. In his story, he said that he didn't like the school rules. The principal told him that he couldn't print his story. Should Mark be allowed to print his story?
<i>Right to protection</i> Terry's parents are never there when he gets home from school. Terry doesn't like being left home alone. Should Terry's parents have to be there when he gets home from school?	<i>Freedom of religion</i> Becky doesn't want to practice her parents' religion. She wants to try some other religions or maybe have no religion at all. Should Becky be allowed to choose her religion?

## 2.1 | Method

### 2.1.1 | Participants

Participants were 292 ( $n = 145$  boys) children from Bulgaria ( $n = 40$ , 26 boys; range = 8.75–11.50 years;  $M = 9$  years 3 months,  $SD = 5.41$  months), Italy ( $n = 53$ , 27 boys; range = 8.58–9.66 years;  $M = 9$  years,  $SD = 3.19$  months), Norway ( $n = 62$ , 22 boys; range = 9.76–10.83 years;  $M = 10$  years 3 months,  $SD = 3.30$  months), Romania ( $n = 66$ , 33 boys; range = 7.25–9.58 years;  $M = 8$  years 4 months,  $SD = 4.74$  months) and Spain ( $n = 71$ , 34 boys; range = 9.75–11.33 years;  $M = 10$  years 4 months,  $SD = 4.42$  months) with a mean age of 9 years, 6 months ( $SD = 10.55$  months). Participants were in grade 3 in their respective countries.

Participants were recruited from schools that had either signed up to participate in a funded project on democratic competences (ERASMUS+ Project 2018-1-IT02-KA201-048371) or comparison schools. Schools in countries eligible for Erasmus+ funding could apply. As a condition of funding, intervention schools found a comparison school for testing measures in the same municipality. Data were taken from pretest data, in which there were no differences between intervention and comparison schools on any measures (Tenenbaum et al., 2023).

### 2.1.2 | Materials

Materials were developed in English and translated into participants' respective languages by a native speaker. Translations were checked over by two other native speakers for accuracy and clarity.

#### *Child rights endorsements*

Participants' endorsements of children's rights were assessed with four hypothetical vignettes adapted from previous research (Ruck et al., 2011). Children's rights are afforded to children through authority figures (Cherney et al., 2009; Peterson-Badali et al., 2004). At the same time, the UNCRC (1989) views children as autonomous beings. Thus, vignettes depicted rights that conflicted with authority (parental or school; Table 1 displays the vignettes). Two vignettes depicted a child character who wished to exercise a nurturance right. The other two vignettes depicted a child character who wished to exercise a self-

determination right. After each vignette was presented, participants rated whether the character should be allowed to exercise the right on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*).

#### *Valuing cultural diversity*

To measure participants' valuing of cultural diversity ( $\alpha = .88$ ), participants rated their responses on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*) developed by Tenenbaum et al. (2019). There were eight questions (e.g., People who speak other languages should be treated the same way as everyone else).

#### *Civic-mindedness*

Participants' civic-mindedness ( $\alpha = .63$ ) was measured with nine items (e.g., I have a responsibility to help keep my school clean) based on White and Mistry (2016). Participants rated their responses on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*).

#### *Openness to cultural otherness (cultural openness)*

Participants' cultural openness ( $\alpha = .67$ ) was measured with five items (e.g., Do you think you would like to meet someone from another country?) on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Items were based on Abbott and Cameron (2014) and further developed by Tenenbaum et al. (2019).

#### *Responsibility*

We measured responsibility ( $\alpha = .63$ ) using five-item (e.g., If I hurt someone's feelings, I apologise) scale developed by Tenenbaum et al. (2019).

#### *Empathy*

Empathy ( $\alpha = .70$ ) was measured with five items (e.g., I often feel sorry people who don't have the things I have) developed by Davis (1983). Participants rated their responses on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*).

### 2.1.3 | Procedure

The study received favourable ethical opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee (2019 43 FHMS). Parents provided written consent and children provided assent. Children were informed that



they were going to answer questions, that there were no right or wrong answers, and that their responses were confidential. Each testing session consisted of three to four children and a researcher. In these sessions, each child was handed out a booklet containing the questionnaire and a pencil. The researcher read the questions aloud to the group of children, while each child recorded their responses in the questionnaire booklet. Children were told not to discuss their answers during the testing session. Data collection took place in June 2019 at their respective schools.

## 2.2 | Results

### 2.2.1 | Data cleaning

Missing values analysis indicated that less than 0.5% of values were missing from the data set. Three participants did not respond to the vignette on freedom of expression, two to the vignette on freedom of religion and one to the vignette on the right to protection. For analyses related to variations in rights endorsements (repeated measures analysis of variance [ANOVA]), these participants were excluded from all analyses. For predictors (regressions), these participants were only excluded from analyses related to the rights for which they had missing data.

In the current study, the age distribution of participants differed among the five countries (see Study 1 method section for age ranges across individual countries). Even though children were in the same school year, children in Norway and Spain begin formal schooling later than children in the other countries. The age distribution in our sample is dependent on participants' countries. Therefore, we could not consider age differences in addition to country-specific contextual differences because these variables are confounded. Hence, we do not include age or country in our analyses.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2.2 | Endorsements of children's rights

To test differences between participants' endorsements of nurturance and self-determination rights, a repeated measures one-way ANOVA with four levels was conducted where the vignettes served as the repeated measures factor.

Mauchly's test indicated the assumption of sphericity had been violated  $\chi^2(5) = 44.14, p < .001$ . The estimate of departure from sphericity was  $\epsilon = .91$ ; therefore, Huynh-Feldt corrected results are reported. There was a significant main effect of vignettes,  $F(2.75, 784.28) = 132.24, p < .001, \omega^2 = .32$ , showing that children differed in their endorsements across vignettes. To determine the differences, we conducted post hoc paired sample *t*-tests with Bonferroni corrected alpha of .008 (.05 divided by 6 comparisons).

Post hoc comparisons showed that children were more likely to endorse nurturance than self-determination rights. Children sup-

**TABLE 2** Mean levels of children's endorsements by type of vignette for Study 1.

Vignettes	Mean endorsement	SD
<i>Nurturance rights</i>		
1.Right to parental emotional availability	4.44 <sub>a</sub>	.98
2.Right to protection	3.93 <sub>b</sub>	1.10
<i>Self-determination rights</i>		
1.Freedom of religion	3.36 <sub>c</sub>	1.51
2.Freedom of expression	2.58 <sub>d</sub>	1.32

Note: Values in the mean endorsement column with different subscripts are significantly different to one another.

ported the right to parental emotional availability over other rights, followed by the right to protection. Among self-determination rights, children were more likely to endorse the right to freedom of religion than freedom of expression (see Table 2). These differences further strengthen our reason to explore predictors of rights individually.

### 2.2.3 | Predictors of children's rights endorsements<sup>2</sup>

Before conducting further analyses, the data were confirmed to meet assumptions of a linear multiple regression. Cook's distance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were used to check for outliers and an absence of multicollinearity amongst predictors (Field, 2018). Table 3 displays descriptive statistics.

To test our second hypothesis that valuing cultural diversity, cultural openness, civic-mindedness, responsibility and empathy would be statistically significant predictors of participants' endorsements of children's rights, we conducted four linear multiple regressions using the enter method. Children's reasoning about rights is domain-specific (Ruck et al., 1998). Therefore, we investigated predictors of each right separately. Table 4 shows individual effects of multiple regressions, including unstandardised B and coefficients' standard errors.

#### *Rights to parental emotional availability*

The regression model was significant,  $F(5, 286) = 8.54, p < .001, R^2 = .13$ . Valuing cultural diversity, civic-mindedness and empathy were significant predictors of participants' endorsements of the right to parental emotional availability. Higher valuing of cultural diversity, civic-mindedness and empathy predicted higher endorsements of this right. However, cultural openness and responsibility did not significantly contribute to endorsements of this right.

#### *Right to protection*

When the endorsement of the right to protection was the dependent variable, the overall model was significant,  $F(5, 285) = 2.45, p = .04, R^2 = .04$ . However, no individual predictors were significant.

<sup>1</sup> We report between-country endorsements of rights, controlling for age, in the supporting information.

<sup>2</sup> We report hierarchical regressions controlling for demographic variables (age and sex) in the Supporting Information.

**TABLE 3** Means, standard deviations and correlation matrix for Study 1.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Right to PEA	4.44	0.98	1								
2. Right to protection	3.93	1.10	.09	1							
3. Right to freedom of expression	2.58	1.32	.15*	-.10	1						
4. Right to freedom of religion	3.36	1.51	.16**	-.02	.36**	1					
5. Valuing cultural diversity	4.40	0.77	.30**	-.01	.30**	.26**	1				
6. Cultural openness	4.22	0.65	.19**	.10	.24**	.10	.46**	1			
7. Civic-mindedness	4.48	0.48	.23**	.13*	.08	.02	.24**	.43**	1		
8. Responsibility	4.36	0.59	.12*	.13*	.06	.05	.25**	.33**	.43**	1	
9. Empathy	4.40	0.63	.25**	.15*	.09	.08	.31**	.31**	.42**	.35**	1

Abbreviation: PEA, parental emotional availability; SD, Standard deviation.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ .

**TABLE 4** Regression coefficients of competences on rights endorsements for Study 1.

Variables	Right to PEA		Right to protection		Freedom of expression		Freedom of religion	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	1.24*	0.59	2.14**	0.69	0.09	0.80	1.63	0.93
Cultural diversity	0.30***	0.08	-0.14	0.10	0.46***	0.11	0.54***	0.13
Cultural openness	-0.003	0.10	0.10	0.12	0.32*	0.14	-0.01	0.16
Civic-mindedness	0.28*	0.14	0.10	.16	-0.05	0.19	-0.16	0.22
Responsibility	-0.07	0.11	0.15	.13	-0.12	0.15	-0.04	0.17
Empathy	0.21*	0.10	0.20	0.12	-0.03	0.14	0.06	0.16
R <sup>2</sup>	0.13***		0.04*		0.11***		0.07***	

Abbreviations: PEA, parental emotional availability; SE, standard error.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

#### Freedom of expression

The model was significant,  $F(5, 283) = 6.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .11$  and explained 10.9% of the variance. Higher levels of valuing cultural diversity and cultural openness significantly predicted higher endorsements of freedom of expression. Civic-mindedness, responsibility and empathy were not significant predictors.

#### Freedom of religion

The regression model was significant,  $F(5, 284) = 4.41$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $R^2 = .07$ . Valuing cultural diversity was a unique predictor of this right. Higher levels of valuing cultural diversity predicted higher endorsements of freedom of religion.

## 2.3 | Discussion

In Study 1, we investigated differences in children's endorsements of specific nurturance and self-determination rights. We also examined the role of democratic competences in endorsements of rights among a sample of children from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Romania and Spain. We were interested in situational variability in endorsements of specific rights and considered different types of rights individually (Gilles

et al., 2019). Our findings regarding the endorsements of rights aligned with research, which has found that children are more likely to endorse nurturance rights than self-determination rights (Ruck et al., 2017). There were variations between the different vignettes, with children endorsing the nurturance right to parental emotional availability significantly more than the nurturance right to protection. The variations in endorsements of specific nurturance and self-determination rights align with research finding variations in children's endorsements of rights in different scenarios (Gilles et al., 2019).

We investigated the role of democratic competences in children's endorsements of rights. Research has highlighted a relationship between democratic environments and children's support for rights (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009; To et al., 2017). We found support for the role of specific democratic competences in children's willingness to endorse different rights. Children's valuing of cultural diversity, cultural openness, civic-mindedness and empathy significantly contributed to endorsements of one or more of the rights to parental emotional availability, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion. As predicted, children who reported higher levels of these competences were more likely to endorse the associated rights. Consistent with the expectation that the competences would contribute to rights differently, the models showed that the role of each competence

in rights endorsements varied depending on the right being evaluated. These findings lend support to SDT's suggestion that children consider multiple factors when judging social issues (Smetana, 2006).

Valuing cultural diversity and cultural openness contributed to endorsements of freedom of expression. Openness to cultural otherness differs from valuing cultural diversity as a guiding principle because the attitude consists of more specific beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards others who are culturally different from the self (Barrett, 2020b). These attitudes further influence the nature of interaction between people and those who are different from them (Barrett, 2020a). That said, the possibility that the attitude of cultural openness serves a value-expressive function (Maio, 2017) is supported by the positive correlation between the valuing of cultural diversity and the attitude of cultural openness. The role of valuing cultural diversity in both freedom of expression and freedom of religion may reflect an appreciation of these differences. However, the additional contribution of cultural openness in endorsements of freedom of expression may suggest a willingness to find out more about differences in people's opinions.

Valuing cultural diversity, civic-mindedness and empathy contributed to the right to parental emotional availability. McFarland and Mathews (2005) found dispositional empathy was related to adults' commitment to human rights. Empathy is associated with a deep concern for others, whilst civic-mindedness is linked to the willingness to contribute to the community through civic duties (Barrett, 2021; McFarland, 2010). Children endorsed this right above all other rights, which may highlight the importance of receiving emotional care from their parents. Valuing cultural diversity, empathy and civic-mindedness may be related to the concern for others being treated fairly, whereas empathy and civic-mindedness may reflect a willingness to help.

Responsibility did not significantly predict rights endorsements. This finding was unexpected because there is a relationship between responsibility and promotion of human rights (Skogly 2009; White, 2010). Perhaps this finding is influenced by the variance explained by other predictors, considering the significant correlations between responsibility and the rights to parental emotional availability and protection. Alternatively, the conceptualisation of responsibility may have contributed to this finding. Research that has found relationships between responsibility and human rights has explored the role of social responsibility in relation to human rights among adult populations (Skogly, 2009; M. White, 2010). Our measure of responsibility was based on the RFCDC (Barrett et al., 2018), which places emphasis on individual responsibilities. The scale used to measure responsibility focused on a child's attitude towards their own obligations in their personal behaviours rather than towards their social responsibility. Social responsibility is linked to democratic relations, justice and civic engagement and could potentially be a predictor of rights values (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011). In the RFCDC, social responsibility (as opposed to personal responsibility) is more closely aligned with the concept of civic-mindedness, which contributed to the right to parental emotional availability.

Although the patterns of predictors varied depending on the right being explored, we found that valuing cultural diversity was the most

consistent predictor of rights endorsements. Valuing cultural diversity contributed to the most rights and accounted for the most variance in each regression model. These findings, therefore, additionally highlight the importance of the valuing of cultural diversity in children's endorsements of child rights.

Notwithstanding the current findings, there are limitations in Study 1. Although children across the countries were in the same school year, the age at which they begin formal schooling is different. As a result, children across countries having different ages, limits our ability to account for cross-country and age differences. Additionally, because the sample sizes in each country were less than 80 participants, we lacked statistical power to calculate structural equivalences of scales in the individual countries (Boosma & Hoogland, 2001; Byrne & van de Vijver, 2010). Various environmental, social, economic and political factors may contribute to variations in children's endorsements of rights across cultures and countries (Helwig, 1995b; Lahat et al., 2009; Ruck et al., 1998). The socio-political histories may create unique experiences for country-specific differences, such as Bulgaria and Romania being post-communist countries, or Spain previously being under a dictatorship (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011; Tusell, 2011). Even if these historical experiences do not, perhaps other socio-economic experiences, like differences in cultural dimensions and wealth (Dimitrova et al., 2021), may lead to country-level variations. The inability to explore potential differences is a limitation of Study 1.

At the same time, however, all these countries are democratic, are members of the Council of Europe, are signatories of the European Convention on Human Rights and are legally subject to rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. Additionally, the Ministers of Education of these countries have endorsed the RFCDC as a framework for citizenship education (Barrett, 2020a; Council of Europe, 2016). From a practical perspective, by including children from a range of European countries, we know that strengthening certain competences (e.g., valuing cultural diversity) should lead to greater rights endorsement than strengthening other competences (e.g., responsibility) in children from five European countries.

Another limitation is that these findings may not be applicable to children living outside Europe in non-industrialised countries. Researchers in psychology have long called for research into people living in countries that are not WEIRD (western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic) because findings often do not generalise to people in non-WEIRD countries (Henrich et al., 2010). To try to expand psychological research, we focused on children in the Global South. In Study 2, more specifically, we chose to explore children from Nigeria, because it has the largest population of any African country.

### 3 | STUDY 2

Study 2 extended Study 1 by examining the endorsements of rights and competences in children from Nigeria, the country with the largest population in Africa. The near universal ratification of the UNCRC suggests that children's rights may be extended to societies beyond the Global North (Ruck et al., 2017). However, research on children's rights



is predominantly framed in the context of western societies, creating a gap in the literature (for some exceptions, see Ben-Arieh & Khoury-Kassabri, 2008; Lahat et al., 2009; To et al., 2017). African countries are underrepresented in psychological research (Mpofu, 2010) and in the rights literature except for South Africa (Peens & Louw, 2000; Ruck et al., 2011). Conducting rights research in societies beyond the Global North may contribute to the development of policies that implement child rights globally. Study 2 included children from Nigeria.

Children from Nigeria may view rights differently than children from other societies. The UNCRC emphasises children's rights as autonomous rather than paternalistic. Children's roles and responsibilities vary in their cultural communities. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Nigeria has a high-power distance score (80), where members of the society accept that power is distributed unevenly (Hofstede Insights, n.d.-c; Usoro & Abiagam, 2018). Nigerian families emphasise respect for authority (Ollendick et al., 1996). Individualism indices are low (30; Hofstede Insights, n.d.-c). These may reflect an emphasis on family group systems where precedence may be given to the family as a group over the individual members (Chiu & Hong, 2006).

Although Nigeria ratified the UNCRC, with a domestic version adopted into law at the federal level as the Child Rights Act 2003 (CRA), the CRA has not been adopted in all states (Ogunniyi, 2018). The lack of enforcement of the CRA nationwide has been influenced by Nigeria's plural legal system. The co-existence of customary and statutory laws provides irregularities in the definition of children under the law (Ajanwachuku, 2016; Okafor & Nnubia, 2013; Onibokun, 1986). These irregularities limit the implementation of basic child rights like the right to education, with Nigeria reporting one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). Concurrently, Nigeria is facing difficulties in ensuring child security, with an increase in security threats across the country. Children are at the forefront of the insecurity, suffering attacks at school, kidnappings, etc (Onapajo, 2017; Tanko, 2021). Governmental agencies established to help are not often child-focused (Onapajo, 2020). These barriers may make it difficult to actualise the rights of children's provision, protection, and participation under the CRA and the UNCRC.

Study 2 was conducted for several reasons. First, we wanted to see if patterns in endorsements from Study 1 would be similar in children in Study 2. For example, we wanted to examine whether Nigerian children would also endorse nurturance more than self-determination rights and whether valuing cultural diversity remained a predictor of rights. Based on the findings of Study 1, as well as the findings of Ruck et al. (1998), we hypothesised that endorsements of nurturance rights would be higher than endorsements of self-determination rights. Second, Study 2 explored further the role of democratic competences in children's endorsements of rights by exploring four additional rights. Schwartz's theory of basic human values suggests values are motivational goals that guide people's actions. People who prioritise values of universalism have core values for cultural diversity and are more likely to advocate for equality and social justice (Schwartz, 1992). Therefore, in Study 2, we tested whether valuing cultural diversity contributed the most to children's endorsements of rights, like in Study 1. Therefore,

we expected that higher levels of democratic competences would contribute to higher rights endorsements, with valuing cultural diversity contributing the most to higher endorsements of children's rights.

### 3.1 | Method

#### 3.1.1 | Participants

Participants were 84 children ( $n = 47$  girls) ranging in age from 7 to 14 years ( $M = 9$  years; 10.8 months,  $SD = 22.53$  months) from a school in Abuja, Nigeria. Abuja is the fourth largest urban area in the country (Abubakar, 2014). Abuja Municipal Area is the most developed of the six municipal areas in the territory, with good infrastructure in housing and roads.

#### 3.1.2 | Materials

Materials were administered in English, the official language of Nigeria. Study 2 used the same materials as Study 1. However, to reflect the Nigerian culture, the authors made a few adaptations to the vignettes as well as the scales measuring valuing cultural diversity and openness to cultural otherness in consultation with school officials.

For vignettes, characters' names were changed to Nigerian names, having a boy and girl from each major ethnic group in Nigeria: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. Two characters were left with English names, which is common in Nigeria as a former British Colony. Significant changes were made to the vignette depicting freedom of religion. We changed the vignette from choice as indicative of freedom of religion, to practice as freedom of religion to increase cultural sensitivity and to limit parents' resistance to allowing their children participate. School officials were concerned that parents would not allow their children to participate without these changes. The right to practice one's religion is a valid right to explore in Nigeria because this right has been limited in school settings, although mostly in the case of Muslim girls' observance of the hijab (Dachen, 2017). For instance, in 2014, Lagos state's high court banned the hijab in public primary and secondary schools (Oyeleke, 2022).

School officials mentioned that some of the original scales in Study 1 were based on European experiences of multiculturalism. Thus, the scales measuring valuing cultural diversity and openness to cultural otherness were adapted to include references to tribal, state and religious differences reflecting cultural diversity in Nigeria. Other measures of democratic competences did not need adaptation.

#### *Child rights endorsements*

Children's rights endorsements were assessed with eight hypothetical vignettes adapted from Ruck et al. (2011). Four vignettes depicted a child character seeking a nurturance right that conflicted with parental or school authority. The other four vignettes involved similar scenarios, but the character sought a self-determination right. Table 5 displays vignettes. After each vignette, participants rated their agreement from

**TABLE 5** Nurturance and self-determination vignettes for Study 2.

Type of right	
<b>Nurturance rights</b>	<b>Self-determination rights</b>
<i>Right to parental emotional availability</i> Isioma had an argument with her best friend and was very upset. She wanted to talk to her parents about it, but they were too busy. Should Isioma's parents have to listen?	<i>Freedom of Expression</i> Mark wrote a story for the school newspaper. In his story, he said that he did not like the school rules. The principal told him that he could not print his story. Should Mark be allowed to print his story?
<i>Right to protection</i> Kanayo's parents are never there when he gets home from school. Kanayo does not like being left home alone. Should Kanayo's parents have to be there when he gets home from school?	<i>Right to privacy</i> Elizabeth kept a diary, and she said that nobody else could read it, not even her parents. Should Elizabeth's parents be allowed to read it? †
<i>Freedom from excessive chores</i> Jummai's parents want her to look after her brother after school, but Jummai wants to play. Should Jummai have to look after her brother? †	<i>Freedom of Religion</i> Folake wants to wear her religious accessory at school. However, she has been informed by the principal that it is not a part of the school uniform and will not be allowed. Should Folake be allowed to wear her religious accessory at school?
<i>Right to education support</i> Tanimu was having trouble with his math homework. He needed his parents to help him with it. But his parents said that he has to do it himself. Should Tanimu's parents have to help him?	<i>Freedom of association</i> Toyin wanted to go and visit his friends, but his parents would not let him because they didn't like his friends. Should Toyin be allowed to visit his friends?

Note: † Indicates items that were reverse coded.

not at all (1) to very much (5) on whether the character should be afforded the right.

#### *Valuing cultural diversity*

To measure the valuing of cultural diversity ( $\alpha = .83$ ), we used the same scale as Study 1. However, four additional items were included depicting tribes, states and religions relevant to Nigeria (e.g., 'People from other states should be treated the same way as everyone else'). The final scale included 12 items.

#### *Openness to cultural otherness (cultural openness)*

We measured openness to cultural otherness ( $\alpha = .76$ ) using an 11-item scale. This included the five items used in Study 1 and six items developed relating to tribes, states and religions to make the scale more culturally relevant to Nigeria (e.g., 'Do you think learning about people from other tribes is an important part of your school education?').

#### *Civic-mindedness*

We measured civic-mindedness ( $\alpha = .65$ ) using the nine-item scale from Study 1.

#### *Responsibility*

We measured responsibility ( $\alpha = .73$ ) using the five-item scale from Study 1.

#### *Empathy*

We measured empathy ( $\alpha = .67$ ) using the five-item scale from Study 1.

### 3.1.3 | Procedure

The study received favourable ethical opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee (FHMS 21-22 128 EGA) and was

pre-registered on OSF registries (<https://osf.io/4s79f>). Schools sent information sheets and consent forms to parents. Interested parents returned signed consent forms to the schools, who returned these to the researcher. Children provided assent before completing questionnaires.

Children completed the questionnaires in groups of 6–8. In each testing session, the researcher read each question aloud whilst the children recorded their responses on a sheet. Children were informed there were no right or wrong answers and told not to discuss their answers during the testing session. Children received a certificate of participation a.

## 3.2 | Results

### 3.2.1 | Data cleaning

The right to privacy and freedom from excessive chores were reverse-coded to prioritise the child's right in each scenario. Missing values analysis showed less than 0.5% of the values were missing from the data set. One participant had a missing rating for the right to privacy and was excluded from all analyses exploring differences in rights endorsements. For predictors of rights, the participant was excluded from analyses related to the right to privacy.

### 3.2.2 | Children's rights endorsements

To test the differences between participants' endorsements of nurturance and self-determination rights, a repeated measures one-way ANOVA with eight levels was conducted, where the vignettes served as the repeated measures factor.

**TABLE 6** Mean levels of children's endorsements by vignettes for Study 2.

Vignettes	Mean endorsements	SD
<i>Nurturance rights</i>		
1. Right to protection	4.01 <sub>a</sub>	1.40
2. Right to educational support	3.71 <sub>a</sub>	1.57
3. Right to parental emotional availability	3.54 <sub>a,b</sub>	1.68
4. Freedom from excessive chores	1.86 <sub>e</sub>	1.28
<i>Self-determination rights</i>		
1. Right to privacy	3.76 <sub>a</sub>	1.64
2. Freedom of religion	3.20 <sub>b,c</sub>	1.83
3. Freedom of expression	2.53 <sub>c,d</sub>	1.72
4. Freedom of association	2.04 <sub>d,e</sub>	1.39

Note: Values in the mean endorsement column with different subscripts are significantly different to one another.

The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of vignettes,  $F(7, 574) = 25.55, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .23$ , showing that children differed in their endorsements across vignettes. To determine the differences between vignettes, we conducted post hoc paired sample t-tests with Bonferroni corrected alpha of .001 (.05 divided by 28 comparisons).

Post hoc comparisons showed that children were more likely to endorse a child's right to protection, privacy, educational support and emotional support than all other rights. Endorsements of freedom of religion did not significantly differ from children's endorsements of the right to parental emotional availability and freedom of expression. The right to association and freedom from excessive chores were endorsed less frequently than in all other situations. Children endorsed the right to protection significantly higher than freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom from excessive chores (see Table 6).

### 3.2.3 | Predictors of rights endorsements

Before conducting further analyses, the data were confirmed to meet assumptions of a linear multiple regression. Cook's distance and VIF were used to check for outliers (Field et al., 2018). Further investigation using bivariate correlations (Pearson's  $r$ ) showed an absence of multicollinearity between predictors (Table 7 displays descriptive statistics).

To test the hypotheses, eight hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted, based on pre-registered statistical analyses. We chose hierarchical regressions to assess whether valuing cultural diversity contributed the most to children's endorsements of rights. The criterion variables were each of the rights. In the first block of each analysis, valuing cultural diversity was entered as a predictor. In block two, cultural openness, civic-mindedness, responsibility and empathy were included as predictors. Table 8 displays results of the regression models. Only four of the eight regressions yielded significant results.

#### *Freedom of expression*

The first model was significant,  $R^2 = .10, F(1, 82) = 8.79, p = .004$ . Children who reported higher valuing of cultural diversity endorsed a higher level of the character child's right to freedom of expression. The second step of the regression that included cultural openness, civic-mindedness, responsibility and empathy did not lead to a significant increase in the model variance  $\Delta R^2 = .06, \Delta F(4, 78) = 1.50, p = .21$ .

#### *Right to privacy*

The first model was significant,  $R^2 = .07, F(1, 81) = 6.09, p = .016$ . Higher valuing of cultural diversity was a significant predictor of higher endorsement of the right to privacy. The second block did not account for any increase in the variance,  $\Delta R^2 = .08, \Delta F(4, 77) = 1.90, p = .12$ .

#### *Right to parental emotional availability*

The first block was significant,  $R^2 = 0.13, F(1, 82) = 11.73, p < .001$ . The second block where cultural openness, civic-mindedness and responsibility were included led to a significant increase in the variance,  $\Delta R^2 = .11, \Delta F(4, 78) = 2.79, p = .03$ . The second model was statistically significant,  $F(5, 78) = 4.79, p < .001, R^2 = 0.24$  with valuing cultural diversity positively predicting children's endorsement of the right to parental emotional availability.

#### *Right to parental educational support*

The initial model was significant,  $R^2 = .15, F(1, 82) = 14.00, p < .001$ . Valuing cultural diversity was a significant predictor of participants' endorsement of the child's right to receive parental educational support. The inclusion of cultural openness, civic-mindedness, responsibility and empathy did not lead to a significant increase in the variance accounted for by the model  $\Delta R^2 = .05, \Delta F(4, 78) = 1.13, p = .35$ .

## 3.3 | Discussion

In Study 2, we predicted that Nigerian children would have higher endorsements of nurturance than self-determination rights. We investigated the role of specific democratic competences in children's rights endorsements. We expected that higher levels of competences would contribute to children's willingness to endorse rights. We additionally predicted that valuing cultural diversity would contribute the most to children's endorsements of rights.

Aligning with previous research (Ruck et al., 2017), we found that Nigerian children were more likely to endorse nurturance than self-determination rights. However, there were two exceptions. The right to privacy, a self-determination right, was endorsed significantly more than other self-determination rights. In fact, this right was endorsed similarly to nurturance rights such as the right to protection, educational support and parental emotional availability. Conversely, the nurturance right, freedom from excessive chores, was the least endorsed right, with children more likely to endorse all self-determination rights over this right.

The high endorsement of the right to privacy have been found in South Africa. Gilles et al. (2019) found South African children endorsed

**TABLE 7** Mean, standard deviations, and correlations for Study 2.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Freedom of expression	2.51	1.72	1												
2.Right to privacy	3.76	1.64	.22*	1											
3.Freedom of religion	3.20	1.83	.16	.07	1										
4.Freedom of association	2.04	1.39	.07	.07	.10	1									
5.Right to PEA	3.54	1.68	.14	.10	-.01	.14	1								
6.Right to protection	4.01	1.40	-.07	.06	.13	-.15	-.16	1							
7.Freedom from EC	1.86	1.28	.12	.01	-.01	.16	.05	.08	1						
8.Right to PES	3.71	1.57	.13	-.06	-.05	.20	.21	-.11	.14	1					
9.Cultural diversity	4.11	0.81	.31**	.27*	-.09	.07	.36**	-.06	-.02	.38**	1				
10.Cultural openness	4.04	0.71	.24*	.14	-.05	-.03	.06	.16	-.03	.24*	.65**	1			
11.Civic-mindedness	4.40	0.55	.20	.17	.06	-.14	-.02	.01	.02	.06	.43**	.42**	1		
12.Responsibility	4.22	0.69	-.18	-.25*	-.10	-.23*	-.26*	.024	-.21	-.07	.21	.26*	.28*	1	
13.Empathy	4.57	0.56	.03	.02	.23*	-.05	-.03	-.01	-.16	.20	.30**	.22*	.38**	.47**	1

Abbreviations: EC, excessive chores; PEA, parental emotional availability; PES, parental educational support; SD, standard deviation.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**TABLE 8** Regression coefficients of democratic competences on rights endorsements for Study 2.

Variables	Right to PEA		Right to PES		Right to protection		Freedom from EC		Freedom of expression		Freedom of religion		Right to privacy		Freedom of association	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
<b>Model 1</b>																
R <sup>2</sup>	0.13***		0.15***		0.00		0.00		0.10*		0.01		0.07*		0.004	
Constant	0.53	0.89	0.67	0.83	4.47**	0.80	1.96**	.73	-0.20	0.93	2.33*	1.04	1.57	0.91	1.58	0.79
Cultural D	0.73***	0.21	0.74***	0.20	-0.11	0.19	-0.03	.17	0.66**	0.22	0.21	0.25	0.53*	0.22	0.11	0.19
<b>Model 2</b>																
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.11*		0.04		0.08		0.06		0.06		0.11		0.08		0.08	
Constant	4.56**	1.68	1.11	1.62	3.42*	1.54	3.36*	1.42	0.85	1.81	1.13	1.98	2.87	1.75	3.98	1.54
Cultural D	1.12***	0.29	0.66*	0.28	-0.55*	0.27	-0.07	.25	0.43	0.33	0.15	0.34	0.38	0.30	0.19	0.27
Cultural O	-0.48	0.33	0.17	0.32	0.77*	0.30	0.02*	.28	0.26	0.35	-0.31	0.39	0.06	0.34	0.01	0.30
Civic M	-0.33	0.36	-0.46	0.35	-0.08	0.33	0.33	.31	0.48	0.39	0.07	0.43	0.48	0.38	-0.40	0.33
Responsibility	-0.47	0.29	-0.35	0.21	-0.16	0.27	-0.38	.25	-0.55	0.31	-0.62	0.34	-0.71*	0.30	-0.47	0.26
Empathy	-0.06	0.36	0.58	0.35	0.17	0.33	-0.25	.31	-0.20	0.39	1.09*	0.42	-0.01	0.37	0.22	0.33

Abbreviations: EC, excessive chores; PEA, parental emotional availability; PES, parental educational support; SE, standard error.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

this right more than other self-determination rights and similarly to nurturance rights. Children's justifications for their endorsements of the right to privacy were based on moral reasoning. Shmueli and Blecher-Prigat (2011) describe the right to privacy in children as becoming more complicated because safeguarding children is sometimes synonymous with monitoring them. However, privacy gives one autonomy and control over information about oneself and whether to share personal information. Children seem to value this self-determination right cross-culturally (Gilles et al., 2019; Livingstone, 2006).

The low endorsements of freedom from excessive chores, a nurturance right, differs from previous research. For instance, Gilles et al. (2019) found South African children endorsed freedom from excessive chores similarly to other nurturance rights. This variation may be due to the situation in which this right is embedded because it differs from that explored by Gilles and colleagues (2019). In their study, the situation revealed that the non-affordance of this right came at a direct cost to the child's well-being. Children justified endorsements based on the consequences of this right not being met. Considering the high-power distance in Nigeria, children may feel obliged to listen to authority.

Osaiyuwu et al. (2022) found that Nigerian children who were told to engage in street trading by parents or older family members believed they had a duty to obey their parents/elders irrespective of the situation. However, the reasoning behind these low endorsements in the current study is unclear because we did not examine reasoning.

In relation to the predictors of rights endorsements, findings from Study 2 differed from those of Study 1 because we found only one of the competences contributed significantly to Nigerian children's willingness to endorse rights. In the absence of multicollinearity, we suspect this may be due to the small sample size, which is a limitation of Study 2. However, supporting our hypothesis, valuing cultural diversity was the most important predictor. This finding strengthens the conclusion from Study 1 on the importance of valuing of cultural diversity in children's endorsements of children's rights.

The only discrepancy found between Study 1 and Study 2 in the contribution of valuing cultural diversity to rights endorsements was regarding the right to freedom of religion. The operationalisation of this right varied between both samples, where Study 1 explored the freedom to choose a religion, and Study 2 explored the freedom to practice a religion. Differences might have occurred because these rights, although both being freedoms of religion, are contextually different, with Study 1 exploring choice and Study 2 exploring practice. Although these findings are from different samples, the non-contribution of valuing cultural diversity to one's freedom to practice religion may be explained by findings related to adults' tolerance of religious practice. Hoffman (2020) found that apparent religious practices (e.g., communal worship) promoted intolerant attitudes towards religious minorities in Lebanon, whilst private prayers were associated with more tolerant attitudes. The scenario characterised in the vignette on freedom of religion in Study 2 related to the character's right to engage in an apparent religious practice. Although the right to freedom of religion was endorsed highly in Study 2, valuing cultural diversity that relates to tolerance does not appear to contribute to these endorsements. Investigating both variations of the right to freedom of religion explored in this research in one culturally heterogeneous sample may provide more clarity on this discrepancy.

Among the four additional rights explored in Study 2, we found contributions of valuing cultural diversity to the right to parental educational support and privacy. The right to parental educational support was the second most endorsed nurturance right, suggesting children highly value the right to education. This finding may reflect a high awareness of issues relating to access to education in Nigeria. Nigeria hosts one of the largest numbers of out-of-school children globally. Nigerian children may be aware of current socio-cultural issues around them, including the disparities in relation to children's access to basic education (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). The role of valuing cultural diversity to both the right to parental educational support and privacy may reflect the concern of treating others fairly and a willingness to extend rights to others.

The ages in the Nigerian sample ranged from 7 to 14 years. By adolescence, children begin to endorse self-determination rights as much as nurturance rights (Ruck et al., 1998). Therefore, there may be age differences in how children endorse their rights. However, we were

unable to make age comparisons, because over 70% of the Nigerian sample was between 7 and 11 years old.

Nonetheless, we provide one of the first investigations of children's endorsements of rights in Nigeria. African experiences remain highly underrepresented in psychological research and children's endorsements of rights have not been explored in Nigeria. The findings from this study provide some of the first insights into how Nigerian children may endorse rights.

## 4 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present studies found that children endorsed more nurturance than self-determination rights in both samples (except for freedom from excessive chores in Study 2). The findings demonstrate the importance of valuing cultural diversity in children's endorsements of rights. Across both studies, valuing cultural diversity contributed to children's endorsements of most rights. In both samples, we found that higher levels of valuing cultural diversity positively predicted children's endorsements of the right to parental emotional availability, and freedom of expression, suggesting the importance of this competence in the endorsements of both rights. In Study 2 specifically, valuing cultural diversity contributed to higher endorsements of the right to parental educational support and the right to privacy, two rights that were not explored in Study 1.

### 4.1 | Rights endorsements

Across the studies, we extend SDT (Turiel, 2002). Our findings confirm that children consider the situation in which a right is embedded when choosing to endorse a right. Aligning with research (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2006; Lahat et al., 2009; Rucket al, 2002), children across both samples endorsed more nurturance than self-determination rights. Killen et al. (2022) suggest that children have moral concerns for the welfare of others, and it appears these concerns extend to rights.

The type of nurturance rights endorsed seemed to be related to children's own environments, differing across both studies. Although we are unable to ascertain if these patterns of endorsements would remain the same when the countries explored in Study 1 are investigated individually, children from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Romania and Spain collectively endorsed the right to parental emotional availability more than other rights. However, Nigerian children endorsed the nurturance rights related to protection and education, and the self-determination right to privacy, similarly to the right to parental emotional availability, with the greatest endorsements being given to the right to protection. The high endorsements of the right to protection were also found among South African children where the environment poses a risk to child safety (Gilles et al., 2019). Security risks are steadily increasing in Nigeria with child security becoming a serious concern (Onapajo, 2020). Similarly, the right to education, which was also highly endorsed, may reflect the current situation regarding unequal access to education in Nigeria (Ogunode et al., 2023). These findings may suggest that



children's endorsements of rights are informed by their socio-cultural context (Lahat et al., 2009).

## 4.2 | Predictors of rights endorsements

The current studies provide novel findings on the role of democratic competences in children's endorsements of rights. Specifically, that valuing cultural diversity contributed to most rights endorsements may reflect its salience in support for rights. Valuing cultural diversity consists of the ability to appreciate people's differences in cultural affiliations, practices, views and perspectives. Higher valuing of cultural diversity may signify understanding and respecting others irrespective of differences, and therefore, allows for an extension of rights to others.

The RFCDC (Barrett et al., 2018) suggests links between the valuing of human rights and cultural diversity. The framework proposes these values operate together, in addition to other competences, to allow people to exercise their rights and responsibilities in culturally diverse societies. Barrett (2022) argues that valuing cultural diversity is linked to other universal values such as human dignity and respect witnessed cross-culturally (Donnelly, 2013). The link between human rights and cultural diversity is further emphasised by UNCRC Article 2 highlighting non-discrimination in the application of children's rights. These values emphasise the importance of fairness, justice and equality in the endorsements of rights. Our findings provide evidence of the salience of valuing cultural diversity in support for children's rights and further highlight the presence of this relationship in diverse cultural contexts.

## 4.3 | Contextual issues

One assumption of the present studies is that the RFCDC is applicable in all the cultural contexts in which the data were collected. Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Spain and Romania are member states of the Council of Europe, and the education ministers of these countries formally endorsed the RFCDC (Council of Europe, 2016). Furthermore, the content of the RFCDC was conducted with the assistance of teachers drawn from across the whole of Europe (Barrett et al., 2018). For these reasons, we have confidence that the RFCDC is applicable in the European contexts in which the data were collected. However, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first study of this nature to have been conducted in Nigeria, and the data from this country cast an additional perspective from the Global South on the theoretical issues studied.

## 4.4 | Limitations

Although the present findings extend our understanding of children's rights, the testing of predefined rights and democratic competences limits a deeper understanding of how children perceive their rights

holistically. However, this was beyond the scope of the present research; a qualitative approach may provide more depth to our understanding of what children think about their rights.

In the present research, we have not accounted for multiple socio-economic factors of participants. Based on advice from school officials in the majority of these countries, questions relating to the socio-economic status of families were not asked. School officials in the European countries and Nigeria were worried that including these questions would limit the willingness of parents to allow their children to take part in the study. Therefore, we cannot fully determine what specific group of children the current findings represent. Given that various socio-economic factors may contribute to variations in rights endorsements, this is a limitation (Helwig, 1995a; Lahat et al., 2009; Ruck et al., 2002).

Additionally, measures used in the current research have not been culturally validated in these countries. Although efforts were made to adapt scales to be culturally relevant and translated into different languages, a full process of validating these scales across each country explored would enhance the validity of the current findings. However, it should be noted that extensive research was conducted by the Council of Europe team that developed the RFCDC to ascertain whether the hypothesised competences and their associated learning outcomes are valid in and applicable to all European countries, a body of work that involved data-collection from 3094 teachers drawn across Europe (see Barrett, 2020b; Barrett et al., 2018).

Another limitation of the current research is the non-representative nature of participants. The sample in Study 1 consists of five European countries that possess varying socio-cultural, economic and political differences. Children's reasoning about social situations is heavily influenced by their socio-cultural environment (Helwig, 2006). The inability to investigate the countries individually is a limitation because we cannot account for these cultural nuances. Additionally, in Study 2, we explored a small number of children from Nigeria, limiting the generalisability of these findings. The cross-sectional design does not allow us to ascertain causal relationships or developmental changes in how democratic competences may influence support for rights or how children endorse rights for themselves.

## 4.5 | Implications and conclusion

Notwithstanding these limitations, the current research extends the literature in novel ways. The present research provides evidence on the role of democratic competences in children's endorsements of specific nurturance and self-determination rights. These findings differ from previous research exploring predictors of rights, not only by investigating children's own democratic competences but also by exploring rights individually as opposed to a group of rights or subgroup of nurturance and self-determination rights (Khouri-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009; Peterson-Badali et al., 2004; To et al., 2017).

Given the varying patterns of endorsements and contributions of predictors between Study 1 and Study 2, the current findings lend support to SDT (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 1983). As research has shown,

social reasoning about rights is multifaceted and children employ multiple factors when evaluating rights (Ruck et al., 1998; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2012). The fact that we find variations in endorsements and contribution of predictors to rights across Studies 1 and 2 indicates a similar multifaceted nature in what predicts willingness to endorse rights. Although we find valuing cultural diversity to play the most significant role, in some rights (e.g., parental emotional availability in Study 1) other predictors (e.g., empathy) also contributed to these endorsements.

One of the most notable contributions of the current research is its showcase of the centrality of valuing cultural diversity in children's endorsements of both nurturance and self-determination rights. Considering that socialising children to support rights begins in childhood (Flowers, 2009), equipping children with democratic competences could potentially increase their values for rights. The role of valuing cultural diversity in children's endorsements of their rights needs to be further explored, especially in the context of culturally diverse settings and extending rights to others. Research has shown that endorsements of rights for others vary and sometimes adolescents may be selective in the rights they endorse for outgroup members as opposed to ingroup members (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2012; Verkuyten & Slooter, 2008). Similarly, experimental findings have shown multiculturalism yields fewer negative attitudes towards minority groups than assimilation (Coenders et al., 2008). Perhaps valuing cultural diversity may be instrumental in increasing endorsements of rights in intergroup contexts.

Finally, the current findings highlight the relationship between two key principles (rights and values) in our understanding of morality (Sverdlik et al., 2012; Turiel, 2008). According to Schwartz (2012), universalism values, which involve valuing cultural diversity, emphasise equality, social justice, tolerance and global cooperation. The current findings demonstrate the role of these values in children's support for rights. Future research is required to fully understand the developmental trajectory of children's values and their support for rights, especially how the interplay of both principles contribute to our understanding of children's moral development.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of Study 1 are available on request from the corresponding author. For Study 2, anonymised data and materials are available at <https://osf.io/4s79f>.

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## ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT

All studies conducted in this research have received favourable ethical opinion from the University of Surrey's Ethics Committee, UK. Parental informed consent was obtained, and participants gave assent after a description of the study was provided.

## TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

The authors confirm that all results are reported honestly and that the submitted work is original.

## ORCID

Nana-Fatima T. Ozeto  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3173-7537>

Sonia Ingoglia  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7272-7976>

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