

Development and Validation of Well-being Scale for Japanese People

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to develop a scale to measure the well-being of the Japanese people. For this purpose, the researcher conducted a preliminary survey on the students in the correspondence course of a university (N= 214) and developed a questionnaire based on the survey. Further, based on that questionnaire, a survey was conducted on Japanese university students (N=894). As a result of exploratory factor analysis, 18 items, and 4 factors were extracted. These 4 factors are: Sense of Fulfillment, Positive Evaluation by Others, Accomplishment, and Sense of Usefulness. The scale is psychometrically robust with high internal consistency (.64 to .81). Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between the resilience scale (Saito & Okayasu, 2010) and the well-being scale. The scale demonstrated convergent validity as a significant positive correlation was observed between the factors of well-being scale and the factors of resilience scale (.10 to .67, $p < .01$).

Keywords: *Well-being, Japan, Sense of Fulfillment, Positive Evaluation by Others, Accomplishment, and Sense of Usefulness*

Well-being has been studied widely since the ancient Greek age. From Aristotle to Diener, well-being has attracted many researchers. In spite of ever-growing research on this field, defining it has proven challenging because the concept of happiness may vary across different societies.

Moreover, various aspects have been identified as the factors of well-being, such as self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, personal growth, and autonomy (Ryff, 1989), life satisfaction, positive effect, negative effect (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and happiness (Pollard & Lee, 2003). Deb, Thomas, Bose, & Awasthi (2019) state that the individual's perception of the various problems in life affects an individual's psychological well-being. Another study found that if a person can positively interpret a situation or life- events positively, he/she becomes less vulnerable to mental illness and become happier. Furthermore, being happy benefits the person and can make others happy, resulting in a comfortable atmosphere.

Several studies found that well-being is related to a country's economic growth (Diener, Oishi, & Tay, 2018). Veenhoven (1989) concluded with the help of data from Easterlin (1974) that GDP per capita and happiness in the country are significantly linked. Diener,

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Suh, Lucas, & Smith (1999) analyzed 55 countries' data from various regions and came to the same conclusion as Veenhoven (1989). However, other researchers have found that economic growth has less effect on well-being in the later stages of economic development (Cavalcanti, Guimarães, & Nogueira, 2010).

Studies have revealed that cultural differences also affect the perception of well-being or happiness (Diener et al., 2018; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009). On the other hand, some studies point to commonality in well-being across different countries and cultures (Nishaat & Magari, 2020).

Cultural variations in well-being predictors have been explored in many studies. For instance, the Japanese people associate well-being with social harmony whereas Americans relate happiness to personal achievement (Uchida & Kitayama, 2009).

Tsai, Knutson, & Fung (2006) found that the Americans place a high value on high activation positive states such as excitement, while people in Asian countries such as Taiwan and Hong Kong place a higher value on low activation positive states such as calm.

Singh, Raina, & Sahni (2016) also argue that the meaning and construal of happiness vary across cultures. They explored the meaning of happiness in the Indian context and derived their definition based on various ancient Indian texts using the concept of "sukha–dukkha" (happiness and unhappiness).

So, various studies show that there are some common factors as well as there are some differences in well-being due to different cultural backgrounds or economic conditions.

WELL-BEING IN JAPAN

Numerous researches on the well-being of the Japanese people have been conducted. Some studies of well-being in Japan have focused on the concept of "Ikigai" (Nakanishi, 1999). "Ikigai" is an idea unique to Japan, which means achieving a better and more fulfilling life (Kumano, 2018). Kumano (2018) analyzed how the Japanese people define "Ikigai" in everyday language and suggested that the concept consists of "a sense of accomplishment," "dedication (despite facing difficulties)," and "social and benevolent contributions." Kumano (2015) reviewed English articles written in many fields, including psychology, and found that many of them contain "Ikigai," and many of these studies reported that the concept of "Ikigai" is essential for happiness in Japanese culture.

In his study, Kamiya (1966) stated that it is not necessary to feel "Ikigai" only in positive situations of life and that one can feel "Ikigai" even when experiencing mentally exhausting or negative situations if one can lead a constructive life. Thus, "Ikigai" is considered to be related to both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

Yoshinaka, Shimizuike, & Ando (2015) researched factors that are important for happiness in Japanese college students and discovered that "free time," "fulfilling leisure time," "having hobbies," and things such as "friendship" and "human ties at work/school" are all highly valued.

Furthermore, many comparative studies between Japan and other countries have been conducted to clarify the characteristics of Japanese well-being. Oishi (2010) surveyed Japanese university students using the Japanese version of the Life Satisfaction Scale

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developed by Diener et al. (1985). Japanese university students' total score was about 18-22 points compared to the total score of 23-26 for university students in the US, indicating a lower level of life satisfaction in Japan.

Easterlin (1974) conducted a study on the relationship between income and well-being and found that well-being is lower in Japan, despite the higher national income level than other countries. Similarly, Diener & Suh (1997) found that life satisfaction tends to be high in economically prosperous countries in general. However, in countries with relatively low incomes, such as Brazil and Argentina, well-being tends to be high, while low in Japan, an economically developed country. In 2000, the World Values Survey was conducted in 60 countries, and a survey on the level of happiness in each country was conducted. Japan ranked 35th in this survey, which is roughly in the middle (Otake, Shiraishi, & Tsutsui, 2010).

Using the well-being scale (PERMA profiler) (Seligman, 2011), Nishaat (2021) conducted a comparative study of well-being between Japanese and Indian students. The result showed that Indian students scored significantly higher in "positive emotions," "accomplishment," and "meaning." Japanese students scored higher only in "engagement." There was no significant difference in "relationships."

Looking at these results alone, it is easy to conclude that Japan is an unhappy country. However, to understand the low level of well-being in Japan, it is essential to consider the differences in the concept of happiness in different countries. It seems that well-being is strongly predicted by the internal value of an individual and self-esteem in North America. In contrast, in Japan, it is predicted by a feeling of connection in interpersonal relationships (Uchida & Ogihara, 2012). Some dimensions of well-being, such as life goals, are considered important in both Japan and the West. In contrast, others, such as independence, are particularly important in Western cultural contexts but have little relevance to Japanese people (Yoo & Ryff, 2019).

Additionally, there are other studies that attempted to assess Japanese well-being using various scales. For example, Hosogoshi & Kodama (2006) used the Japanese version of Ryff & Keyes' (1995) six-factor psychological well-being scale, Hashimoto & Koyasu (2012) used the Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Diener et al. (1985), Shimai, Otake, Utsuki, Ikemi, & Lyubomirsky (2004) used a four-item scale, which is the Japanese version of the Subjective Happiness Scale created by Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999). In addition, Ito, Sagara, Ikeda, & Kawaura (2003) created a scale based on Subjective Well-being Inventory (SUBI) developed by the WHO (World Health Organization). Asano, Igarashi, & Tsukamoto (2014) modified the original version of the Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities (HEMA) scale developed by Huta & Ryan (2010), which consists of two factors: hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being.

As mentioned above, various surveys and researches related to the well-being of Japanese people have been conducted. In all of the studies mentioned above, the researchers modified scales (made by western scholars) considering the cultural context of Japan so that it can reflect the characteristics of Japanese people. In this sense, it can be said that those studies did not necessarily grasp Japanese well-being appropriately. Uchida & Ogihara (2012) also pointed out that using scales developed in Europe and the United States to measure happiness in Japan will not produce accurate results. They proposed that to explore the true

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meaning of people's happiness, they must first comprehend the "cultural view of happiness" that underpins it.

Some researchers have tried to explain well-being from the Japanese perspective. Kumano (2018) aimed to clarify how the concepts of "Shiawase" and "Ikigai," which are unique to Japan, differ. For this purpose, a survey was conducted in which participants were asked, "Currently, how much Shiawase do you feel?" and "Currently, how much Ikigai do you feel?" The KJ (Kawakita Jirou) method was used to analyze the collected data. The results of the study suggest that for Japanese people, "Ikigai" is close to eudaimonic well-being and "Shiawase" is close to hedonic well-being. The study by Kumano (2018) attempted to clarify the concepts of "Shiawase" and "Ikigai" but she did not develop any scale to measure the well-being of the Japanese people using these concepts.

On the other hand, Maeno (2013) developed a well-being scale for the Japanese people and extracted four factors: "self-actualization and growth," "connection and gratitude," "positive attitude and smile," and "independence and my pace." Maeno's results were slightly different from the previous studies. For instance, Markus & Kitayama (1991) stated that the concept of self in East Asian cultures is defined by people's interdependence with others. But in Maeno's (2013) study, "independence and my pace" was extracted as a factor. Also, "self-actualization and growth" was extracted as another factor that is different from the concept that the Japanese people tend to place more importance on fostering harmony with others and maintaining cooperativeness rather than asserting themselves compared to the Westerners (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Maeno's (2013) study revealed the factors of Japanese well-being which are different from the ones seen in previous studies. Given the circumstances, the present study seeks to understand the well-being of the Japanese people and whether it is similar to previous studies. Based on this understanding, this study will try to develop a scale that would help to comprehend the characteristics and structure of Japanese people's well-being.

METHODOLOGY

1. Construction of well-being scale and implementation

To develop questionnaire items to measure the well-being of the Japanese people, the researcher first asked Japanese people of various age groups to write freely about "what is happiness?" and "when do you feel happiness?" Based on the descriptions of their happiness, the researcher extracted question items to measure the well-being of Japanese people. The subjects were 214 (113 male, 101 female) Japanese students enrolled in the correspondence course of a private university in Tokyo in 2018.

The contents of the answer were classified using the KJ method, and a total of 28 items were extracted and classified into the following categories: "positive emotion," "curiosity/interests," "positive evaluation by others," "self- growth," and "meaning of life." Based on these categories, researcher prepared a questionnaire and used it as a tentative well-being scale. A questionnaire survey was conducted using the tentative well-being scale with a five-point Likert method.

2. Survey target and implementation time

1) Survey target:

The researcher conducted a survey on 911 undergraduate students (464 males and 447 females) of three private universities in Tokyo. Of these, the data of 894 students (454 males and 440 females) are used in the analysis, excluding the incorrect entries.

2) Implementation time:

A survey was conducted in December 2018. The researcher conducted the survey with the permission of the university ethics review committee. First, all the participants were requested to read and sign the agreement of the survey. Then, they were asked to answer the questionnaire anonymously.

RESULTS

1. Exploratory factor analysis of well-being scale

To clarify the characteristics of the well-being of the Japanese people, factor analysis was conducted based on the scores of all 28 items. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the maximum likelihood method with no factor specification (eigenvalue greater than 1) and Promax rotation. As a result, a total of 18 items with four factors were extracted.

The first factor, which consists of six items, such as "I am satisfied because I could find a goal" and "I feel that I am developing as a person" was named "Sense of Fulfillment." Likewise, the second factor consists of six items, such as "I've been happy because people expressed gratitude to me" and "I was happy when I was well evaluated by people" was named "Positive Evaluation by Others". The third factor, which consists of four items, such as "I can concentrate on study" and "I am satisfied with my academic achievement" was named "Accomplishment." Finally, the fourth factor comprises of two items, which are "I do not think that I am useful to people (reverse item)" and "I am loved by many people" was named "Sense of Usefulness".

Table No.1 Well-being factor analysis result

Items	Factor Loadings			
	I	II	III	IV
I Sense of Fulfillment				
16. I am satisfied because I could find a goal.	.67	.21	.13	.01
18. I feel that I am developing as a person.	.64	.27	.17	.12
23. I have confidence in my mental health.	.61	.15	.15	.15
15. I am living a full life, having my thought or faith.	.57	.25	.03	.15
17. I have confidence in my physical health.	.56	.12	.06	.06
1. I feel happy now.	.52	.31	.12	.12
II Positive Evaluation by Others				
10. I've been happy because people expressed gratitude to me.	.13	.75	-.07	.11
12. I was happy when I was well evaluated by people.	.08	.66	-.04	.10
26. I was happy when I could express gratitude to those around me.	.32	.58	-.03	.07
5. I was satisfied when I achieved my goals.	.30	.56	.08	.07
13. I could concentrate my mind on my work so much, forgetting the passage of time.	.15	.50	.06	-.01

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9. I have a trustable friend who will help me when I'm in trouble.	.27	.49	.02	.16
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III Accomplishment

8. I can concentrate on study.	.02	.01	.67	.02
11. I am satisfied with my academic achievement.	.02	-.01	.55	.12
24. I am anxious about my future. (▲)	.21	.01	.48	.08
27. I feel stressed. (▲)	.25	-.02	.43	.23

IV Sense of Usefulness

20. I do not think that I am useful to people. (▲)	.10	.14	.20	.81
21. I am loved by many people.	.24	.22	.25	.57

(▲) Reverse item	Inter factor Correlation		I	-			
			II	.49	-		
			III	.21	.24	-	
			IV	.44	.39	.23	-

2. Reliability Test

In order to examine the internal consistency of the factors of well-being, Cronbach α coefficients were calculated, and the following values were obtained: $\alpha = .81$ for the first factor, "Sense of Fulfillment," $\alpha = .80$ for the second factor, "Positive Evaluation by Others," $\alpha = .64$ for the third factor, "Accomplishment," and $\alpha = .70$ for the fourth factor, "Feeling of Usefulness." It indicates a certain degree of internal consistency. Furthermore, split-half reliability was estimated using Guttman split-half reliability coefficient, and the following values were obtained: .82 for the "Sense of Fulfillment," .80 for the "Positive Evaluation by Others," .67 for the "Accomplishment," and .73 for the "Sense of Usefulness" (Table 2).

Table No.2 Reliability test of the Well-being scale

Factors	Alpha α	Split half method
Sense of Fulfillment	.81	.82
Positive Evaluation by Others	.80	.80
Accomplishment	.64	.67
Sense of Usefulness	.70	.73

3. Convergent Validity Test

In order to examine the convergent validity, the researcher calculated Pearson's correlation coefficient between the resilience scale created by Saito & Okayasu (2010) and the well-being scale. As a result, the researcher found moderate to highly significant positive correlations ($r = .10$ to $.62$) between each factor of the resilience scale (Competence, Social support, and Positive Evaluation) and all the factors of well-being scale, confirming convergent validity (Table 3).

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Table No.3 Correlation between Well-being scale and Resilience scale (N = 894)

Factors	Competence	Social Support	Positive Evaluation
Sense of Fulfillment	.29**	.10**	.33**
Positive Evaluation by Others	.49**	.52**	.27**
Accomplishment	.29**	.10**	.33**
Sense of Usefulness	.39**	.28**	.28**
Well-being (Total)	.67**	.50**	.49**

** $p < .01$

DISCUSSION: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WELL-BEING OF JAPANESE PEOPLE

This study attempted to clarify Japanese people's concept of well-being. First, the researcher reviewed the previous literature on their well-being and conducted a questionnaire survey to confirm them.

The researcher asked students of correspondence course of a private university to write freely about happiness and built a questionnaire based on their answers. Following this, a questionnaire survey was conducted on university students to examine the well-being of Japanese students. As a result, four factors were extracted as the component of the well-being of Japanese people, which are "Sense of Fulfillment," "Positive Evaluation by Others," "Accomplishment," and "Sense of Usefulness."

The "Sense of fulfillment" factor, which is related to satisfaction in life, is similar to Diener et al.'s (1985) Life Satisfaction scale, Ryff & Keyes's (1995) "purpose in life" factor of Psychological Well-being Scale, and Seligman's (2011) "positive emotion," factor of PERMA.

Hashimoto (2015), in his overview of research on well-being, found that the factors that contribute to well-being include both cognitive aspect, represented by life satisfaction, and an emotional aspect, represented by positive emotions. The present study takes "Sense of Fulfillment" as a factor that includes both cognitive and emotional aspects.

The "Accomplishment" factor is closely related to the "accomplishment" factor proposed by Seligman (2011) in his concept of well-being (PERMA) and the "personal growth" factor of Ryff & Keyes's (1995) Psychological Well-being Scale.

As mentioned above, factors similar to "Sense of Fulfillment" and "Accomplishment" have also been found in research on well-being in other countries. Therefore, it could be concluded that these factors are not specific to Japanese well-being only but are found in other countries as well.

In contrast, the factors extracted in this study, such as "Positive Evaluation by Others" and "Sense of Usefulness," can be used to explain the Japanese sentiment that relates well-being to social harmony, as shown in the study by Uchida & Kitayama (2009).

Therefore, these factors may provide clues to understanding the perspective of well-being specific to the Japanese people. The factor, "Positive Evaluations by Others," which consists of statements such as "I was happy when I could express gratitude to those around me." and

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"I've been happy because people expressed gratitude to me," are related to "relationships" factor pointed out by Seligman (2011) and "positive relations" factor of Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). However, "relationships (Seligman, 2011)" and "positive relations (Ryff & Keyes, 1995)" focus on a good relationship with others, whereas "Positive Evaluations by Others" emphasizes more on how the evaluation of others influences the well-being of the Japanese people.

No factor similar to the factor "Sense of Usefulness," which is composed of items such as "I am loved by many people" and "I do not think that I am useful to people," was found in western well-being research.

This study revealed that Japanese well-being is comprised of both common factors ("Sense of Fulfillment" and "Accomplishment") as well as unique factors ("Positive Evaluations by Others" and "Sense of Usefulness").

CONCLUSION

The current study is aimed at understanding the characteristics of the well-being of the Japanese people. The study found few factors that are unique to Japanese people's well-being. It shows that perceiving well-being in Japan is different from other countries such as the US. However, this study also found factors of well-being that are common to Japan and western countries.

In the same way, it is possible that other countries also have their own unique factors that affect their well-being. So rather than comparing the well-being of countries using a single scale, it is essential that researchers take into consideration the cultural background of all targeted countries.

Future Research

This study revealed some of the characteristics of the well-being of the Japanese people, but the following points may be the areas of future research. This study primarily covered the well-being of university students only. In the future, this scale could be used to measure the well-being of Japanese people in general, which will cover people from various social and working backgrounds.

In Inglehart's (2002) study of more than 60 countries, the relationship between well-being and gender differed by age group, suggesting that women in the younger age group (18-44 years) and men in the older age group (45-65 years) had higher life satisfaction. So, it is desirable to conduct detailed studies that take into account factors such as age, gender, and lifestyle to understand the Japanese people's well-being better.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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