The Impact of Value on Happiness: Comparative Studies of Twelve Asian Countries’ Level of Happiness

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Our studies empirically analyze whether or not the value variations in twelve Asian countries bring out the different level of happiness.

The studies consist of two parts:

First, after by reviewing the exiting findings, we will highlight the role of value in happiness. In particular, we pay attention to value factors such as Materialism/Post-materialism, Traditionalism, Religion and Ideology (Left/Right).

Second, based on survey data of Asian Barometer, covering twelve countries, we test various values’ relative power in explaining the happiness, compared to basic conditions for happiness including the social relation, income and health.

Based on empirical analysis, we know that twelve Asian countries show the different state of happiness. The post-materialism and left-oriented ideology decrease the happiness but religion increases the happiness. However, there are contrasting determinants of happiness across countries.
2. Introduction: Does Value Matter in QOL?

1) Basic Research Questions
   (1) “What are states of happiness across twelve Asia countries?”
   (2) “What’s relative explanation power of value, compared to economic, social relational and health factors, in determining QOL?”
   (3) “What’s role of value in QOL across twelve Asia countries”

☞ Our research goal is to show that variations in happiness depend on value difference. We will empirically test it.

2) Research Background
   (1) In happiness studies, generally the economic, social relation and health conditions at the individual level are often referred as the determinants for subjective well-being. Across level of analysis, the value as a determinant for happiness has been dismissed for the long time, even if in fact it takes important role in happiness.

   (2) Although a lot of researches have focused on different role of culture, such as collectivism and individualism, there are few studies about value as a determinant for happiness under the same culture, i.e., collectivism or individualism.

   (3) Hence, we try to examine the impact of value on happiness under the same collectivism with twelve Asian countries.
3. Theoretical Background

1) Three Main Approaches in Cross-Cultural Studies QOL Studies

(1) Political approaches: Political factor (including the party control of government, the quality and extant of welfare provision) affect a nation’s aggregate level of satisfaction (Radcliff, 2001, APSR)

(2) Economic approaches: Richer countries display no greater mean happiness than poor ones (Easterlin, 1974, 1995)

(3) Cultural Approaches: Individualism (collectivism) was a strong predictor of SWB when other predictors were controlled (Diener, Diener & Diener, 1995, JPSP)

2) There are Few Studies about QOL in Asia

(1) By analyzing the six Confucian societies, Shin & Inoguchi(2009) show that East Asians tend to experience happiness to a greater extent when they experience enjoyment together with achievement and/or satisfaction. Also reveal the multidimensional concept of happiness and the importance of interpersonal relationships among determinants of happiness.

(2) According to Uchida et al.(2004), in East Asia cultural context, happiness tends to be defined in terms of interpersonal connectedness. Happiness is best predicted by perceived embeddedness of the self in a social relationship.
1) Model

**Basic Factors**
- Economic Statute
- Health
- Social Relation

**Value Factors**
- Post-materialism
- Religion
- Traditional Value
- Ideology

Happiness in Twelve Countries

2) Data: 2004 Asia Barometer by Takashi Inoguchi
Even if twelve countries lie under the same culture of collectivism, the empirical data from *Asian Barometer* (2004) show, in <Figure 1>, significant different level of mean of happiness scores across them.
6. Determinant of Happiness in Asian Countries

**<Table 1> Simple Correlation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Happiness</th>
<th>Post-Materialism</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Tradition Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Materialism</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>0.043***</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.599</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Value</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>0.036***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.160***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (Left)</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>-0.029***</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>-0.071***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**<Table 2> Regression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>.122***</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation</td>
<td>.156***</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>.102***</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>-0.028**</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religion</td>
<td>.037***</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition Value</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>-0.020***</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-Square</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td></td>
<td>228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-Value</td>
<td>6.584***</td>
<td></td>
<td>222.783***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ***: P <.001**:P<.05: *P<.01

🔗 Simple correlations show that there are positive relationships between happiness and religion/traditional values but negative ones between happiness and left-oriented ideology.

🔗 Multi-regression analysis shows that ① the post-materialism and left-oriented ideology reduces the happiness but religion increases the happiness, ② in Model 2, basic variables (economy, social relation, health) significantly determine the happiness.
### Table 3: Correlation between Happiness and Determinants across 12 Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Post-Materialism</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Traditional Value</th>
<th>Ideology (Left)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Countries</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>.043***</td>
<td>.036***</td>
<td>-.029***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Cambodia</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>.073**</td>
<td>.059*</td>
<td>-.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Indonesia</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>1.111***</td>
<td>-.066*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Japan</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>-.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Myanmar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Philipines</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Thailand</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Vietnam</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.069*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Malaysia</td>
<td>-.077**</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>-.132**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Singapore</td>
<td>-.090*</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.064*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. South Korea</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.118***</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>-.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Laos</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Brunei</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.120***</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>-.094***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, there are largest variations of explanation relevance of each variables across countries. Second, ideology explains the happiness across five countries. However, there are contrasting results between countries. In Vietnam, left-oriented ideology improves the happiness but in other countries, it decreases the happiness.
8. State of Determinants

To know the variation in determinants of happiness at the countries level, we divide twelve countries into three groups such as unhappy, middle, and happy countries.

**<Figure 3> Variation in Basic Conditions**

- **Health**
  - Unhappy: 3.63
  - Middle: 4.04
  - Happy: 4.11

- **Social Relation**
  - Unhappy: 7.86
  - Middle: 8.54
  - Happy: 8.43

- **Economy**
  - Unhappy: 6.56
  - Middle: 7.11
  - Happy: 7.56

**<Figure 4> Variation in Value**

- **PM**
  - Unhappy: 2.12
  - Middle: 2.42
  - Happy: 1.94

- **Religion**
  - Unhappy: 1.40
  - Middle: 0.93
  - Happy: 1.08

- **Traditional Value**
  - Unhappy: 9.26
  - Middle: 3.62
  - Happy: 9.40

- **Left**
  - Unhappy: 0.00
  - Middle: 0.59
  - Happy: 0.21

In **<figure 3>**, about the basic conditions for happiness, there are systematic variations in health and economy in which happy countries show higher health and economy.

In **<figure 4>**, about value variations, there is no systemic difference between three groups of happiness. It implies that there are to the largest extent differences in value determinants of happiness between at the individual level and at the countries level.
1) Basic questions: Does value influence happiness? YES

2) Research results about impact of value on happiness as follows.
☞ Even if being under the same culture of collectivism, twelve Asian countries show the different state of happiness.
☞ Correlations show that there are positive relationships between happiness and religion/traditional values but negative ones between happiness and left-oriented ideology.
☞ According to multi-regression analysis, the post-materialism and left-oriented ideology decrease the happiness but religion increases the happiness. Moreover, compared to value factors, basic conditions of happiness such as economy, social relation, health significantly determine the happiness.
☞ By analysis the correlations across twelve countries, post-materialism, religion, traditional value and ideology take impact the national happiness. In particular, ideology explains the happiness across five countries. However, there are contrasting results between countries.
☞ About the basic conditions for happiness, there are systematic variations in health and economy in which the happy countries show higher health and economy. However, about value variations, there is no systemic difference between three groups of happiness. It implies that there are to the largest extent differences in value determinants of happiness between at the individual level and at the countries level.

3) Conclusion remarks: Value influences happiness but there are variations across countries.


Thank You!

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