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研究課題名(和文) Social and Subjective Well-being in Eastern and Western Contexts - a Comparative Approach

研究課題名(英文) Social and Subjective Well-being in Eastern and Western Contexts - a Comparative Approach

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研究成果の概要(和文)：本研究では客観的ウェルビーイングと主観的ウェルビーイング(SWB)の相互関係が文化的脈絡とライフステージによって異なるのかを検討した。を明らかにするために日本、ドイツ、アメリカのウェブ調査を実施した。その結果、主観的社会地位はドイツやアメリカよりも日本のSWBに強い影響を与えることが分かった。

では混合研究法を用いた。日本の量的調査の結果からSWBの決定要因は年齢層によって異なることが明らかになった。また57名の20代の若者を対象とした質的調査からは2010年代末の日本の若者は、自分達の生活への期待を日本社会における比較的不平等かつ不安定な社会的現実に対応させていたという知見が得られた。

研究成果の学術的意義や社会的意義

Results imply that determinants of SWB are not universal but are impacted on by (a) cultural context, (b) life stage, and (c) social reality of a given society. For policy makers this means that policies need to be carefully coined to positively affect the well-being of certain populations.

研究成果の概要(英文)：This project investigated how interrelations of social well-being and subjective well-being (SWB) differ (a) depending on cultural context and (b) life stage. To elucidate (a), a cross-cultural online survey was carried out, comparing Japan, Germany and the US. Results indicate that subjective social status has a stronger impact on SWB in Japan than in Germany and the US. This implies that comparison with others is more closely connected with individual happiness in the Japanese context.

For (b), a mixed methods approach was applied. Analysis of quantitative survey data for Japan indicated that determinants of SWB differ across age groups. These results were followed up by a qualitative study focusing on young Japanese. In-depth interviews with 57 Japanese in their 20s yielded the result that young Japanese have adapted their expectations towards life to the more unequal and less stable social reality of Japanese society in the late 2010s.

研究分野：Sociology

キーワード：Subjective well-being Quality of life Relative deprivation International comparison Method-mix

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様式 C - 19、F - 19 - 1、Z - 19 (共通)

1. 研究開始当初の背景 (Scientific background)

In recent years, with the emergence of ‘happiness studies’, an increasing number of investigations of subjective well-being and quality of life have been published across disciplines. While such studies frequently include cross-cultural comparisons, the focus has been mainly on Western societies so far (for an overview of the relevant literature: Hommerich & Klien 2012). At the same time, in the aftermath of the global economic and financial crisis of 2007-2008, an increase of precarity and social risk and its impact on the social fabric is another topic which has received much scholarly attention (for an overview of the relevant literature: Schöneck & Hommerich 2014).

This project, investigated how these two topics are intertwined and impact on each other and how this differs in East Asian and Western contexts. The overall results of this multi-method project indicate that the interrelations of social and subjective well-being in the context of increasing social risk and social inequality share similarities, but that there are also clear distinctions depending on the cultural context and the life stage of individuals.

2. 研究の目的 (Purpose of the research)

The general goal of the project was to reach a better understanding of how individuals make sense of and cope with new risks and uncertainty born out of processes of globalization and socioeconomic transformation which make individual biographies less predictable and how this impacts their subjective well-being. More specifically, this research focused on an analysis of the interrelation of objective social status and its subjective evaluation, and the impact of the latter on social well-being, in a sense of being able to feel as valuable part of society, and subjective well-being, here defined as individual assessment of the overall quality of one’s life.

Specific emphasis was placed on possible differences between these mechanisms depending on

- a) the cultural context (comparing Japan, Germany and the US) and
- b) different life stages (in Japan).

These two parts were investigated separately and with various methods, as outlined in more detail below.

3. 研究の方法 (Research method)

(1) Social and subjective well-being in intercultural comparison

A quantitative approach was used for this part of the project, with two different surveys as outlined below:¹

To investigate intercultural differences in how social status affects well-being, Dr. Christina Sagioglou (Innsbruck University, Austria) and I carried out a three-country online survey in August 2019, comparing Japan (N = 738), the US (N = 712), and Germany (N = 708). In addition to standard measures of socioeconomic status, we included measures of relative deprivation, as the theory of relative deprivation predicts detrimental outcomes resulting from disadvantaged social standing. Moreover, feeling relatively deprived is a stronger predictor of hostility, prosocial behavior, and health than are subjective and objective status indicators (e.g., income). This indicates that the way individuals evaluate their circumstances in comparison to others, has a larger impact on their well-being than their actual social standing. While previous research suggests that status indicators affect well-being differently in Eastern and Western contexts (Curhan et al., 2014), no study has yet considered possible differences in the impact of relative deprivation on subjective well-being.

Next, to ensure appropriate measurement of subjective well-being for each cultural context, we included Su, Tay & Diener’s (2014) “Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving” (CIT), which we translated into Japanese for the first time for the purpose of our survey, as well as Hitoko and Uchida’s (2015) “Interdependent Happiness Scale”, which is based on interpersonal harmony, ordinariness, and quiescence, and was developed specifically for the East Asian

¹ Initially, I had planned to also include a qualitative part in the cross-cultural comparison, but due to changes in my family circumstances I was not able to travel easily and, therefore, had to shift to another methodological approach.

context, where relationships with others seem to have more weight in subjective evaluations of well-being.

Our samples were generated by crowdsourcing (using Mturk in the US, Lancers in Japan, and Clickworkers in Germany), which added a methodological dimension to our research, as it poses the opportunity to test out the quality of this relatively new kind of convenience sample in terms of representativity when comparing with census data for the respective country.

A second approach to elucidate differences in mechanisms behind happiness formation depending on cultural context was a cross-cultural comparison of the interrelation of value preferences and subjective well-being. In this collaborative research with Prof. Kazufumi Manabe (Aoyama Gakuin University), Prof. Wolfgang Jagodzinski, Prof. Eldad Davidov, and Dr. habil. Hermann Dülmer (all Cologne University, Germany), we fielded a student survey in Germany (N = 500) and Japan (N = 500) as paper-and-pencil survey carried out in class between October 2018 and January 2019.

(2) Social and subjective well-being across the life-course

For part b), a mixed method approach was chosen, as a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a more in-depth analysis of what shapes individual patterns of well-being in differing social contexts. Applying an explanatory sequential research design, this meant that in a first quantitative step, determinants of subjective well-being were compared across age groups, carrying out secondary analysis of two cross-sectional surveys, namely the Japanese National Survey on Lifestyle Preferences from 2010 and a nationwide postal survey carried out by the principal investigator (as part of a different project) in 2009. The results were then followed up in a qualitative part which focused on accounts of happiness evaluations of young Japanese. This focus was chosen to better understand contradictive results regarding the mental health of young Japanese, with one strand of literature worrying about high levels of stress and anxieties (for an overview, cp. Hommerich 2017), while another attests them high levels of well-being (Furuichi 2011). To this end, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 57 Japanese in their 20s from across Japan. This was partly done as part of a research methods class taught by the principal investigator at Hokkaido University in 2017/2018.

4 . 研究成果 (Research results)

(1) Social and subjective well-being in intercultural comparison

In comparison of Japan, the US and Germany, we find relative deprivation to be the strongest predictor of subjective well-being in all countries, when controlling for income, education and subjective social status. Subjective social status and financial security also significantly affect well-being in all three countries, but their impact is weaker than that of relative deprivation. Regarding intercultural differences, we find that Japanese subjective well-being is more strongly affected by subjective social status than is German and US American subjective well-being. This seems to imply that the comparison with others is of greater importance for subjective well-being in the Japanese context. Publications on this survey from August 2019 with more in-depth analyses are in preparation/under review but will be added to the project page as soon as they become available.

For measurements used in our German-Japanese student survey we were able to establish at least partial scalar equivalence, which means a comparison of means of the value measurement models used in the survey is possible. However, the quality of the student samples posed problems, leading us to question the reliability of our data. For this reason, we hesitated to publish the data as is and instead intend to use it as pre-test for a survey based on random population samples in the two countries in the future.

(2) Social and subjective well-being across the life-course

Results of the quantitative part within this part of the project, which were carried out in form of secondary analyses of previous surveys, indicated that determinants of subjective well-being – what we call the “structure of happiness” – differ across age groups. Our analysis of

data from the 2010 Japanese National Survey on Lifestyle Preferences shows that both satisfaction with as well as subjective importance of different life domains (financial situation, employment, health, purpose in life, family, friends, workplace and region) differed depending on the generational location of the respondents. In opposition to older respondents, young respondents' happiness was not significantly influenced by how satisfied they were with their financial situation. Analysis of data of a nationwide postal survey carried out by the principal investigator in 2009 yielded the result that for the younger age group it was more important than for older age groups to be able to feel as valuable and accepted member of society. Anxieties experienced in the past and held towards the future negatively impacted subjective well-being across all age groups. However, they seemed to affect the youngest age group stronger, as such anxieties were experienced most frequently by the 20-34-year-olds, indicating large detrimental impact on their well-being.

More information as to what these anxieties were related to, was gained from the qualitative part of the study, which helped to further interpret the results of the quantitative analyses. The 57 respondents in their 20s were asked about their personal level of happiness and definition of happiness, their family and friends, love relationships, work and career ambitions, future expectations, their view of and interest in politics, their involvement in society and their financial situation. The narratives of these young respondents indicated an adaptation of their future expectations to the social reality of Japanese society in the late 2010s. They were aware of large social disparities in Japanese society and – having grown up in the so-called lost decades - felt to be placed within different social circumstances than their parents, with employment being less stable and the life-course less predictable. While most did not strive for material riches, they all aimed to achieve a stable and carefree middle-class life. Most of them were insecure, however, whether they would be able to realize this dream.

An additional quantitative analysis of 20-39-year-old Japanese based on data of the Stratification and Social Psychology Survey from 2015, which differentiated between young Japanese with and without university education, helped to further elucidate differences within this age group. There seemed to be a stark difference in how these two groups construct their well-being, with aspirations being comparatively low among the lower educated.

Overall, the findings indicate that young Japanese expect less from life than their parent generation. What people imagine as a “good” or “fulfilled” life can change, across, but also within generations. Aspirations can be adapted, upwards, but also downwards (Austin 2016). The fact that young Japanese evaluate their lives positively can mean that they have adjusted their aspirations to what seems realistically possible. For parts of the young generation – especially those with a university degree, this seems to be a healthy attitude, because – even if they might not be able to achieve upwards mobility – they are living a very good and affluent life and chances are high that they will be able to keep the same standard of living in the future. For those with low levels of education, however, being satisfied with what seems achievable can mean giving up hope for a better life and not actively claiming basic rights (adequate working conditions, coverage of minimum needs, equal possibilities for women to work, or for men to stay at home and take care of their children). As many young Japanese indicated not to feel able to have an impact on their society, they were also reluctant to get involved.

What this generally indicates is that high levels of happiness or life satisfaction do not mean that policy makers can cross certain sub-populations off their policy list. Instead, an in-depth analysis of what different groups expect from life and how they evaluate it, seems necessary.

In sum, this project allowed to achieve further insight in how determinants of subjective well-being are impacted on by cultural context as well as stage in the life-course. Nevertheless, it also leaves questions unanswered and points to the need for future investigation.

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〔産業財産権〕

〔その他〕

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