

Predictors of subjective wellbeing at work for regular employees in Japan

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Abstract: Japan has been experiencing a long decline in its workforce. Companies in Japan are eager to retain their existing employees and diversify their recruitment. Employees with long-term and open-ended employment are also switching companies at a greater rate. Consequently, Japanese firms have started paying attention to employee subjective wellbeing, now recognized as a source of higher job performance. This study empirically explores the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work for Japanese regular employees beyond those already identified in Europe and U.S.-centric research. We applied a two-stage design, consisting of interviews and a questionnaire survey to identify those factors that promote subjective wellbeing in Japanese corporations where long-time employment and group cohesiveness and achievement are valued over individual achievement. We identified eight factors affecting subjective wellbeing at work for Japanese regular employees: meaningful work, relationships, culture, workspace, evaluation, time off, financial benefits, and diversity at work. Consequent regression analyses highlighted the discriminant importance of work relationships, evaluation, diversity, workspace, and meaningful work. Eudaimonic and hedonic happiness were found to be caused by different factors. As expected, meaningful work led to eudaimonic satisfaction of life at work in Japan. In contrast hedonic happiness was affected by factors external to work itself, such as work relationships, work evaluation and diversity. Interestingly, diversity at work was found to have an ambivalent effect as it was related to both positive and negative affects at work. These findings will help Japanese companies create a work environment that can maximize regular employees' wellbeing, job performance, and retention.

Keywords: subjective wellbeing; predictors; work; Japan

1. Introduction

1.1 Pressures on the labor force

Japan has the fastest aging population in the world (World Atlas, 2022). The World Economic Forum is projecting that the Japanese working age population (ages 15-64) will fall by around 20% by 2040, reducing the workforce by as many as 12 million people from 65 million working-age people in 2017 to 61 million in 2025 and only 52 million in 2040 (Fleming, 2019). This is mainly due to the double phenomenon of declining birthrate and aging population; in 2018 alone, the Japanese population shrank by 448,000 people as the country registered about 1.37 million deaths and 0.92 million births. Facing this dire challenge to the country's future, the Japanese government has attempted to bring more women into the workforce, as well as to attract foreign workers over the past decade (Magnier-Watanabe, 2016).

Partly due to new legislation designed to encourage more females to work (Rich & Ueno,

2020), women's participation in the workforce in Japan stood at 53% in 2019, having recorded an increase of five percentage points in the last 5 years (Catalyst, 2020). However, it remains low compared to other industrialized countries and to that of Japanese men which stood at 71% that same year (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2020). While 'womenomics,' a policy of then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, helped more women enter or return to the labor market, their jobs remain mostly part-time and low-paid compared to those of men (Larmer, 2018). And even though the demographic decline has placed strong pressure on Japan to open up borders to more foreign workers, changes in immigration policy are proving problematic, as Japanese citizens are hesitant to let more foreign workers enter the country (Peng, 2016). Hence, foreign workers, mainly from China and Vietnam, constitute only a small segment of the working population and are concentrated in the manufacturing, wholesale/retail, accommodation, and food and drink service industries (MHLW, 2020). According to recent estimates, foreign workers in Japan totaled about 1.66 million as of October 2019 and their number has increased steadily over the past 5 years (MHLW, 2020). However, foreign workers still represent a mere 2.4% of the total workforce, far less than the percentage in Europe (10%) and the United States (16%) (The Japan Times, 2016).

Unable to bring in more women or foreigners faster into the labor pool, companies are eager to retain their existing workforce. Japanese firms have started paying attention to employee subjective wellbeing, now recognized as a source of higher job performance (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Magnier-Watanabe et al., 2017, 2020b). Japan has witnessed a decline in the already low state of wellbeing since the Sustainable Development Network has investigated global happiness (Helliwell et al., 2020). In the latest survey measuring how country nationals perceive the extent of their happiness, Japan is ranked 62 out of 153 countries, and its ranking has dropped substantially over the last decade. Tokyo is ranked 79 out of 186 cities in terms of the current life evaluation of its citizens, while it is ranked 86 and 46 for their positive and negative feelings, respectively (Helliwell et al., 2020). In response, the Abe administration implemented a 'Work Style Reform' agenda (*hatarakikata kaikaku*) in 2016 specifically aimed at reversing the decreasing productivity brought about by the aging and shrinking workforce (Prime Minister of Japan, 2017). The stated goals of the government bill which was passed in 2018 are to reform the workplace, reduce working hours and make work more flexible, and treat employees fairly regardless of employment status (Okunuki, 2018). These measures are squarely aimed at supporting subjective wellbeing among workers and higher work productivity (Baudrand et al., 2018).

1.2 Focus on regular employees

The predictors of subjective wellbeing at work have not yet been clarified for Japanese employees. Furthermore, Japanese companies and society at large are first and foremost interested in looking after a class of workers specific to Japan, the regular employees. In his authoritative book on the Japanese employment system, Rebeck (2005) stresses the difference between regular and non-regular employees, which is central for understanding human resources management in the country. First, regular employees, or '*seishain*', are employed for an unlimited period, while non-regular employees are working for a fixed period of usually twelve months. These non-regular employees include part-time workers who in fact work almost full-time schedules, hourly workers on limited schedules, contract employees, and dispatched workers. These second-tier status workers have much lower wages and no job security, compared to regular employees (Gordon, 2017).

More critically, these two categories of employees do not get the same consideration by employers and society at large. Rebeck (2005) notes that "a non-regular employee is also less likely

to be regarded as a full member of the community that makes up the company” (p. 18). Regular workers are often referred to as core employees as they have much longer job tenure, and the term ‘*seishain*’ in Japanese “means more than a mere hired worker and implies belonging to a community formed by people with the same interests” (Suzuki, 2010, p. 394). At the same time, Japanese companies have increasingly been relying on non-regular employment, which now represents about 40% of total employment, or more than 20 million workers (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2020). This rise started even before the 1991 burst of the Japanese economic bubble (Gordon, 2017). Indeed, the separation between regular and non-regular employees is part of Japan’s labor law, which provides many more benefits to regular employees, and allows firms to use non-regular employees as a buffer that can be cut (by not renewing contracts) while retaining regular employees. For example, the limit on overtime work in the ‘Work Style Reform’ passed in 2018 concerns regular workers only.

Accordingly, this paper aims at identifying the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work for core workers in Japan. It will make a broad inventory of these predictors, building on previous findings and using an exploratory approach based on mixed methods.’

2. Literature review

2.1 Subjective wellbeing at work

Happiness, or wellbeing, has been a topic studied since ancient Greece with philosophers such as Aristotle arguing that people could influence their health and happiness by living a virtuous life. In modern times, wellbeing has been a topic of major focus in the fields of sociology and psychology. Currently, it has been gaining attention as an important topic among scholars of management and business as a factor in promoting motivation and job performance in today’s increasingly hectic, changing and stress-filled environment (Magnier-Watanabe et al., 2020a). In the workplace, it has been credited as a source of superior job productivity and performance (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) in several countries including Japan (Magnier-Watanabe et al., 2017).

Salas-Vallina et al. (2018) identify two strands of thoughts regarding wellbeing. One emphasizes “eudaimonic aspects of happiness,” or living a life of virtue in pursuit of human excellence. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) is one example that addresses psychological needs such as inherent need for growth and autonomy. The other strand purported by Diener et al. (1999) emphasizes the subjective nature of wellbeing and includes both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of happiness, the latter concerning the positive emotions of pleasure (and negative emotions of displeasure).

Many researchers also note the distinction between cognitive and affective evaluations of wellbeing, where the cognitive evaluation concerns an individual’s assessment of a person’s relative situation to some point of reference, and affective evaluation relates to one’s emotions. These are also said to be mutually correlated (Tsurumi et al., 2020).

Given that employees, just like any person, routinely have good and bad experiences in their daily lives, and that the totality of these ups and downs has a significant effect on their emotional state, including happiness, this paper will adhere to the proposition that subjective wellbeing, also called emotional wellbeing, is multifaceted and “includes people’s emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction” (Diener et al., 1999, p. 277). In this research, we focus on subjective wellbeing at work. In other words, one’s subjective wellbeing at work is influenced by daily emotional experiences at work, both positive and negative, and one’s overall satisfaction with work.

2.2 Predictors of subjective wellbeing at work

A wide range of predictors of subjective wellbeing have been examined and confirmed (Diener et al., 1999). Recent extensive review of the literature on subjective wellbeing at work (Fisher, 2010; Salas-Vallina et al., 2018) have revealed a wide variety of predictors. Salas-Vallina et al. (2018) reviewed 58 empirical papers which investigated positive predictors of happiness at work at the individual level. They organized the extracted list of 38 predictors into 4 meta-categories: work context factors (autonomy, flexibility, supportive supervision, adequate staffing, workload management, environmental clarity, career development, situational factors, justice, feedback, empowerment, trust, dignified treatment, lean management, work climate, fair salary, perceived external social prestige, job resources); leadership (inspirational leadership, transformational, leadership, transactional leadership, authentic leadership, creative leadership), social interactions (collaboration, interpersonal relationships, high quality connections, worker-manager relationship, pleasant interactions, communication), and personal resources (level of education, work family conflict, negative emotions, morale, time perspective, personal resources, resilience, authenticity, positive mood, proactive personality).

In addition, personality and emotional intelligence have been found to be predictors of subjective wellbeing and subjective wellbeing at work (Gannon & Ranzijn, 2005; Higgs & Dulewicz, 2014). Specifically, emotional intelligence and social relationships at work contribute positively to subjective wellbeing (Brackett et al., 2004). Looking at personality using the big 5 personality traits, Furnham and Petrides (2003) found that extraversion and openness to experience were positively associated with happiness at work, while neuroticism was negatively related to it.

However, in the case of Japan, there has been little research elucidating a comprehensive list of potential predictors of subjective wellbeing at work. Some researchers have analyzed the salient psychological characteristics related to happiness in general of a large group of Japanese respondents; the important factors they found were self-realization and growth, connection and gratitude, positivism and optimism, and independence and autonomy (Iwata et al., 2018). Furthermore, recent findings have highlighted the importance of organizational virtuousness, or pervasive positive attributes and behaviors in the firm (Magnier-Watanabe et al., 2020b). In addition, Higashide (2016) has proposed the three broad dimensions of income and employment as necessary conditions, community and its attributes (trust, individualism, democracy, and democratic process) as context, and pleasure, engagement and meaning as individual behavior and experiences. However, his model has not received empirical validation. The Commission on Measuring Wellbeing (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2011) did not explore the work domain beyond employment (as opposed to unemployment) and the resulting material wealth.

3. Current research

Literature has identified many yet inconsistent factors affecting subjective wellbeing at work for diverse groups of people. We aim to fill a gap by making a broad inventory of the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work (both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects) for Japanese regular employees, building on previous findings and using an exploratory approach based on mixed methods.

We applied a 2-stage design, whereby we first conducted in-depth interviews whose findings were then statistically assessed using a questionnaire survey.

3.1 Study 1: Interviews

3.1.1 Sampling and interviewee demographics

The first phase of our research aimed to map the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work for Japanese employees beyond those few identified in Europe and US-centric research, using qualitative data gathered in interviews conducted by the authors. These interviews were conducted with 14 Japanese employees all working for different companies in manufacturing, IT, banking, and services. Candidates were recruited through the alumni network of the researchers' academic institutions. Respondents were not given any information on the aims of the study, aside from the fact that they would be interviewed about the predictors of wellbeing at work. Interview questions included background information about the interviewee, and a general description of their business unit and firm. Of those interviewed, 71% (10 out of 14) was male, mean age was 43 (range 25–59), which is consistent with the gender and age distribution of regular employees in Japan (MHLW, 2019). All respondents had received higher education and were regular employees.

3.1.2 Procedure and coding

All interviews were conducted in Japanese, which was the primary working language of all respondents. Two of the four researchers involved in this project are native or near-native speakers. All interviews were open-ended to allow for unbiased opinions from the respondents regarding their thoughts about wellbeing at work, and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, were recorded, and then transcribed. The critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) was applied during the interviews to elicit instances of concrete situations in which the interviewees perceived potential predictors of wellbeing at work. This open-ended method has been employed for the recall of specific events believed to be crucial in affecting final outcomes. Respondents were asked about specific situations in detail in which they experienced subjective wellbeing. In doing so, they were tasked to reflect on the causes, descriptions, and outcomes, and to describe their feelings and perceptions.

The authors analyzed the content of the interviews following the five steps put forward by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and often used in management research, most recently by Gabriel et al. (2020). In the first step, we read the transcripts to identify pertinent expressions or keywords mentioned by our interviewees and obtained 137 first-order codes (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In the next step we grouped these first-order codes into larger consistent yet distinct 35 categories. When diverging opinions among researchers arose, those were resolved through discussion until mutual agreement was reached.

In Study 2, we set out to confirm the predictors from Study 1 using exploratory factor analysis and to identify the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work using regression analysis. The original questionnaire for the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work is based on the interviews' 137 first-order codes minus 29 codes that had been mentioned by only 2 interviewees or less for a total of 106 codes.

3.2 Study 2: Questionnaire

3.2.1 Sample

To confirm the relevance of the predictors uncovered during the interviews, we conducted a questionnaire survey of 229 regular Japanese employees working in Japan. The sample size was adequate as it is recommended there be at least five times as many observations as the number of variables to be analyzed (Hair et al., 2009); there are 38 variables (35 potential predictors of

subjective wellbeing at work and 3 constructs for subjective wellbeing at work), thus requiring at least $38 \times 5 = 190$ observations. The data were gathered in March 2020 using a Japanese Internet Survey service with a large database of potential respondents throughout Japan working in a wide range of industries and in different functions. In addition to basic demographic questions (gender, age, education), the questionnaire included items inquiring into the respondent's situation with the present company (industry, company size, position, number of subordinates). The sample was made up of about 60% men and 40% women. It also consisted of sizable groups of different age ranges and a majority of university-educated respondents (67%). Furthermore, the sample consisted of 57% general employees, 30% without any subordinates, and 67% working in services (tertiary industry), and 49% in companies with 500 employees or more (Table 1). Although the proportion of men was lower than in Study 1 (71%), it was higher than that of women. Furthermore, while all interviewees in Study 1 were college graduates, only 67% of respondents in Study 2 were. For Study 2, we gave precedence to all respondents being regular employees over having graduated university, as this research seeks to uncover the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work for Japanese regular employees, irrespective of their education.

Table 1. Sample demographics

Variables		Frequency (%)	Mean (SD)		
			SPANE-P	SPANE-N	SWLS-W
Gender	Male	137 (59.8%)	2.85 (0.92)	2.78 (0.92)	4.2 (1.21)
	Female	92 (40.2%)	3.07 (0.95)	2.96 (0.93)	4.26 (1.53)
Age	25-29	36 (15.7%)	3.04 (0.86)	3.09 (0.84)	4.23 (1.3)
	30-39	56 (24.5%)	2.99 (0.9)	2.8 (0.99)	4.3 (1.38)
	40-49	52 (22.7%)	2.89 (1)	2.95 (0.86)	3.98 (1.35)
	50-59	59 (25.8%)	2.75 (1.01)	2.82 (0.96)	4.2 (1.43)
	60 and over	26 (11.4%)	3.19 (0.8)	2.51 (0.89)	4.65 (1.09)
Education	High school	33 (14.4%)	3.08 (0.84)	2.84 (0.84)	4.31 (1.42)
	Vocation school	11 (4.8%)	2.88 (1.1)	2.82 (1.05)	3.8 (1.37)
	Junior college	7 (3.1%)	2.43 (0.86)	3 (1.06)	3.17 (1.59)
	University	153 (66.8%)	3.03 (0.93)	2.84 (0.93)	4.3 (1.29)
	Master's degree	22 (9.6%)	2.3 (0.87)	2.9 (0.98)	4.06 (1.49)
	Other	3 (1.3%)	3 (1)	2.89 (0.92)	4.8 (1.06)
Position	General employee	130 (56.8%)	2.79 (0.9)	2.86 (0.9)	4.05 (1.41)
	Section /proj. manager	36 (15.7%)	2.95 (1.07)	2.69 (1.04)	4.17 (1.1)
	Manager	24 (10.5%)	3.02 (0.85)	2.95 (0.95)	4.49 (1.2)
	Division Manager	11 (4.8%)	3.64 (0.78)	3.5 (0.86)	5.04 (1.51)
	Senior management	13 (5.7%)	3.33 (0.81)	2.46 (0.64)	4.85 (0.89)
	CEO / Rep. Director	10 (4.4%)	3.38 (1.06)	2.73 (0.97)	4.68 (1.5)
	Other	5 (2.2%)	2.8 (0.81)	3.27 (0.75)	3.68 (1.28)
Subordinates	0	69 (30.1%)	2.48 (0.95)	2.91 (0.98)	3.71 (1.39)
	1 to 5 people	55 (24%)	2.84 (0.86)	2.72 (0.86)	4.28 (1.2)
	6 to 10 people	34 (14.8%)	3.27 (0.78)	2.83 (0.79)	4.41 (1.01)
	11 to 30 people	38 (16.6%)	3.36 (0.8)	2.89 (0.95)	4.52 (1.48)
	31 or more	33 (14.4%)	3.23 (0.92)	2.92 (1.03)	4.71 (1.34)
Industry	Primary	8 (3.5%)	3.77 (0.94)	3.38 (1.29)	4.83 (1.48)
	Secondary	67 (29.3%)	2.86 (0.88)	2.78 (0.87)	4.08 (1.33)
	Tertiary	154 (67.2%)	2.93 (0.95)	2.86 (0.93)	4.26 (1.34)
Company size	Less than 10	29 (12.7%)	3.18 (0.97)	2.83 (0.91)	4.23 (1.29)
	10 to 49	24 (10.5%)	2.73 (0.84)	3.07 (1.04)	4.22 (1.75)
	50 to 249	39 (17%)	2.82 (0.72)	2.94 (0.81)	4.17 (1.02)
	250 to 499	26 (11.4%)	2.92 (0.9)	2.55 (0.7)	4.44 (1.1)
	500 or more	111 (48.5%)	2.96 (1.02)	2.85 (0.98)	4.2 (1.43)

3.2.2 Predictors of subjective wellbeing at work

Potential predictors of subjective wellbeing at work were measured using statements created by the researchers, based on the results of the previous semi-structured interviews described above. Respondents had to provide their level of agreement with those statements about predictors of subjective wellbeing on a 5-point scale, reflecting their reality at work today.

3.2.3 Subjective wellbeing at work

The measurement of subjective wellbeing at work used in this paper includes a person's general self-evaluation and their daily emotions, both positive and negative. Both were measured for respondents' work and life domains by widely used instruments: the former by the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), and the latter by the Scale for Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) (Diener et al., 2010). The three were measured using statements to which respondents had to provide their level of agreement. The three constructs of SPANE-P, SPANE-N, and SWLS-Work were used to assess subjective wellbeing at work (Rahm et al., 2017). Each aspect of subjective wellbeing at work was considered separately in order to capture nuanced aspects of subjective wellbeing. Taken together, these three constructs (SPANE-P, SPANE-N, SWLS-work) make up subjective wellbeing at work.

Positive and negative affects were assessed using the Scale for Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) adapted by changing the focus of each question from one's life to one's work. SPANE consists of 12 items rated on a 5-point scale, half of which are items concerning positive and the other half negative feelings. Respondents were asked to what extent they had experienced the following feelings over the past 4 weeks at work: positive, negative, good, bad, pleasant, unpleasant, happy, sad, afraid, joyful, angry, content (Diener et al., 2010). Satisfaction with work was evaluated with the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), again adapted by changing the focus of each question from one's life to one's work. SWLS-work comprised 5 questions on a 7-point scale about global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's work (Diener et al., 1985; Kobau et al., 2010). Survey items included the following: in most ways my work is close to my ideal; the conditions of my work are excellent; I am satisfied with my work; so far, I have gotten the important things I want in my work; if I could start over my work career, I would change almost nothing. Japanese versions of these validated questionnaires have been collected by Diener (2020) and are freely available. Nevertheless, two native Japanese university professors involved in this research checked the translations for accuracy and consistency.

In order to minimize common method variance, a mandatory pause of 15 minutes was built into the data collection process between questionnaire items about the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work and those about the measurement of subjective wellbeing at work (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In effect, this time lag in the data collection process is equivalent to having two distinct surveys, thus ensuring that common method variance is unlikely to create bias in the interpretations of results.

3.2.4 Validity and reliability of subjective wellbeing at work outcome and predictors

Factor analyses were conducted on the 106 questions used to measure the variables under study to ensure that the items displayed highest loadings on the intended constructs and to assess discriminant validity. Regarding the predictors of subjective wellbeing, we used an exploratory factor analysis and removed question items that had excessive cross-loadings, free stood as one-item factors, or considerably reduced factor reliability, in keeping with Costello and Osborne (2005)'s recommendations. This process led to the removal of 65 problematic questions, leaving

the remaining 41 questions appearing in Table 2. We used an oblique (promax) rotation since we cannot exclude the fact that some factors may be correlated with one another (UCLA Statistical Consulting Group, 2020). Such oblique rotation methods may produce multicollinearity between the predictor variables so this will be addressed when examining their effect on subjective wellbeing at work. This yielded the following 8 distinct factors with eigen values above 1, explaining 77% of the total variance: meaningful work (49%), work relationships (6%), work culture (5%), workspace (4%), work evaluation (3%), time off (2%), financial benefits (2%), and diversity at work (2%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Pattern matrix of questions on antecedents of subjective well-being at work

	Mean- ingful work	Work relations	Work culture	Work- space	Work evalua- tion	Time off	Financial benefits	Diversity at work
Have professional skills	.958							
Have a professional vocation	.913							
Have passion for your work	.888							
Be in line with your work	.833							
Having responsibilities at work	.746							
Have autonomy at work	.613							
Set your own work objectives	.602							
Freedom of expression at work	.595							
Having an overview of your work	.564							
Getting results	.561							
Have a respected superior		.941						
Have good relationships with your supervisor		.893						
Have a respectful superior		.887						
Have a caring superior		.859						
Have good working rels with your colleagues		.569						
Be in a dynamic corporate culture			.820					
Be in a caring and generous corporate culture			.800					
Be in a friendly corporate culture			.796					
Being in an indulgent corporate culture			.751					
Be in an honest and integrated corporate culture			.735					
Be in a corporate culture of solidarity			.732					
Have good work equipment				.862				
Have a good size workspace				.811				
Have a clean and pleasant workspace				.719				
Have access to a relaxation area				.700				
Have a well-arranged workspace				.645				
Have a management by objectives in the evaluation of your work					.885			
Have a contribution valued by others					.751			
Get feedback on your work					.708			
Having authority acquired through experience					.704			
Have clear criteria in the evaluation of your work					.703			
Having many days off						.894		
Not working						.881		
Receiving days off						.732		
Be financially independent							.824	
Be financially stable							.758	
Take early retirement							.725	
Have performance-related pay							.591	
Have diversity in terms of nationalities								.857
Have diversity in terms of cultures								.836
Have gender diversity								.734
# of items	10	5	6	5	5	3	4	3
% of variance	49.161	6.364	5.310	3.968	3.662	3.168	2.470	2.443
Cronbach alpha	.939	.945	.948	.898	.903	.878	.882	.893

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

For subjective wellbeing at work, a confirmatory factor analysis by way of AMOS 26.0 confirmed the existence of the 3 separate components of positive affect (SPANE-P), negative affect (SPANE-N), and satisfaction with one's work (SWLS-work), consistent with past research. Goodness of fit indices (chi-square/DF=2.380; CFI=0.989; SRMR=0.029; RMSEA=0.040; PClose=0.998) indicated excellent model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Gaskin and Lim, 2016). Convergent and discriminant validity were estimated based on composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and maximum shared squared variance (MSV) (Fornell and Larcker (1981). CR was greater than 0.70, AVE greater than 0.50 and MSV and square root of AVE greater than inter-construct correlations, which demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity (Gaskin et al., 2019) (Table 3).

Table 3. Regression weights, convergent, discriminant validity of outcome variables

		Standardized regression weight	CR	AVE	MSV
SPANE-P	I have felt happy at work for the past 4 weeks	.903	0.963	0.813	0.467
	I have been feeling well at work for the past 4 weeks	.910			
	I have felt satisfied at work for the past 4 weeks	.905			
	I have felt joy at work for the past 4 weeks	.914			
	I've had nice things at work for the past 4 weeks	.881			
	I've had positive feelings at work for the past 4 weeks	.897			
SPANE-N	I've felt unpleasant at work for the past 4 weeks	.870	0.934	0.704	0.074
	I have felt bad at work for the past 4 weeks	.893			
	I have felt angry at work for the past 4 weeks	.845			
	I have had negative feelings at work for the past 4 weeks	.839			
	I have felt sad at work for the past 4 weeks	.831			
	I have felt worried at work for the past 4 weeks	.747			
SWLS-W	In general, my work closely matches my ideals.	.884	0.927	0.720	0.467
	My working conditions are excellent.	.879			
	I am satisfied with my work.	.920			
	If I could start my working life over again, I would hardly change it.	.708			
	So far, I've gotten the important things I wanted from my job.	.836			

CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted; MSV: maximum shared squared variance
Correlation scores between the variables were all below 0.8, which removes any concern of

multicollinearity (Field, 2005), despite the fact that the factors were obtained through a promax rotation which allows the factors to be correlated (UCLA Statistical Consulting Group, 2020).

4. Results

4.1 Study 1 results

In Study 1, we obtained the following 8 themes: meaningful work, work relationships, work culture, workspace, work evaluation, time off, financial benefits, and diversity at work. Representative quotes from respondents are shown below.

Meaningful work: Respondents mentioned that being able to accomplish goals that are in line with what they would like to do and understanding how their job fits into the bigger scheme of things were important for their happiness. We defined these and similar such factors that provide meaning to their job as “meaningful work.”

“When we talked about happiness, we talked about a sense of accomplishment, right? A sense of accomplishment is due partly because you are able to achieve the goal that the company gave you, but I think the sense of accomplishment is higher when you have a goal that you want and are able to achieve. It’s like setting your own goals. I feel a greater sense of accomplishment when I am able to do something that I want to do, rather than a goal given to me by my company, rather than being forced to do it.” (Household product manufacturer, purchasing department, department manager)

“It is very interesting to learn what other people are doing in different departments. In this sense, I am happy to know the whole “world of my company” and not just be a frog in a well.” (IT industry, audit department, auditor)

Work relationships: Many respondents placed importance on having good work relationships for their happiness. This finding is not surprising considering the importance of groups and long-term orientation and employment in Japanese culture.

“We don’t have a single superman, but by working together, we can gather a variety of ideas and insights, and make them better and better. It’s not about one superman.” (Household product manufacturer, product development department, department deputy manager)

“It is better when we cover for each other, as naturally, there will be times when people have to take time off.” (Household product manufacturer, purchasing department, department manager)

Work culture: Respondents stated that they desired a culture that fits with their own, and one that values loyalty to employees. This finding is consistent with Japanese culture’s emphasis on group and long-term orientation.

“I wonder what is important regarding corporate culture. Maybe it’s very Japanese, but I think it’s surprisingly important to find out whether a company’s corporate culture fits, and whether or not there is chemistry.” (Household product manufacturer, product development department, department manager)

“I want to be loyal to a company that is loyal to its employees.” (Sales subcontractor,

operations, sales staff)

A few respondents, however, noted the importance of having a nice, appropriate office environment.

“After all, there’s nothing better than a good environment, right? It includes things like space and the comfort of the chairs, though. It’s also about brightness, isn’t it? We are also creating a kind of communication space.” (IT industry, audit department, auditor)

“The office is very clean. This is very good.” (Building maintenance, human resource department, department manager)

Many respondents also noted that evaluations at their company were fair, which they deemed very important for their happiness at work.

“If you look at it over a long period of time, people who do their jobs well and make an effort are evaluated appropriately at my company. In that sense, it is a good company (and I am very happy).” (Household product manufacturer, purchasing department, department manager)

Several respondents also emphasized the need for more personal time and less overtime, which reflects the increasing awareness of the need to decrease overwork from both the government and corporations in Japan, where overtime was once considered a mark of being a good corporate soldier.

“I used to go home with my computer and do my work. Now, I don’t do it, and I don’t let people do it. I am happier now that I am able to manage my own time.” (Household product manufacturer, product development department, department deputy manager)

“Having my own time is very important.” (Distribution, sales support department, technical sales assistant)

“It is a lot easier now to manage my own time in my department. When I was in sales, I couldn’t do this. It is the difference between heaven and hell.” (IT industry, audit department, auditor)

With regards to financial benefits, many respondents noted the importance of having their pay linked to performance. This reflects the growing trend in Japanese companies to introduce some form of performance incentives.

“I am happy when pay is linked to performance.” (Sales subcontractor, operations, sales staff)

In terms of diversity, many respondents were ambivalent stating both the positive and negative aspects of workforce diversity. This indicates that many Japanese employees have conflicting feeling about diversity and its effect on happiness at work.

“Diversity is a plus for performance for our customers. But for an old-fashioned company like mine, diversity can have a negative internal impact.” (IT industry, general affairs department,

human resource section manager)

4.2 Study 2 results

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

First, Study 2 was able to statistically confirm the eight antecedents of subjective wellbeing at work identified in Study 1: they were meaningful work, work relationships, work culture, workspace, work evaluation, time off, financial benefits, and diversity at work. Furthermore, it was found that the first antecedent explained almost half of the variance.

Second, in order to examine significant differences among the constructs and compare them on a 5-point Likert scale, mean scores were calculated for each dimension. Overall, all predictors of subjective wellbeing at work were found to be above 3.0 on a 5-point scale, with work diversity the lowest with a mean of just 3.01. The average for subjective wellbeing at work was 4.23 on a 7-point scale, indicating respondents were slightly satisfied with their work, while that for SPANE-P and SPANE-N were both below 3.0 on a 5-point scale, denoting slightly less frequent experience of either positive or negative emotions at work. Table 4 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables under study. It can be noted that the number of subordinates had the highest correlation score with any component of subjective wellbeing at work (0.340, $p < 0.001$ with SPANE-P), which remains weak nevertheless. This result suggests that respondents with more subordinates tend to experience more positive emotions at work.

Table 4. Means, standard deviation and correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Gender (1)	1.40	0.49	1															
2. Age (2)	3.93	1.26	-.221**	1														
3. Education (3)	3.58	1.25	-0.115	-0.098	1													
4. No. of subordinates	2.61	1.43	-0.026	-0.019	0.025	1												
5. Company size (4)	3.72	1.47	0.087	-.189**	.202**	.250**	1											
6. Meaningful work	3.61	0.80	-0.082	.144*	-0.085	.251**	-0.008	1										
7. Work relations	3.47	0.99	0.013	-0.034	-0.111	.219**	0.076	.588**	1									
8. Work culture	3.39	0.92	0.031	-0.062	-0.086	.191**	0.047	.676**	.732**	1								
9. Workspace	3.46	0.89	0.066	-0.038	-0.064	.230**	0.125	.607**	.600**	.654**	1							
10. Work evaluation	3.36	0.91	0.107	-0.083	-.186**	.173**	-0.026	.617**	.696**	.766**	.646**	1						
11. Time off	3.47	0.98	0.018	0.083	-0.054	0.096	0.105	.551**	.496**	.516**	.579**	.465**	1					
12. Financial benefits	3.29	0.93	-0.027	-0.010	-0.058	.221**	0.112	.597**	.489**	.634**	.633**	.617**	.553**	1				
13. Diversity at work	3.01	1.07	0.051	-0.095	-.175**	.271**	0.082	.482**	.511**	.511**	.552**	.540**	.480**	.540**	1			
14. SPANE-P	2.94	0.94	0.118	-0.028	-0.084	.340**	-0.011	.495**	.548**	.503**	.426**	.528**	.345**	.375**	.464**	1		
15. SPANE-N	2.85	0.92	0.093	-0.129	0.009	0.017	-0.038	-.139*	-.200**	-.153*	-.219**	-0.119	-0.124	-.177**	-0.019	-0.076	1	
16. SWLS-Work (a)	4.23	1.34	0.021	0.042	0.027	.255**	-0.002	.529**	.512**	.489**	.445**	.451**	.369**	.436**	.368**	.618**	-.307**	1

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

(1) 1: male (2): female

(2) 1: under 25; 2: 25-29; 3: 30-39; 4: 40-49; 5: 50-59; 6: 60 and over

(3) 1: High school; 2: Vocation school; 3: Junior college; 4: University; 5: Master degree; 6: Doctor degree

(4) 1: less than 10 employees; 2: 10 to 49 employees; 3: 50 to 249 employees; 4: 250 to 499 employees; 5: 500 employees or more

(a) 7-point scale

4.2.2 Predictors of subjective wellbeing at work

Three separate regression analyses were conducted to identify which of the 8 possible factors (see Table 2) are predictors of subjective wellbeing at work, by separately examining their relationships with SPANE-P, SPANE-N, and SWLS-work. To analyze subjective wellbeing at work, we decided to keep the three factors of SPANE-P, SPANE-N and SWLS-work separate.

Indeed, while these variables are related because of their shared affective component, they remain independent constructs. Past research on the measurements of subjective wellbeing has confirmed that evaluative scales on the one hand and positive and negative affect measures on the other hand loaded on different factors (Kapteyn et al., 2015). Furthermore, when measuring subjective wellbeing, the bifactor model with one general and three specific factors (assessed with SWLS, SPANE-P, and SPANE-N) presented a better statistical fit than three-factor or higher-order factor models (Chen et al., 2006; Jovanović, 2015; Rice & Shorey-Fennell, 2020).

The explanatory power of the regression models (Table 5) was evaluated based on the amount of variance (R^2) in the outcome constructs for which the model could account. The model explained 29% of the variance ($F=11.227$, $p=0.000$) for SPANE-P, 9% for SPANE-N ($F=2.661$, $p=0.008$), and 21% for SWLS-work ($F=7.245$, $p=0.000$), near or far exceeding the threshold of 10% proposed by Falk and Miller (1992) as indication of substantive explanatory power. The value of the unstandardized regression coefficient (B) indicates the degree to which each predictor variable affects the outcome variables. For SPANE-P, identified predictors were work relationships ($B=0.216$, $p=0.009$), work evaluation ($B=0.221$, $p=0.015$), and work diversity ($B=0.222$, $p=0.001$), for SPANE-N, workspace ($B=-0.214$, $p=0.018$) and work diversity ($B=0.209$, $p=0.006$), and for SWLS-work, meaningful work ($B=0.282$, $p=0.001$).

Table 5. Predictors of subjective well-being at work

	SPANE-P			SPANE-N			SWLS-W		
	B	SE	Beta	B	SE	Beta	B	SE	Beta
(Constant)	-6.21E-17	0.057		1.10E-16	0.064		-1.26E-17	0.06	
Meaningful work	0.103	0.079	0.103	0.031	0.090	0.031	0.282	0.084	0.282**
Work relations	0.216	0.082	0.216*	-0.168	0.093	-0.168	0.157	0.087	0.157
Work culture	0.019	0.090	0.019	0.072	0.102	0.072	0.079	0.095	0.079
Work space	-0.024	0.079	-0.024	-0.214	0.089	-0.214*	0.025	0.083	0.025
Work evaluation	0.221	0.090	0.221*	0.061	0.102	0.061	-0.117	0.095	-0.117
Time off	-0.042	0.075	-0.042	0.030	0.085	0.030	0.003	0.079	0.003
Financial benefits	-0.077	0.072	-0.077	-0.154	0.082	-0.154	0.130	0.076	0.130
Diversity at work	0.222	0.066	0.222**	0.209	0.075	0.209*	-0.016	0.07	-0.016
R^2			0.290**			0.088*			0.209**
F			11.227			2.661			7.245

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.001$

5. Discussion

Study 1 uncovered eight factors affecting subjective wellbeing at work: meaningful work, relationships, culture, workspace, evaluation, time off, financial benefits, and diversity at work. Consequently, Study 2, by way of regression analyses, showed discrete predictors for each aspect of subjective wellbeing at work: for positive feelings at work, work relationships, evaluation, and diversity; for negative feelings at work, workspace and diversity; and for satisfaction with one's work, meaningful work.

5.1 Weak predictors

First, each predictor influences distinct constructs of subjective wellbeing at work (SPANE-P, SPANE-N, and SWLS-work), save for diversity at work which was found to be related to both

positive and negative affects at work. Unexpectedly, work culture, time off, and financial benefits did not significantly affect any of the constructs of subjective wellbeing at work, although all, except the last one, were elicited from the interviews. It is therefore important to note that two different methodological approaches yielded different predictors of subjective wellbeing at work. This could be explained by the fact that our sample size was limited and that survey respondents were all regular employees with open-ended employment.

Being a regular employee is seen as a goal, as a prize in itself, especially now that they account for only 60% of all jobs in the country (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2020). Regular employees cannot be picky about the culture of their company, and workers in the regular employee category can expect to be treated the same regardless of the firm. What's more, regular employees are embedded in the traditional system of Japanese human resource management practices which consists, among others, of long-term employment and development, seniority-based compensation and promotion, and teamwork (Sekiguchi et al., 2016). Job security and guaranteed incremental pay raises are more important than the small idiosyncrasies of corporate culture; this is especially true considering that regular employees can expect to find very similar work cultures based on the prevalent consensual and collective decision-making found in the Japanese business system (Witt, 2014). Financial benefits and compensation in general depend more on the number of years an employee has been working for the company and one's track or career path, rather than performance (Sekiguchi et al., 2016). It follows that companies within the same industry and of a similar size would pay about the same salaries to employees with comparable titles and numbers of years of service since the start of their career. The lack of salary differentials, all things equal, render financial benefits a non-issue when it comes to subjective wellbeing at work. Lastly, Japanese employees are notorious for working long hours and taking few days of paid leave, although the law provides regular employees with 20 days of paid leave per year in addition to numerous national holidays. According to Ono (2018), in Japan "taking time off in itself is seen as a negative signal, regardless of how (or whether) taking time off affects outcomes" (p. 40). As a result, options to work less are certainly not expected to be associated with subjective wellbeing at work. The results would certainly be very different if we were to look at non-regular employees with precarious employment contracts.

5.2 Diversity as an ambivalent predictor

According to Magoshi and Chang (2009), diversity designates "differences in terms of nationality, ethnic group, gender, age, and those with or without physical and mental difficulties" (p. 31). Diversity management is defined as firms providing opportunities and making use of people with different cultural identities, where culture has a broad meaning referring to nationality, ethnic origin, gender or age (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Past research has noted that Japanese companies, although lagging behind those from other developed countries, have increased their diversity in terms of compensation and promotion. However, their rates for diversity in leadership are still have very low (women, 4% and foreigners, 0.3%) (Magoshi & Chang, 2009).

The benefits of diversity for corporations have been extensively researched. They include the acquisition of knowledge about minority groups in society and higher levels of innovation and creativity (Ely & Thomas, 2001), as well as the creation of a positive and responsible corporate image (Cunningham & Melton, 2011). The threats of diversity stemming from differences in cultural identities consist of those related to one's career and power, symbolic threats originating from differences in values and beliefs, and intergroup anxiety caused by interactions with out-group members (Stephan and Stephan, 2000). These benefits and threats of diversity have led to the development and validation of a specific measurement tool, the Benefits and Threats of

Diversity Scale (BTDS) (Hofhuis et al., 2015).

5.3 Significant predictors of subjective wellbeing at work

First, the results of regression analyses showed that the factor meaningful work, which incorporates having a professional vocation for which one has passion and responsibility, was the only significant predictor of satisfaction with life domain related to work (SWLS-work) and that it explained about 21% of this construct. This suggests that for Japanese regular employees, satisfaction with life in the work domain is mostly dependent on the intrinsic value of work itself. This is consistent with the findings of Steger et al. (2012, 2013) which found that meaningful work is personally significant and has positive valence for workers.

Steger et al. (2012) have noted that there is little consensus on the definition of meaningful work and that its causes and experience are often commingled. Meaningful work consists of psychological meaningfulness in work, meaning making through work, and greater good motivations (Steger et al., 2012). Psychological meaningfulness in work refers to the perceived significance of one's work and its outcome (Taubman-Ben-Ari & Weintraub, 2008). Meaning making through work can denote the role of work as a source of meaning in one's life overall. As such, these two factors are tightly linked. Greater good motivation is the desire to make a positive impact on the greater good.

To place this finding in context, we must recognize that although most research on subjective wellbeing has been centered on the western world, wellbeing is heavily culture-based and is interpreted differently in Asia and other regions. Previous research on wellbeing in Japan has highlighted the importance of *ikigai*, which is an important concept in Japanese culture and everyday life, and which has been gaining attention among western scholars. It is defined as something to live for or the joy and purpose for living in Japanese dictionaries and has been associated with eudaimonic wellbeing (Kumano, 2018). In this sense, it has also been presented as one of the factors behind the country's longest life expectancy (Sone et al., 2008). To a certain extent, psychological meaningfulness at work can promote *ikigai*.

Ikigai does not, however, have to be a grand or ambitious overtaking, but can also be found in hobbies or other simple tasks one enjoys (Mathews, 1996). Kamiya (1966) also states that it is similar to happiness but incorporates a view toward the future. In other words, work one enjoys, however routine or complex, can be considered as a positive force for motivation. In accordance with this viewpoint, our results show that Japanese regular employees' wellbeing at work was largely affected by having work that gives meaning to their professional life, rather than other external factors such as relationships, evaluations or office environment. In other words, for regular employees of Japanese companies, it is important that work be more than just a means for earning wages. Work should also offer some source of meaning.

Furthermore, Trompenaars found seven dimensions of preferences and values that differ across cultures. For the cultural dimension of individualism vs. communitarianism, which evaluates whether one places importance on being recognized for individual achievements or for contribution to a group/team, Japanese culture is found to be quite communitarian; Japanese employees are more prone to find meaning or *ikigai* in contributing to a group or others than those employees of more individualistic cultures such as the United States, France or Australia which tend to place value on individual achievement and recognition. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2011).

In terms of the hedonic aspects of happiness, or the day-to-day fluctuations in positive sentiments, respondents were asked about the positive and negative emotions they felt at work over the last four weeks as measured by SPANE-P and SPANE-N. In contrast to SWLS-work,

factors external to the respondents' work itself had an impact: work relationships, work evaluation and diversity at work accounted for 29% of positive emotions at work as measured by SPANE-P. This can be explained by the collectivist or group-oriented nature of Japanese culture that has been identified by an abundance of research (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In such a group-oriented culture, happiness or wellbeing is tied to one's relationship with others and one's place in one's group. The interdependent self becomes highly developed and significantly defined in terms of relationships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Gelfand et al., 2001). As such, the relationships employees have at work and how they are viewed (or evaluated) significantly affect the emotions they feel in their day-to-day work lives.

In terms of negative emotions, workspace and diversity accounted for slightly less than 10% as measured by SPANE-N. The regression coefficient for workspace and SPANE-N was negative, meaning that a better workspace led to lower levels of negative emotions at work, or conversely an unsatisfactory workspace meant higher levels of negative emotions. This is explained by Herzberg's Two-factor Theory (1996) which states that hygiene factors, defined as work-related elements that surround but are extrinsic to the job, such as the workspace, lead to job dissatisfaction or unpleasantness when absent, but do not directly lead to job satisfaction when present. In this manner, the results of this survey show that the absence of an adequate or appropriate workspace affected the respondents' emotions negatively.

As described in a previous section, diversity, in terms of nationality, culture, gender, but not age, had both positive and negative effects on employees' emotions at work. It is a double-edged sword in a collective and homogenous culture as Japan. While diversity brings creativity, novel ideas and positive company image, it can also cause disorientation and friction in Japanese companies, whose corporate culture has been traditionally entrenched by both the homogenous population and the practice of life-long employment (Gordon, 2017).

As shown by the above results, subjective wellbeing at work is influenced by both eudaimonic and hedonic happiness, which each had clearly different predictors. Eudaimonic happiness in Japanese regular employees as measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale is predicted by having meaningful work, while hedonic happiness as measured by Scale for Positive and Negative Emotions was predicted by the positive and negative emotions experienced due to work relationships, work evaluations and diversity of co-workers. Both types of happiness are important and should receive attention by management.

6. Implications

6.1 Implications for theory

As stated earlier, little research has examined the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work in Japan. Our results partially confirm some of those from Iwata et al. (2018), who focused on the individual psychological characteristics of the Japanese for subjective wellbeing in general, rather than on predictors which may lie outside the individual. Specifically, we found that meaningful work, related to individual employee characteristics, was the strongest factor, accounting for almost half the variance for the predictors of subjective wellbeing at work among Japanese regular employees. Moreover, meaningful work was identified as the only predictor of SWLS-work, further establishing its influence. This is also consistent with Higashide's (2016) proposed (and yet unsubstantiated) dimension of pleasure, engagement and meaning as a necessary condition for subjective wellbeing at work. The importance of organizational virtuousness, or pervasive positive attributes and behaviors in the firm (Magnier-Watanabe et al., 2020b), was corroborated through the identification of work relationships, culture, workspace, evaluation, and diversity at work as predictors.

Meaningful work, as the most significant of our predictors of subjective wellbeing at work, is not included in the four meta-categories previously identified by Salas-Vallina et al. (2018) in their recent survey of all predictors of subjective wellbeing at work found in the existent literature. Meaning and passion found in the intrinsic value of work is neither a factor related to work context, nor to leadership, to social interactions, or personal resources. We therefore contribute to the wellbeing and motivation literature by uncovering a fundamental predictor of happiness at work. Furthermore, since we identified this predictor in the Japanese context, it may be embedded in this specific national culture, as also suggested by our discussion of the importance of the *ikigai* concept in the country. We therefore add to the literature on Japanese management and cross-cultural organization.

6.2 Implications for practice

In this research, we have found that diversity is a predictor of both positive and negative experiences at work, suggesting that Japanese regular employees are ambivalent about diversity at work. Diversity and its management are believed to indeed have an indirect positive effect on Japanese employees, resulting in stronger organizational commitment by way of satisfying employees' expectations that the company is committed to understanding and utilizing the unique characteristics of each individual" (Magoshi & Chang, 2009, p. 34). However, this research highlights the existence of a concurrent negative effect of diversity in the workplace. While cultural diversity has been heralded as a threat to Japanese homogeneity (Iwabuchi, 2015), it is the first time to our knowledge it is documented with empirical evidence in the context of Japanese firms.

As Japan is preparing to lose 20% of its working population over the next two decades, Japanese firms must be able to retain and recruit talented employees. They must also increase their employees' productivity through enhancing their engagement and motivation (Tritch, 2003) to maintain competitiveness. For practical implications, our results show that for Japanese regular employees, matching workers with jobs that they find meaningful and providing opportunities to increase their skills and responsibilities are the most important factors for increasing satisfaction at work. In the context of Japanese culture which values group-orientation and the concept of *ikigai*, meaningful work or tasks do not have to be ambitious or complex but should provide satisfaction and preferably be appreciated by and/or contribute to others. This value placed on contribution to others or to something that is bigger than one individual is in contrast to value placed on individual achievement and advancement by employees in many western countries.

On the other hand, increased time-off or financial benefits were not shown to have an effect. Considering the comparatively large number of days off and low pay differential among regular employees of similar position and age in companies of similar size and industry, employees may not consider these factors as variable. Furthermore, diversity was found to have both positive and negative effects on employees' subjective wellbeing. This is a serious issue for Japanese firms which must resolve their frequently criticized very low diversity in terms of employee nationality and gender through training and active engagement if they are to regain their competitiveness in the everchanging and global economy. They must be able to take advantage of the unique competencies of non-traditional employees.

7. Conclusion

This research has uncovered eight original factors related to subjective wellbeing at work for Japanese regular employees. These are meaningful work, relationships, culture, workspace,

evaluation, time off, financial benefits, and diversity at work. However, regression analyses showed that eudaimonic and hedonic happiness were found to be caused by different factors. Only meaningful work led to eudaimonic satisfaction of life at work among Japanese regular employees, which is consistent with emphasis placed on *ikigai* and contribution to something bigger than oneself in Japan compared to many other western countries where more emphasis is given to personal achievement (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2011). In contrast hedonic happiness, or day-to-day positive (or negative) emotions were caused by factors external to work itself: work relationships, work evaluation and diversity. The effect of work relationships on positive emotions can be understood to be due to the emphasis placed on belonging to a group or group cohesiveness in Japan.

8. Limitations

One limitation is the small sample size of 229 which did not allow for statistical analysis by demographic categories. In our next study, we hope to build on our findings and expand our sample size in order to investigate the factors that promote subjective wellbeing among gender, job rank, age and employment category (regular, non-regular employees, part-time employees). This will become more important as Japanese companies are starting to find that they need much more flexibility in their human resource management practices as they navigate the acceleration of change in the global business environment.

Although this paper's focus on Japanese regular employees and gives a unique perspective on subjective wellbeing at work in a non-western context, a comparative study across cultures and employment categories (e.g., non-regular and or part-time employees) would provide further insight and confirmation of the findings. Besides core employees, Japanese companies have been relying on a higher proportion of non-regular employees, who act as a buffer in uncertain economic times. Furthermore, as a national strategy Japan is trying to increase the number of foreign professionals working in the country due to the declining workforce. As the number of foreign professionals increase, corporations will have to rethink their management of employee motivation and wellbeing.

Conflict of interest statement

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