

Pitfalls of psychometric construct discussion in a cross-national comparative study

Hideki Hashimoto, MD DPH
Professor in Health and Social Behavior
The University of Tokyo, School of Public Health
hidehashimoto-circ@umin.ac.jp

Focus of this talk

- Use of socio-psychological constructs for X-country comparative purpose in the field of public health, health policy, and social health studies
- Given “valid” psychometric scale for measurement
- Socio-cultural consideration in the interpretation of the results and discussion for implication
- Not exclusive, simply based on my experience so far.
- To open discussion, no intention to provide comprehensive review/conclusive remarks.

Case1

Locus of control “internal” vs. “external”

- A psychological concept that refers to how strongly people believe they have **control** over the situations and experiences in their lives
- Classic categorization by Rotter; internal vs. external (1954)
- Strong and presumed sense of “self” as a center of mind (Cogito!)
- Imagine theoretically what is the association between internal LOC and external LOC?
- My experience

Hashimoto H, Fukuhara S. “The influence of locus of control on preferences for information and decision making” *Patient Education and Counseling*,55 (2):236-240, 2004

Case 2; gender and socioeconomic position

What is known already and intuitively received;

“ Power imbalance between women and men as a source of gender inequality”

- Campos-Serna J, Ronda-Pérez E, Artazcoz L, Moen BE, Benavides FG. Gender inequalities in occupational health related to the unequal distribution of working and employment conditions: a systematic review. *Int J Equity Health*. 2013 Aug 5;12:57. doi: 10.1186/1475-9276-12-57. PMID: 23915121; PMCID: PMC3765149.

“Employed women had more job insecurity, lower control, worse contractual working conditions and poorer self-perceived physical and mental health than men did.”

Then, what is your interpretation of the results below?

- Umeda M, McMunn A, Cable N, Hashimoto H, Kawakami N, Marmot M. Does an advantageous occupational position make women happier in contemporary Japan? Findings from the Japanese Study of Health, Occupation, and Psychosocial Factors Related Equity (J-HOPE). *SSM Popul Health*. 2015 Oct 26;1:8-15. doi: 10.1016/j.ssmph.2015.09.002.

“Our findings suggest that Japanese women in more advantaged occupational positions are likely to be at a greater risk for poor psychological health due to higher levels of effort-reward imbalance at work.”

Case 3; social basis of social integration

- Social capital in the sense of Putnam (republicanism-based group property)
- Classic measurement using a General Social Survey questionnaire
 - “Most people can be trusted (in your neighborhood)”
- 60-70% in the US vs. Less than 50% in Japan
- Intuitively contradictory? (individualism, independent culture in US vs. collectivism, interdependent culture in Japan)
- What you mean by “trust”?

A suggestion

- Masami Nishishiba & L. David Ritchie Ph.D (2000) The concept of trustworthiness: A cross-cultural comparison between Japanese and U.S. business people, Journal of Applied Communication Research, 28:4, 347-367, DOI: [10.1080/00909880009365581](https://doi.org/10.1080/00909880009365581)

“Japanese emphasize organizational commitment, while Americans emphasize personal integrity in judging another's trustworthiness. These differences between the two cultural groups were interpreted as evidence of an “interdependent”; versus an “independent”; view of trustworthiness in an organizational setting, and may help explain persistent miscommunication about trustworthiness between Japanese and U.S. colleagues”

Another view

- Yamagishi, T., Yamagishi, M. Trust and commitment in the United States and Japan. *Motiv Emot* **18**, 129–166 (1994). <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02249397>
- Yamagishi, T., Cook, K., & Watabe, M. (1998). Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation in the United States and Japan. *American Journal of Sociology*, *104*(1), 165-194. doi:10.1086/210005

“A theory of trust proposed by Yamagishi and Yamagishi provides the basis for the prediction that (1) social uncertainty promotes commitment formation between particular partners and (2) high trusters tend to form committed relations less frequently than would low trusters when facing social uncertainty. These predictions receive support in two experiments conducted in the United States and Japan. The findings provide empirical support for the theory of trust that emphasizes the role of general trust (trust in others in general) in emancipating people from the confines of safe, but closed relationships. The results also offer a theoretical explanation for what have been viewed in the past as cultural differences.”