The Structure of Life Satisfaction and Happiness:
A Data Analysis of the “Parental Well-Being Survey” in Germany and Japan

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is a methodological discussion on the analysis of the structure of well-being, and to deal with the “Parental Well-Being Surveys” in Germany (2009) and Japan (2012). For further information, see http://www.dijtokyo.org/pws

The author’s methodological questions are raised over the conceptual schema/model regarding the structure of parental well-being by Hans Bertram and his colleagues. This schema/model is composed of eight circles—one large circle representing the general aspect of well-being is surrounded at even intervals by seven smaller circles representing the specific aspects of well-being: economic well-being, physical and mental well-being, educational well-being, employment well-being, family well-being, family policy well-being, and partnership well-being.

Therefore, the questions are how to confirm this schema/model empirically, and which statistical method is appropriate for data analysis. The author selected Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) developed by Louis Guttman for this data analysis, because this method is an effective tool in visually depicting the structure of parental well-being. The Japanese result yielded a two-dimensional SSA map. This SSA map shows a Radex structure as follows:

1. The life satisfaction items of specific domains are positioned in a space divided into three concentric circles that are centered on overall well-being items—a single item of overall life satisfaction and a single item of overall happiness—and are spread outward in accordance with the degree of content-relevance to the overall well-being items.

2. The life satisfaction items of specific domains are also positioned in a space divided into four wedge-shaped regions—“income/work/education” “health/sleep” “partnership with spouse/childcare support from spouse/work share with spouse/family support” “public financial support/institutional childcare support/time consideration”—by four rays emanating from overall well-being items.

The German results also yielded a SSA map with a basically similar shape except for the deviant position of “partnership with spouse”.

The result above shows that the conceptual schema/model proposed by H. Bertram and his colleagues has been effectively confirmed with the geometrical portrayal of the structure of well-being by SSA. Thus the author has illustrated the utility of Smallest Space Analysis for the understanding of the structure of parental well-being.

Key Words: parental well-being, life satisfaction, feeling of happiness, structure, Smallest Space Analysis (SSA)