

A Cross-Cultural Study on Lifestyles among Workers in Japan, Thailand, and China

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This study was undertaken to explore the following.

1. What lifestyles do the workers have?
2. How do workers in Japan, Thailand and China conceive of Yutori?
3. How are hobbies and sports reflected in their lifestyles?

The research was conducted from November 1998 through March 2001 with the participation of 2772 workers including 687 Japanese workers, 1492 Thai workers and 593 Chinese workers. The questionnaires consisted of 24 lifestyle items and 22 Yutori items. The lifestyles were classified into three kinds: work, leisure and social activity. The difference in lifestyles between workers in Japan and Thailand, and between workers in Japan and China were analyzed. Factor Analysis was applied to Yutori and yielded four factors for Japan, three factors for China, and two factors for Thailand. Lifestyles of Japanese workers were analyzed by *t*-test with regards to hobbies and sports. Male workers who participated in hobbies and sports had higher scores for cognition of life. There were no significant difference for cognition of work, but workers who participated in hobbies and sports had higher scores. In contrast, female workers had significant differences in cognition of life: the workers who participated in hobbies and sports had higher scores.

key words: lifestyles, workers, cross-cultural comparison

ISSUE

Today, the Japanese Economy is in poor condition, the economic growth rate is falling, and unemployment shows little sign of improving. This is affecting the lifestyles of working people in areas such as their work, leisure, home life, and regional community.

In this paper, I would like to explain how workers in Japan, Thailand, and China regard Yutori (Yutori literally means room) and its relationship with sports, their lifestyles, and interests.

—Lifestyle of today's worker—

What is the lifestyle of today's worker? How much desire (orientation) do they have for the involvement in their present work (cognition of present situation for the work), leisure and life, and social activity? The specific problems are as follows.

- i. We suppose that male and female workers have major differences in their lifestyle. In this paper, we analyze relatively young (under the age of 30) Japanese, Thai, and Chinese workers.
- ii. What kind of Yutori do Thai workers desire? How about Chinese workers? The Japanese Yutori structure resulting from factor analysis is classified into four categories, mental activities, time, money and space. We compare and examine if Thai and Chinese workers have the same Yutori structure as Japanese workers.
- iii. Regarding the relationship between leisure activity and the lifestyle, we will clarify how leisure activities affect worker's lifestyles. That is, we discuss if the lifestyle differences will

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be found between workers who are active in hobbies and sports and those who are not.

METHOD

Periods of investigation: May to June 1999 (Japan), June 1999 (China), and December 1998 and March 2001 (twice; Thailand).

Subjects and the method of examination: Subjects are employees of company A, a general manufacturer of housing, lighting, and electrical appliances.

In Japan, we distributed an anonymous questionnaire to 254 male workers and 433 female workers under the age of 30. In Thailand, we distributed the survey to 614 male workers (282 in 1998 and 332 in 2001) and 878 female workers (692 in 1998 and 186 in 2001) of company B, a subsidiary of company A. In China, we distributed the survey to 184 male workers and 409 female workers of joint-venture company C.

We used the Easy Form Questionnaire (1998) of lifestyle¹⁾ developed by the NIP research group. Examination of the lifestyle was categorized into three parts, the cognition of present situation; the orientation to work, leisure and life, and social activities.

There are 24 questions from above three parts. For each question, workers choose an answer from five choices, rated from 1 to 5. A questionnaire on Yutori was also distributed.

The questionnaire on Yutori asks workers how much Yutori they have at present. We asked questions consisting of 22 items. Factor analysis was conducted to clarify the structure of Yutori in each country.

RESULTS AND CONSIDERATION

Lifestyles of Japanese workers, Thai, and Chinese workers

1. Comparison of the lifestyles between Japanese workers and Thai workers

Male: As shown in Table 1-1, Japanese scored 1.70 and Thai workers scored 1.78 on

the cognition of present situation of work. Thai workers are significantly higher in the orientation to work (1.91 for Thai workers and 1.14 for Japanese workers $t(866)=12.934, p<.001$).

In contrast, the present cognition of leisure and life is higher for Japanese than Thai workers (2.33 for Japanese workers and 2.02 for Thai workers $t(866)=5.027, p<.001$). The orientation to leisure and life followed the same trend as the present cognition. Japanese workers are significantly higher than Thai workers ($t(866)=16.637, p<.001$). Thai workers are considerably higher than Japanese workers in the present cognition of social activities (1.13 for Thai workers and 0.37 for Japanese workers $t(866)=12.591, p<.001$). In addition, Thai workers are also higher than Japanese workers in the orientation to social activities ($t(866)=12.301, p<.001$).

Female: The present cognition of work is 1.22 for Japanese female workers and 1.57 for Thai female workers. The orientation to work is 0.77 for Japanese female workers and 1.70 for Thai female workers.

Japanese female workers are significantly higher than Thai female workers in the present cognition of leisure and life (2.70 for Japanese and 1.60 for Thai) as well as in the orientation to leisure and life (3.35 for Japanese female workers and 2.20 for Thai female workers). Thai female workers had a higher score in the present cognition of social activities than Japanese female workers (0.80 for Thai workers and 0.31 for Japanese workers). Thai female workers also had a higher score in the orientation to social activities than Japanese female workers (1.96 for Thai workers and 1.18 for Japanese workers).

As is the case for male workers, Thai female workers have higher scores in the present cognition of work and social activities, as well as in the orientation to social activities. Japanese female workers have a higher score in the present life situation and orien-

¹⁾ The questionnaire of Lifestyle items was made by NIP ASSOCIATES (1998, Japan).

tation to life.

Significant differences ($p < .001$) between Japanese and Thai were found in all aspects.

2. Comparison of the lifestyles between Japanese workers and Chinese workers

Male: Japanese male workers have a significantly higher score in present cognition of work than Chinese male workers (1.70 for Japanese male workers and 1.22 for Chinese ($p < .001$)). In contrast, Chinese male work-

ers have a higher orientation to work than do Japanese male workers (2.22 for Chinese workers and 1.14 for Japanese workers ($p < .001$)).

Japanese male workers had a score of 2.33 for the present cognition of leisure and life, compared to 2.28 for Chinese male workers. Also, Japanese male workers scored 3.28 in the orientation to leisure and life compared to 3.18 for Chinese male workers. Therefore, we can say that there is no difference be-

Table 1-1 Results of lifestyles in Japanese male workers and Thai male workers

	<i>N</i>	C. of Work		C. of Leisure/Life		C. of Social Act.	
		Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
J-male	254	1.70	0.70	2.33	0.79	0.37	0.60
T-male	614	1.78	0.70	2.02	0.84	1.13	0.88
<i>t</i> -Test		1.530		5.027***		12.591***	
	<i>N</i>	O. of Work		O. of Leisure/Life		O. of Social Act.	
		Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
J-male	254	1.14	0.79	3.28	0.66	1.24	0.82
T-male	614	1.91	0.80	2.24	0.90	2.10	0.98
<i>t</i> -Test		12.934***		16.637***		12.301***	

Table 1-2 Results of lifestyles in Japanese female workers and Chinese female workers

	<i>N</i>	C. of Work		C. of Leisure/Life		C. of Social Act.	
		Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
J-female	433	1.22	0.62	2.70	0.76	0.31	0.55
C-female	409	0.98	0.62	2.12	0.75	0.60	0.64
<i>t</i> -Test		5.607***		11.126***		7.055***	
	<i>N</i>	O. of Work		O. of Leisure/Life		O. of Social Act.	
		Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
J-female	433	0.77	0.63	3.35	0.58	1.18	0.86
C-female	409	2.30	0.87	3.09	0.71	2.56	0.92
<i>t</i> -Test		29.310***		5.826***		22.469***	

C. of Work: Cognition of the present situation of Work.

C. of Leisure/Life: Cognition of the present situation of Leisure/Life.

C. of Social Act.: Cognition of the present situation of Social Activities.

O. of Work: Orientation to Work.

O. of Leisure/Life: Orientation to Leisure/Life.

O. of Social Act.: Orientation to Social Activities.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

tween these countries in present cognition and orientation.

Chinese male workers scored significantly higher in the present cognition of social activities than did Japanese male workers (0.86 for Chinese male workers and 0.37 for Japanese male workers ($p < .001$)). In addition, Chinese male workers also scored higher in orientation to social activities than did Japanese male workers (2.62 for Chinese male workers and 1.24 for Japanese male workers ($p < .001$)).

Female: As shown in Table 1-2, Japanese female workers scored significantly higher than did Chinese female workers in the present cognition of work (1.22 for Japanese female workers and 0.98 for Chinese female workers $t(840) = 5.607$, $p < .001$) and orientation of work (0.77 for Japanese female workers and 2.30 for Chinese female workers $t(840) = 29.310$, $p < .001$).

Next, Japanese female workers scored significantly higher than Chinese female workers in both the present cognition (2.70 for Japanese female workers and 2.12 for Chinese female workers $t(840) = 11.126$, $p < .001$) and orientation of leisure and life (3.35 for Japanese female workers and 3.09 for Chinese female workers $t(840) = 5.826$, $p < .001$). And, Chinese female workers scored higher than Japanese female workers in both the present cognition of social activities (0.31 for Japanese female workers and 0.60 for Chinese female workers $t(840) = 7.055$, $p < .001$) and in the orientation to social activities (1.18 for Japanese female workers and 2.56 for Chinese female workers $t(840) = 22.469$, $p < .001$).

These results indicate that Japanese male and female workers participate more actively in the present work, while Chinese male and female workers have a much stronger orientation to become involved in their work. That is, Chinese workers' cognition of work is lower than that of Japanese workers because of severe conditions of their present work. We can thus say that Chinese workers have more desire to become involved in their jobs.

More Japanese female workers are attracted to leisure and life and have stronger orientation toward them. That is, Japanese workers, especially female workers, strongly desire pleasure and fullness of their life, as individualism becomes widely acknowledged. Their cognition of leisure and life is thus high and they also hope to work more. In contrast, both male and female Chinese workers participate in social activities more actively and have a higher orientation to these activities. Therefore, they highly value their local communities and social activities.

Next, comparing Japanese and Thai workers, both male and female Thai workers have a higher score in the present work cognition and orientation to work, the present cognition of social activities and orientation to social activities. Thai workers thus participate in the job more actively and are keen to become involved in their job as well as social activities. Japanese workers are more likely to become involved in their life and it seems that Japanese workers orient their lifestyle to leisure and life. Japanese male and female workers' cognition of leisure and life is higher than that of Thai workers, and they hope to spend more time in leisure.

In contrast, Thai people are devout Buddhists so they value volunteer service in the local community more than individual pleasure of leisure and fullness of life, therefore their cognition and orientation of social activities are both high. It seems that Thai workers are more active in the job and social activities, resulting in the higher score on the present cognition of and orientation to work and social activity.

Analysis by the consciousness of Yutori

For Japanese workers, four factors (time, mental activities, money, and space) were extracted and clearly classified into Yutori (Table 2). For Chinese workers, three factors (money, time and mental activities, and space) were extracted for Yutori (Table 3); for Thai workers, we extracted two factors (Table 4).

① Results of Factor Analysis of Japanese (four Factors)

The first factor extracted was Yutori for money and consisted of the following five questions for males.

6. Is your life stable?
14. Are you satisfied with your income?
15. Do you have enough money for things you like?
16. Are you financially comfortable?
17. Do you have enough savings?

For females, the second factor was Yutori for money and consisted of four questions (14, 15, 16, and 17).

For males, the second factor was Yutori for time. It consisted of six questions.

8. Are you satisfied with the way you spend your time?

9. Do you have enough time for things you like?

11. Do you often spend free time working?

12. Do you often spend free time for your family or friends?

13. Can you take holidays freely?

22. Do you feel that you have Yutori now?

For female workers, the first factor was Yutori for time. It consisted of six questions (8, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 22).

The third factor was Yutori for space and consisted of three questions for males.

18. Are you satisfied with space in your life?

Table 2 Results of Factor Loading in Yutori Scale

4 Factors—Japanese male workers

	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV	Community
I (Room for money)					
6. Is your life stable?	0.557	0.094	0.033	0.260	0.387
14. Are you satisfied with your income?	0.659	0.056	0.136	0.029	0.457
15. Do you have enough money for things you like?	0.550	0.088	0.192	0.098	0.356
16. Are you financially comfortable?	0.886	-0.017	0.073	0.014	0.790
17. Do you have enough savings?	0.695	-0.035	0.083	-0.011	0.492
II (Room for time)					
8. Are you satisfied with the way you spend your time?	0.140	0.549	0.122	0.377	0.478
9. Do you have enough time for things you like?	0.158	0.628	0.147	0.237	0.497
11. Do you often spend free time for your working?	0.044	-0.612	0.013	0.058	0.380
12. Do you often spend free time for your family or friends?	0.012	0.426	0.006	0.120	0.196
13. Can you take holidays freely?	-0.036	0.527	0.126	0.116	0.308
22. Do you feel that you have Yutori now?	0.397	0.482	0.234	0.230	0.498
III (Room for space)					
18. Are you satisfied with space in your life?	0.221	0.111	0.753	0.095	0.637
19. Do you have enough space for yourself?	0.148	0.137	0.724	0.083	0.572
20. Is your house big enough?	0.054	0.036	0.825	0.027	0.686
IV (Room for mental activity)					
2. Do you try to enjoy yourself?	-0.073	0.268	0.042	0.496	0.325
3. Do you always try to improve yourself?	0.023	-0.114	0.045	0.519	0.285
4. Are you enjoying everything?	0.077	0.218	0.052	0.712	0.563
5. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your colleagues at work?	0.140	0.095	0.071	0.526	0.310
7. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your family and friends?	0.220	0.224	0.078	0.420	0.281
Pct of Var (%)	12.408	10.402	9.228	8.652	40.690

19. Do you have enough space for yourself?
20. Is your house big enough?

For female workers, the fourth factor was Yutori for space. Questions for female workers were the same as those for male workers.

The fourth factor was Yutori for mental activity and consisted of five questions for male workers.

2. Do you try to enjoy yourself?
3. Do you always try to improve yourself?
4. Are you enjoying everything?
5. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your colleagues at work?
7. Are you satisfied with the relationship with your family and friends?

Yutori for mental activity (questions 2, 3, 4, and 7) for female workers was the third factor.

The following questions do not appear in Table 2.

1. Do you have stress now?
10. Do you spend long hours on your work (including your commuting time)?
21. Does your working place have enough space?

②Results of Factor Analysis of Chinese (3 Factors)

We extracted three factors from 22 questions for male and female Chinese workers. The first factor was Yutori for money and consisted of the following five questions for male workers.

14. Are you satisfied with your income?
15. Do you have enough money for things you like?
16. Are you financially comfortable?
17. Do you have enough savings?
22. Do you feel that you have Yutori now?

We also extracted three factors for female Chinese workers. The result was similar to that for male Chinese workers. For female workers, it consisted of four questions (14, 16, 17, and 22).

The second factor was Yutori for time and mental activity. It consisted of five questions for male workers.

4. Are you enjoying everything?
5. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your colleagues at work?
7. Are you satisfied with the relationship with your family and friends?

Table 3 Results of Factor Loading in Yutori Scale

3 Factors—Chinese male workers

	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Communality
I (Room for money)				
14. Are you satisfied with your income?	0.616	0.186	0.134	0.433
15. Do you have enough money for things you like?	0.555	0.298	0.096	0.406
16. Are you financially comfortable?	0.790	0.104	0.136	0.654
17. Do you have enough savings?	0.689	0.056	0.069	0.483
22. Do you feel that you have Yutori now?	0.671	0.124	0.364	0.599
II (Room for time and mental activity)				
4. Are you enjoying everything?	0.130	0.408	0.116	0.197
5. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your colleagues at work?	0.107	0.435	0.066	0.205
7. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your family and friends?	0.020	0.535	0.017	0.287
8. Are you satisfied with the way you spend your time?	0.212	0.595	0.173	0.429
9. Do you have enough time for things you like?	0.200	0.606	0.104	0.418
III (Room for space)				
18. Are you satisfied with space in your life?	0.386	0.185	0.528	0.462
19. Do you have enough space for yourself?	0.159	0.229	0.684	0.546
20. Is your house big enough?	0.250	0.191	0.415	0.271
Pct of Var (%)	12.958	9.995	7.455	30.408

8. Are you satisfied with the way you spend your time?

9. Do you have enough time for things you like?

For female Chinese workers, the second factor was the same as for male Chinese workers. It consisted of six questions (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9).

The third factor was Yutori for space and consisted of three questions for male Chinese workers.

18. Are you satisfied with space in your life?

19. Do you have enough space for yourself?

20. Is your house big enough?

For female workers, we extracted Yutori for space which consisted of three questions (18, 19, and 20).

The following questions do not appear in Table 3.

1. Do you have stress now?

2. Do you try to enjoy yourself?

3. Do you always try to improve yourself?

6. Is your life stable?

10. Do you spend long hours on your work (including your commuting time)?

11. Do you often spend free time working?

12. Do you often spend free time for your family or friends?

13. Can you take holidays freely?

21. Does your working place have enough space?

③Result of Factor Analysis of for Thai workers (two Factors)

We extracted three factors for male Thai workers. The first factor is Yutori for money, time, and space and consisted of 16 questions for male workers.

1. Do you have stress now?

Table 4 Results of Factor Loading in Yutori Scale

2 Factors—Thai male workers

	Factor I	Factor II	Communality
I (Room for money, time, space)			
1. Do you have stress now?	0.249	-0.040	0.063
8. Are you satisfied with the way you spend your time?	0.465	0.409	0.384
9. Do you have enough time for things you like?	0.539	0.246	0.351
10. Do you spend long hours on your work?	0.264	0.248	0.131
11. Do you often spend free time for your working?	0.430	0.145	0.206
12. Do you often spend free time for your family or friends?	0.612	0.292	0.460
13. Can you take holidays freely?	0.711	-0.019	0.506
14. Are you satisfied with your income?	0.701	0.125	0.507
15. Do you have enough money for things you like?	0.803	0.033	0.645
16. Are you financially comfortable?	0.675	-0.037	0.457
17. Do you have enough savings?	0.826	0.012	0.683
18. Are you satisfied with space in your life?	0.879	0.156	0.797
19. Do you have enough space for yourself?	0.851	0.202	0.765
20. Is your house big enough?	0.755	0.068	0.574
21. Does your working place have enough space?	0.715	0.110	0.523
22. Do you feel that you have Yutori now?	0.828	0.136	0.704
II (Room for mental activity)			
2. Do you try to enjoy yourself?	-0.071	0.185	0.040
3. Do you always try to improve yourself?	-0.122	0.433	0.202
4. Are you enjoying everything?	0.198	0.394	0.195
5. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your colleagues at work?	0.093	0.568	0.332
6. Is your life stable?	0.322	0.463	0.318
7. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your family and friends?	0.216	0.602	0.409
Pct of Var (%)	33.905	8.153	42.059

8. Are you satisfied with the way you spend your time?
9. Do you have enough time for things you like?
10. Do you spend long hours on your work (including your commuting time)?
11. Do you often spend free time working?
12. Do you often spend free time for your family or friends?
13. Can you take holidays freely?
14. Are you satisfied with your income?
15. Do you have enough money for things you like?
16. Are you financially comfortable?
17. Do you have enough savings?
18. Are you satisfied with space in your life?
19. Do you have enough space for yourself?
20. Is your house big enough?
21. Does your working place have enough space?
22. Do you feel that you have Yutori now?

For female Thai workers, we extracted two factors. The result was similar to that of male workers. For female Thai workers, we found Yutori for money, time, and space as the first factor; it consisted of 15 questions (1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22). The second factor was Yutori for mental activities and consisted of six questions for male Thai workers.

2. Do you try to enjoy yourself?
3. Do you always try to improve yourself?
4. Are you enjoying everything?
5. Are you satisfied with the relationships with your colleagues at work?
6. Is your life stable?
7. Are you satisfied with the relationship with your family and friends?

For female Thai workers, the extracted factor consisted of seven questions (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8).

In conclusion, the structure of Yutori for Thai male and female workers is based on two factors. In contrast, the structure of Yutori is based on four factors for Japanese male and female workers and on three factors for Chinese male and female workers. From these results, Yutori for money, time

and space is a conjunct factor for Thai workers as seen in the first factor. For Chinese workers, the factor of money is independent, and the factor of time and space is a conjunct factor. The living standard of Japanese workers is assumed to be higher than that of Thai and Chinese workers, which makes the structure of Japanese Yutori more divergent. In other words, the GDP of Thailand and China is lower than that of Japan, so we do not believe that the consciousness of Yutori for living differentiates thoroughly to Yutori for work, leisure, time, space, and money.

Results of lifestyle in terms of hobbies and sports for male and female workers

In this part, we analyzed Japanese workers based on the hypotheses below.

Method We compared workers who enjoy hobbies and sports and those who do not enjoy them in their life in terms of work, leisure and life, and social activity.

For male workers, a significant difference was found in the present situation of life ($t(89)=2.08, p<.05$). The same was true for female workers ($t(149)=2.44, p<.01$). Workers who enjoy hobbies and sports scored higher than in the present situation of life than workers who do not enjoy them (Table 5).

For female workers, a significant difference was found in the present situation of life; workers who enjoy hobbies and sports scored higher than workers who do not enjoy them. In conclusion, workers who enjoy hobbies and sports were more actively involved in their life, and female workers had a much stronger desire for life than male workers.

Over all, workers who have hobbies and play sports actively participated in the present situation of life. Before the *t*-test analysis was conducted, it had been anticipated that the people who enjoy hobbies or sports would participate in social activities more positively. However, the result denied this hypothesis. Actually, it was found that the people who did not participate in hobbies or

Table 5 Results of lifestyles in hobbies and sports in Japanese workers

Japan		C. of Work		C. of Leisure/Life		C. of Social Act.	
Male	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Both	70	1.72	0.65	2.59	0.84	0.40	0.65
None	21	1.48	0.79	2.15	0.85	0.38	0.61
<i>t</i> -Test		1.393		2.076*		0.124	
Japan		C. of Work		C. of Leisure/Life		C. of Social Act.	
Female	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Both	77	1.30	0.63	2.77	0.74	0.37	0.66
None	74	1.22	0.77	2.47	0.76	0.39	0.61
<i>t</i> -Test		0.695		2.444**		0.192	

C. of Work: Cognition of the present situation of Work.

C. of Leisure/Life: Cognition of the present situation of Leisure/Life.

C. of Social Act.: Cognition of the present situation of Social Activities.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

sports could spend more time participating in social activities.

As a result, they spent more energy and time for their life than workers who do not have hobbies or play sports. Although no significant difference was found in job involvement, it seems that the lifestyle of male workers is influenced some way.

APPENDIX

Several questions of Lifestyle Scale²⁾

Q 1 Do you spend your salary or pocket money on things related to work?

Q 5 Do you secure leisure time, free time and the time with family after working hours?

Q 9 Do you secure a time for social activities after working hours?

Q13 Would you want to spend much money on something related to work if salary is raised?

Q17 Do you want to do work by making use of hobbies and special abilities?

Q21 Do you want to do work related to social activities?

Responses are based on a five-point scale (from 5-think strongly, many or much- to 1-

don't think so or no)

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²⁾ The questionnaire of Lifestyle items was made by NIP ASSOCIATES (1998, Japan).