

# I

## Introduction and Research Methodology

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Studies on wellbeing and the quality of life have been conducted by national governments, research organizations, international agencies and scholars in the fields of sociology, psychology, economics, management and other disciplines for many decades. The results of these studies provide insights into what makes people happy, enjoy their lives and feel a sense of achievement. The measurement of the quality of life has been operationalized using various approaches such as social indicators, subjective wellbeing or economic indices (Ring *et al.*, 2007; Diener and Fujita, 1997). The social indicators method relies on the use of social statistics such as those related to health and education to measure their effects on the quality of life of people. The subjective wellbeing approach emphasises people's satisfaction with life or their levels of happiness. Similarly, economic indices such as income and the level of poverty have been used as indicators of the quality of life. Responses to these quality of life or wellbeing indicators could be collected at the level of the individual, community, region or country. Country-level data collected over different time periods are particularly useful and important for the governments concerned in measuring the progress made by individual nations over time. Social scientists and policy planners are also interested in the aspirations, values, priorities and worries of individuals and communities, as they provide insights into how the living environment might be enhanced to help people lead more satisfying lives.

The research on wellbeing and the quality of life has also highlighted the multi-dimensionality of these concepts. Both subjective and objective

measures have been used to develop a composite index of quality of life. One of the common approaches adopted to assess quality of life or subjective wellbeing (SWB) is to examine people's evaluation of their lives at both the affective and cognitive levels (Diener, 1984). The affective component is defined "as the balance of pleasures and displeasures in people's lives" (Schimmack, Schupp and Wagner, 2008). The cognitive component is based on subjective evaluation theories of wellbeing (Summer, 1996). People evaluate their lives on the "basis of a comparison of a subjectively constructed ideal and a comparison of their actual life with this ideal" (Schimmack *et al.*, 2008). Cognitive wellbeing is frequently measured as satisfaction with life as a whole and satisfaction with specific domains of life (e.g., material wellbeing, community wellbeing, health and safety).

Take the Quality of Life Index developed by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Chan *et al.*, 2005) as an example. It incorporated both objective and subjective measures and comprised 21 indicators in three sub-groups: the sociocultural sub-index (e.g., mortality rate and life expectancy), the economic sub-index (e.g., housing affordability and rate of unemployment) and the environmental sub-index (e.g., air index and water index). Out of the 21 indicators, six are measures of the subjective feelings of individuals. The respondents were asked to respond to questions on stress, general life satisfaction, press freedom and government performance. Based on all the measures, a composite index was then developed to gauge the quality of life in Hong Kong.

In Singapore, the research on wellbeing and the quality of life has been more fragmented. Although various official and academic data sources on social statistics and economic performance indicators are available, no composite index of the quality of life in Singapore has been systematically reported. However, several studies on life satisfaction as a whole and with specific domains of life, and their relationships to happiness have been conducted (e.g., Kau and Wong, 1995; Kau *et al.*, 1998; Kau *et al.*, 2004; Swinyard *et al.*, 2001). In these studies, life satisfaction was measured at the overall level as well as at the domain level (e.g., satisfaction with types of relationships, job, health, leisure and material comfort). As reported in

Kau *et al.* (2004), comparing 1996 and 2001 figures, Singaporeans' level of satisfaction with life in general has been enhanced. However, their levels of satisfaction with specific aspects of living in Singapore have somewhat decreased.

On a global basis, the World Values Survey has embarked on a study of happiness, life satisfaction and values since 1981. It is a worldwide investigation of sociocultural and political change conducted by a network of social scientists at leading universities all around the world. With regard to life satisfaction, the respondents were asked the question "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" using a scale ranging from 1 for "completely dissatisfied" to 10 for "completely satisfied". On Happiness, they were asked to respond to a question "Taking all things together, would you say you are...." using the scale ranging from 1 for "very happy", 2 for "rather happy", 3 for "not very happy" and 4 for "not at all happy". Past data on these measures for selected countries can be downloaded or analyzed online by assessing its web site at [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/). A global perspective of happiness and life satisfaction was also reported by Inglehart *et al.* (2008).

The research on wellbeing and the quality of life has often examined the influence of extraneous variables such as value orientations and lifestyles on the level of happiness and satisfaction (e.g., Ahuvia, 2002; Hellevik, 2003; La Barbera and Gurhan, 1997; Ryan and Dziurawiec, 2001; Tan *et al.*, 2006). Values are defined as "enduring beliefs that one mode of conduct or end-state of existence is preferable to an opposing mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973). Values can be further distinguished as terminal values (i.e., "desirable states of existence") and instrumental values (i.e., "desirable modes of conduct"). Lifestyles refer to "how people live, how they spend their money, and how they allocate their time", thus alluding to "the overt actions and behavior" of people (Mowen, 1995).

The study of values and lifestyles has been fruitfully integrated into psychographic profiling, a body of techniques that help to define groups or clusters of people based on psychological, sociological, and anthropological factors (Demby, 1994). One of the most well-known psychographic

profiling methods is the Values and Lifestyles (VALS) system reported by Arnold Mitchell (1983) in his book on *The Nine American Lifestyles*. The latest VALS-2 categorization by SRI Consulting Business Intelligence ([www.sric-bi.com/VALS](http://www.sric-bi.com/VALS)) grouped American adult consumers into one of eight segments along two dimensions: primary motivation and resources. Based on these two dimensions, eight consumer segments were developed as follows: (1) Innovators, (2) Thinkers, (3) Achievers, (4) Experiencers, (5) Believers, (6) Strivers, (7) Makers and (8) Survivors.

The VALS system of classification has also been adapted and used in many countries in Europe and Asia. For example in Asia, the Japan-VALS system classifies respondents into ten clusters based on two important attributes: life orientation and attitudes to social change (see [www.sric-bi.com/VALS/JVALS](http://www.sric-bi.com/VALS/JVALS)). In Singapore, the first values and lifestyles study was initiated by Kau and Yang (1991). Over 2000 respondents aged 15 to 40 years answered questions on their value perceptions, moral standards, religious inclinations, concepts about family, pecuniary adherence, attitudes towards education and media credibility, leisure activities, shopping behaviors, media and reading habits, and satisfaction with life. Six segments of Singaporeans were identified based on two dimensions: value perception and psychological orientation. A second values and lifestyles study was conducted in 1996 using a sample of 1600 respondents (Kau, Tan and Wirtz, 1998). In this study, seven clusters of consumers were identified as follows: Traditional Family-Oriented, New Age Family-Oriented, Entrepreneurs, Aspirers, Materialists, Pragmatists, and Independents. These clusters were derived based on six dimensions of the value systems of Singaporeans, namely their orientations towards family values, entrepreneurial spirit, status, traditional values, materialism, and society. In the third study conducted in 2001 with 1500 respondents, eight clusters of consumers were identified: (1) Traditional Family-Oriented (9% of respondents), (2) New Age Family-Oriented (6.1%), (3) Modern Pragmatists (10.5%), (4) Materialistic Entrepreneurs (9%), (5) Entrepreneurial Strivers (9.1%), (6) Dreamers (9.5%), (7) Aspirers (28.3%) and Independents (19.5%). As in the 1996 study, these clusters were found to engage in different lifestyles and demonstrated differences in their aspirations and consuming behaviors (Kau *et al.*, 2004).

In continuing with the research on wellbeing, values and lifestyles, in this book, we report and discuss the results of the 2006 AsiaBarometer Survey using primarily the Singapore respondent database. Familiar themes will be covered such as the standard of living, life satisfaction, satisfaction with specific life domains, priorities in life, happiness, enjoyment, achievement, overall quality of life, and value orientations (such as family values, spirituality, global outlook and the digital lifestyle). In addition, new themes on national identity, democracy and political rights will also be discussed. Additional insights into Singaporeans' feelings and attitudes about these themes are also gained by making suitable comparisons with six other East Asian countries in the 2006 AsiaBarometer Survey database (namely China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam).

## **Overview of the AsiaBarometer Survey**

The AsiaBarometer Survey was launched in 2002 on the initiative of Takashi Inoguchi at Chuo University in Japan. To date, six consecutive annual surveys (from 2003 to 2008) have been completed in 27 countries and two regions in Asia. In outlining the aims, scope and development of the AsiaBarometer Survey, Inoguchi and Fujii (2008) highlighted the theoretical and practical importance of documenting and tracking the values and lifestyles of people in Asia, including the physical, psychological and sociological aspects of their lives. More critically, the AsiaBarometer Survey provides a rich source of data for academics, policy makers, business professionals and laypeople who are interested in exploring and learning more about Asia ([www.asiabarometer.org](http://www.asiabarometer.org)). It is currently the largest comparative survey in Asia, covering East, Southeast, South and Central Asia. Singapore was involved in 2004 and 2006 as part of the AsiaBarometer Survey. In 2004, Singapore was one of thirteen countries of East and Southeast Asia surveyed. In 2006, Singapore was surveyed along with six East Asian societies (China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam).

## Research Methodology

### Survey Questionnaire

Questions in the AsiaBarometer survey were formulated with the input of local experts from each country during annual workshops. The questionnaire focuses on the daily lives of ordinary people in Asia and has nine clusters: (1) living conditions, (2) patterns of daily and economic life, (3) value priorities, (4) subjective quality of life, (5) quality of society, (6) identities, (7) political consciousness, (8) views on social issues, and (9) demographics. These clusters form a fairly consistent core for the surveys conducted across the various years and countries although some fine-tuning is done on a year-to-year basis. Local languages are used in the questionnaire to facilitate understanding and responses from the people surveyed. In the case of Singapore, four languages were used, namely Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English.

### Sampling Procedures

The AsiaBarometer Survey primarily employs a multi-stage stratified random methodology for all of its surveys. Sample sizes have been increasing through the years from 800 (2003 and 2004) to 1000 (2005 to 2007) and then to 2000 (2008). Typically, face-to-face interviewing is used with the exception of the placement method in Japan for the 2003 survey.

Data collection via face-to-face interviews for the Singapore portion of the 2006 AsiaBarometer Survey was conducted by Media Research Consultants Pte Ltd (MRC) from 28 June to 1 August 2006. MRC used the sampling frame from the Department of Statistics (DOS), Ministry of Trade and Industry. The sampling frame adopted a stratified two-stage sample design, using a computerized Master List of Houses in accordance with the specified sampling criteria. The Master List of Houses was derived from the records of all the houses listed during the 2000 Census of Population, and updated monthly to provide a comprehensive sampling frame for household surveys. MRC used the most updated sampling frame when the survey was commissioned. The Polling Districts (PDs) were stratified by three predominant house types, namely Public Housing (HDB), Private Houses and

Apartments and Others (Attap/Zinc-roofed houses and shophouses). The PDs were selected with probability proportional to size (i.e., number of houses within each PD).

Within each selected PD, housing units were stratified by detailed housing types such as detached, semi-detached, terrace houses and the various public housing room types (e.g., 1 to 5 rooms, Executive flats, etc.). For every selected PD, housing units were selected by systematic sampling with a random start. The age of the selected respondents should be between 20 to 69 years, and who had most recently celebrated his/her birthday within the selected household. A total of 1038 respondents completed the survey.

## Sample Description

Table 1 presents the profile of respondents who were surveyed in Singapore as part of the 2006 AsiaBarometer study. The profile is organized along the lines of the six demographic variables that will be used in further analyses and comparisons of the findings. These demographic variables are gender, marital status, age, education, income (annual household income) and religion. The sample had more female respondents (54.2%) compared to male respondents (45.8%). Most respondents (69.7%) are married and approximately a quarter (25.7%) are single. Widowed (1.6%) and divorced/separated (2.9%) respondents comprised a small proportion of the sample. In terms of age, the two larger groups of respondents are those aged 40–49 years (28.3%) and those aged 30–39 years (27.7%).

For income, the majority are medium-income earners of \$2000–\$5000 (48%). Those earning less than \$2000 (27.8%) or more than \$5000 (24.2%) are almost equal in proportion. There are 18.2 percent who have a university or postgraduate qualification, while most would have completed at least secondary school (81.5%). Buddhists (30.1%) comprised the largest religious group in the survey, followed by Muslims (21.4%) and Christians (16.7%). As some demographic segments of the sample are very small in absolute numbers, care should be taken in interpreting statistical results in terms of representativeness and generalizability.

**Table 1** Profile of Respondents

AsiaBarometer Survey 2006	Percent	N	Singapore General Household Survey 2005*	Percent	N
1. Gender			1. Gender		
— Male	45.8	475	— Male	49.0	1,357,377
— Female	54.2	563	— Female	51.0	1,412,913
Total	100	1038	Total	100	2,770,290
2. Marital status			2. Marital status		
— Single	25.7	267	— Single	31.0	858,133
— Married	69.7	724	— Married	61.4	1,700,462
— Divorced/ separated	2.9	30	— Divorced/ separated	2.8	76,346
— Widowed	1.6	17	— Widowed	4.9	135,349
Total	100	1038	Total	100	2,770,290
3. Age			3. Age (excluding 15–19)		
— 20–29	19.7	204	— 20–29	19.0	347,724
— 30–39	27.7	288	— 30–39	24.4	446,679
— 40–49	28.3	294	— 40–49	26.0	476,447
— 50–59	17.2	179	— 50–59	20.4	372,917
— 60–69	7.0	73	— 60–69	10.2	186,508
Total	100	1038	Total	100	1,830,275
4. Education			4. Education <sup>†</sup>		
— No formal education	2.0	21	— No formal education	17.2	335,527
— Primary school	16.5	171	— Primary school	10.5	205,224
— Secondary/ ITE	44.3	460	— Secondary school	30.9	600,717
— GCE A/ diploma	19.0	197	— GCE A/ diploma	23.7	460,396
— University	18.2	189	— University	17.7	343,791
Total	100	1038	Total	100	1,945,655

*(Continued)*

**Table 1** (Continued)

AsiaBarometer Survey 2006	Percent	N	Singapore General Household Survey 2005*	Percent	N
5. Household income			5. Household income		( <sup>000</sup> )
— No income	3.0	30	— No income	10.1	106.4
— \$1000 or below	6.4	54	— Below \$1000	4.8	50.6
— \$1001– \$2000	18.4	185	— \$1000– \$1999	12.5	130.8
— \$2001– \$3000	22.3	224	— \$2000– \$2999	12.7	133.5
— \$3001– \$4000	15.7	158	— \$3000– \$3999	11.5	120.2
— \$4001– \$5000	10.0	101	— \$4000– \$4999	9.3	97.9
— \$5001– \$6000	6.9	69	— \$5000– \$5999	7.9	82.5
— \$6001– \$7000	5.0	50	— \$6000– \$6999	6.3	65.7
— \$7001– \$8000	4.1	41	— \$7000– \$7999	5.0	52.1
— \$8001– \$9000	2.7	27	— \$8000– \$8999	3.9	41.1
— \$9001– \$10,000	1.7	17	— \$9000– \$9999	2.8	29.7
— More than \$10,000	3.9	39	— \$10,000 and over	13.2	138.3
Total	100	1038	Total	100	1049.0

\*Resident Population aged 15 years and above.

†Resident Non-students aged 15 years and above.

Source: General Household Survey 2005, Dept of Statistics, Singapore [www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/ghsr1.html](http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/ghsr1.html).

**Table 1** (Continued)

AsiaBarometer Survey 2006	Percent	N	Singapore Population Census 2000 <sup>‡</sup>	Percent	N
Religion			Religion		
— Buddhism	30.1	312	— Buddhism	42.5	1,060,662
— Islam	21.4	222	— Islam	14.9	371,660
— Christianity	16.7	173	— Christianity	14.6	364,087
— Hinduism	9.0	93	— Hinduism	4.0	99,904
— Taoism	8.5	88	— Taoism	8.5	212,344
— Other religion	1.7	17	— Other religions	0.6	15,879
— No religion	12.8	133	— No Religion	14.8	370,094
Total	100	1038	Total	100	2,494,630

<sup>‡</sup>Based on Singapore Population Census 2000 for residents aged 15 years and above.  
Source: Tambyah, SK *et al.* (2009).

## Representativeness of Sample

The profile of respondents is matched against the national averages derived from the 2005 General Household Survey for gender, marital status, age, education and income. For religion, national averages from the 2000 Population Census were used as the 2005 General Household Survey did not have comparable figures. Singapore's population stands at 4,351,400 as at end June 2005, an increase of 1.6 percent per annum since 2000. Of this population, 18.3 percent (797,000) is non-resident. Based on the national population of individuals aged 15 years and above, the gender ratio is 49 percent male and 51 percent female. Thus males seemed to be a little under-represented in the sample. For marital status, singles (31%) and widowed individuals (4.9%) are under-represented, while married individuals (61.4%) are over-represented. In terms of age groups, people in their fifties and sixties are under-represented while those in their thirties and forties are over-represented. For education, those with no formal education and GCE A level/Diploma education are under-represented while those with primary

and secondary level education are over-represented. In terms of income, the low income group (those with no income and/or earning less than \$2000) comprised 27.8 percent of the sample. This percentage is close to the 27.4 percent in the population. The medium income group (those earning \$2000 to \$4999) is over-represented in the sample (48%) compared to the population (33.5%). In contrast, the high income group comprising those earning \$5000 and more is under-represented (24.3% of the sample) compared to 39.1 percent of the population. For religious groups, Buddhists and those with no religion are slightly under-represented in the survey and Muslims and Hindus were over-represented. Taoists and Christians would be considered adequately represented.

In the following chapters, our discussion on the findings will take into account similarities and differences among various demographic groups. For marital status, we will only compare the responses of single and married people as the numbers for those who are divorced, widowed or separated are too small. For education, we have three levels namely, low (those with no formal education or primary school education), medium (those with secondary/GCE O Level, post secondary/ITE or GCE A Level/Diploma qualifications), and high (those with university or postgraduate degrees). Similarly, we have three levels of income. They are low (those earning \$2000 or less), medium (those earning \$2001 to \$5000), and high (those earning \$5001 and more). To facilitate comparisons among the religious groups, we have reclassified the groups as follows: (1) Christians (which includes Catholics and Protestant Christians), (2) Muslims, (3) Buddhists (which includes Taoists), (4) Hindus and (5) None (those with no religion).

For the cross-country comparisons with the six East Asian countries mentioned earlier, although we are not able to conduct detailed demographic analyses for these countries, the general means and percentages would still provide us with valuable insights into how respondents in these various countries felt about key social and political issues.

## **Organization of Book**

In Chapter 2, we evaluate the perceptions of Singaporeans with regard to their standard of living in Singapore and their satisfaction with specific

life domains in their physical, social and spiritual environment. The 16 life domains were housing, friendships, marriage (for those who are married), standard of living, household income, health, education, job, neighbors, public safety, the condition of the environment, the social welfare system, the democratic system, family life, leisure and spiritual life. After an overview of Singaporeans' standard of living and life satisfaction, we focus on the priorities in life for Singaporeans in Chapter 3. Priorities in life refer to the resources and activities which people consider important in helping them to live a satisfying life. We juxtapose these with the top worries of Singaporeans, and then assess how Singaporeans feel about the various areas of government spending and how some of these concerns may be addressed.

In Chapter 4, we explore the more affective aspects of wellbeing by having Singaporeans evaluate how happy they were, whether they were enjoying life, and if they felt they had achieved what they wanted in life. We also discuss Singaporeans' overall quality of life using a composite index of responses on the three dimensions of happiness, enjoyment and achievement. In Chapter 5, we discuss the value orientations and lifestyles of Singaporeans, in terms of their family orientation, their spirituality, their global outlook, and their digital lifestyle.

In Chapter 6, we examine the essence of the Singaporean national identity using indicators such as English fluency, national identification and national pride. We also assess how Singaporeans feel about the superiority of their culture, their opinions about restrictions on the foreign workforce and their views about patriotic education. In Chapter 7, we discuss how Singaporeans feel about democracy and political rights such as the system of governance, their involvement in political action, their level of satisfaction with the scope of rights, their views about political rights and the influence of media.

After highlighting the various aspects of the quality of life for Singaporeans, we examine the influence of demographic and non-demographic factors on the wellbeing of Singaporeans. The results of the regression analyses are reported in Chapter 8. The indicators of wellbeing, namely, happiness, enjoyment, achievement and the overall quality of life were used as dependent variables. Twenty one independent variables were used. Four were demographic variables (gender, age, education and income). Seventeen

were non-demographic variables (fluency in English, religiosity, satisfaction with the personal life sphere, satisfaction with the interpersonal life sphere, satisfaction with the public life sphere, national pride, ethnocentrism, and how well the government is dealing with different issues in the country). Finally in Chapter 9, we review the significant results gleaned from the 2006 AsiaBarometer Survey, and outline their implications for the wellbeing of Singaporeans.