

# Ikigai in the Workplace and its Impacts on Happiness

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## ABSTRACT

In an exceptional society, each person would follow their belief and their dream of becoming whatever or whoever they want. In American society we have been constricted under the influence of schooling and the common American society's ideals. These shared ideals of the American community have led students to believe in the pursuit of wealthiness, which in turn has also guided a lack of passion among American citizens. In Japan, the focus is less on the interest in pursuing a wealthy life in riches, but more in the pursuit of a fulfilled life through the continued use of Ikigai. Each person does think about the wealth that will be accumulated in their profession, but they focus more on the fulfillment of the job in relation to their "meaning of life", or their Ikigai. Ikigai in a profession falls under four common categories, what the world needs, how talented you are in the profession, how much you love/like your job, and the income the job provides (Hughes, 2021). Those that can meet these categories in their job are said to be happier than someone who does not. The purpose of this study is to determine if Ikigai in the workplace really leads to a happier life. The results of this study support the theory of Ikigai leading to increased happiness in life.

## Background

In several areas of Japan, particularly Okinawa, the practice of Ikigai in the workplace is said to increase the life expectancy of the citizens living there, and people associated with Ikigai are far less likely to be intertwined with diseases and illnesses (Seko & Hirano, 2021). Among elderly women in Japan, Ikigai is a way to help maintain connectivity with other citizens by giving them a purpose through working. Ikigai helps put more people out in the environment instead of spending their retirement in a laze. With the elderly being constantly stimulated, and not over-stimulated, they are able to live longer lives. Stimulation increases the functionality of the brain, which leads to a healthier brain, and a healthier life (Ridding & Ziemann, 2010). People who are isolated from their own archetype are more likely to be depressed because of their lack of positive emotion from Ikigai. These positive emotions stem from the fulfillment of a person's life. If an elderly woman does not have any positive stimulation, due to the lack of working any kind of job, small or large, it will lead them to a more depressing life (Seko & Hirano, 2021). If a person is more eudemonic from the start of their adolescent years, they will have a surplus of positive stimulation and live a healthy life because of their passion for their profession. From the Heian period until this day, Ikigai has been used to fulfill adolescence and elderly lives in Japan, and is opposite of the American society's social condition: affluenza. Japan strives to find wealth psychologically, while America strives to find materialistic wealth. The Japanese government has even set policies in place for people (especially the elderly) with lots of free time (Kabasawa et al., 2021). This includes a one-call center, the Ikigai Lifestyle Center, which gives people with an excess free time something to do (*Japan gets serious about Ikigai*).

## Methods

The method for collecting data in this study was an anonymous survey that would question the level of happiness of the person on a daily basis, the level of skill of the person in their profession, how important their profession is to the environment around them (in their opinion), and how much they like their job. The topics for these questions were created in direct relation to the criteria that contribute to Ikigai in the workplace. In addition to these questions, a question to identify the responder's happiness level on a daily basis was included to determine the relationship between the Ikigai criteria and the happiness level of each person. The only demographic question included identifying their age range (if they felt comfortable doing so) to see the correlation between different ages and different happiness levels.

These questions were used to show the relationship between their job and their happiness to show the impact of the skill, liking, and importance of one's job correlation to someone's happiness. The Likert scale of 1-5 was used on each question to get a more accurate response than a general polar question, as the questions were based on the responder's feelings. Responses were collected from over 330 people from unique audiences with a variety of ages via social media to maintain unbiased evidence. The responses for the happiness level on each rating of the Likert scale averaged into one number for each question to contain condensed, unambiguous data. The data collected was synthesized into a composite score that shows the average happiness rating for each score on each Ikigai question. The chart shows the relationship between Ikigai in the workplace as a whole to the happiness levels to show if Ikigai has an effect on happiness in total.

## Results

Jobs Benefit to Society's Correlation to Happiness

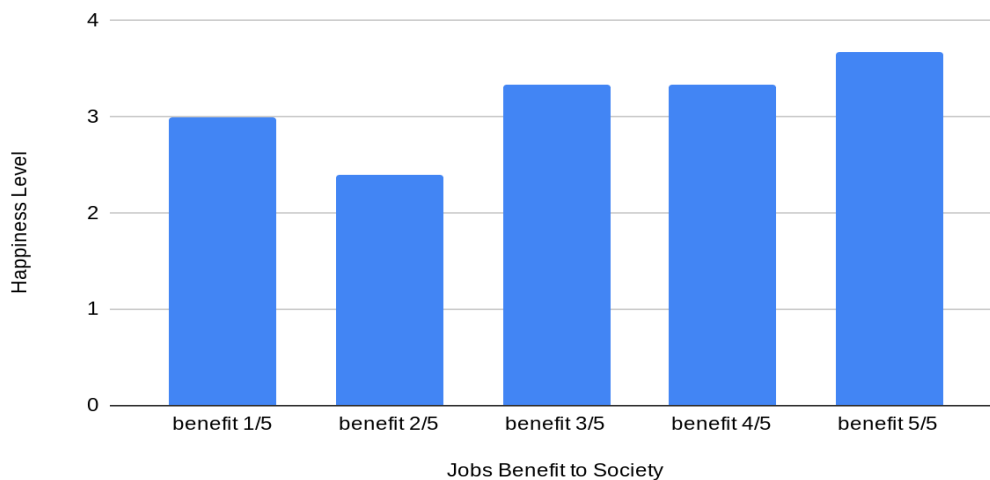
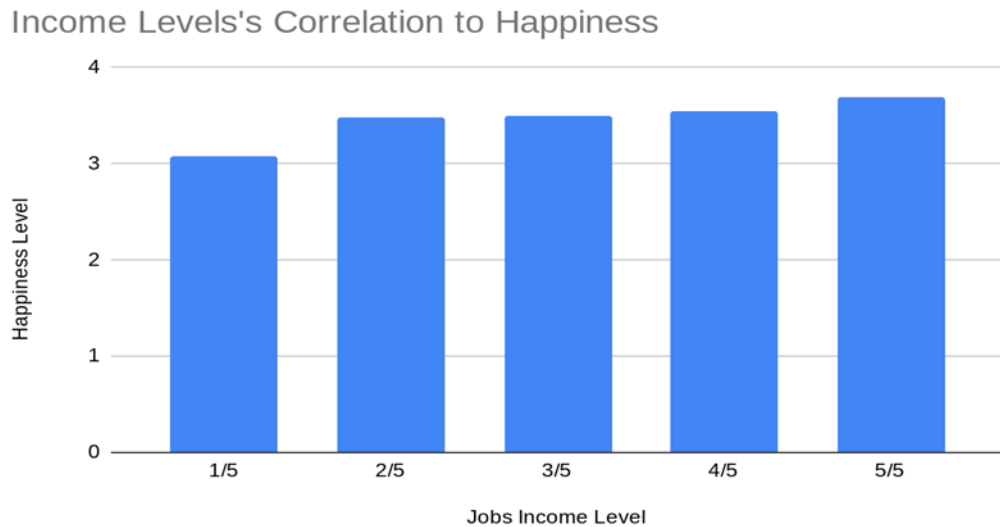


Figure 1. Jobs Benefit to Society's Correlation to Happiness.

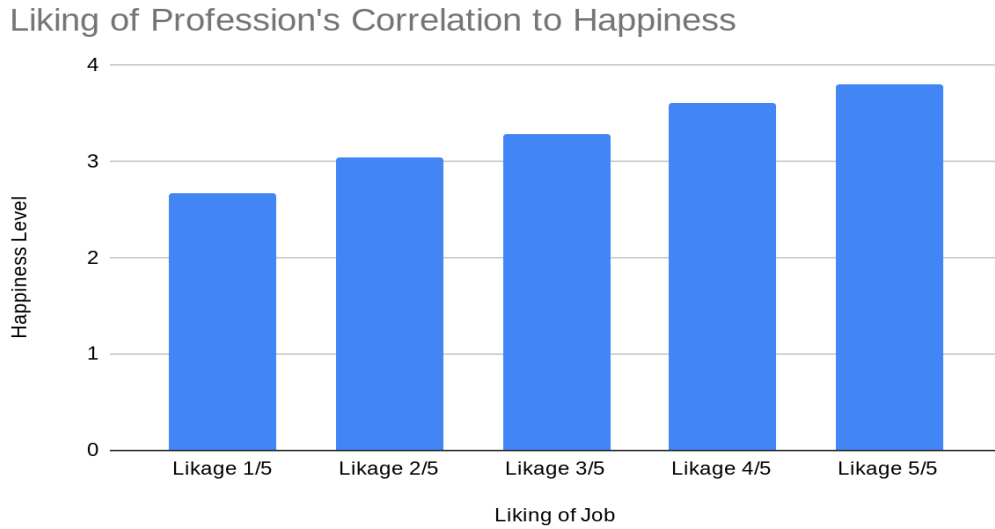


**Figure 2.** Skill in one's Profession Correlation to Happiness.

Note: Due to no participants selecting that they were a 1 out of 5 on skill, there is only 2-5 instead of the common 1-5 scale that had been used for every other one.



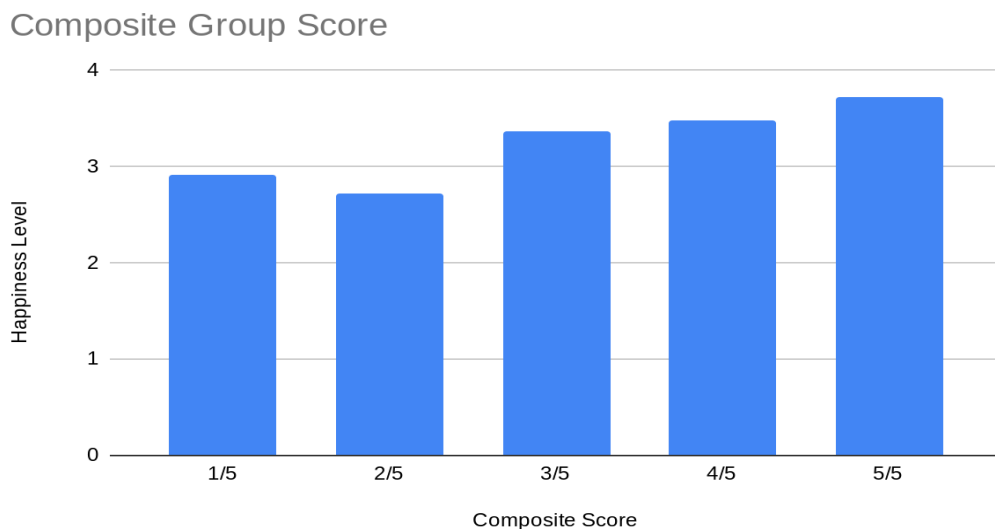
**Figure 3.** Income Level's Correlation to Happiness.



**Figure 4.** Liking of Profession’s Correlation to Happiness.

## Discussion

Based on the data collected, Figures 1-4 above show that each question can be seen having an increase in happiness level as the responses increased on the Likert scale. This trend was also seen in the composite scale chart, Figure 5 below, which shows that Ikigai as a whole leads to higher levels of happiness. The composite score was created for each responder by calculating the average for all four of the Ikigai criteria questions and Figure 5 displays that composite score in relation to their identified happiness score.



**Figure 5.** Composite Group Score

## Limitations

Although a large sample size was collected for this data sample, there was only one demographic question which identified their age range. The study could have been more beneficial by including more demographic questions to show correlations between an individual's background and the specific question (such as levels of education). Additionally, gathering more information about the type of profession of each individual could illustrate different satisfaction levels of their job and also give insight to how meaningful they think their profession is to society.

## Additional Findings

**Table 1.** Trends of Ages to Ikigai in the workplace components

	Averages for n/a	averages 18-30	averages 31-40	averages 41-50	averages 51-60	averages 60+
Meaningful to Society	5	4.583333333	4.379310345	4.305882353	4.693548387	4.810810811
How Happy are you daily	4	3.4	3.471264368	3.447058824	3.483870968	3.863013699
Income Compared to Average	3	3.916666667	3.770114943	3.535714286	3.967213115	3.694444444
Skill In Profession	4	3.84	4.310344828	4.282352941	4.403225806	4.472972973
Love for Profession	3	3.24	3.896551724	3.894117647	4	4.273972603

Note: Each response is on a Likert scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least and 5 being the most. The income is compared to the national average for the USA, which is 54,132 (Russo, 2022).

Table 1 identifies the trend and relationship between each age's average answer for each question. A clear trend cannot be identified based on the table above in regard to the questions related to their profession being meaningful to society, their income compared to the average, and their skill in their profession. However, the trends that are shown in the table are the relationship between happiness and age, and the relationship between love for profession and age. Based on the table above it can be concluded that as a person gets older, they become happier on a daily basis, and their love for their profession also increases. With these trends shown, it can be argued that the results from the Ikigai test are faulty. However that is only true to an extent, as the group sampled contained a large amount of people and had a large variety, meaning that the data from the older age group did not sway the entire experiment's results.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded from the data obtained in this study that meeting the criteria in Ikigai in a profession leads to an increase in happiness for the individual. Further research should be conducted on Ikigai in the workplace

to include additional demographic information and a larger sampling to further improve the integrity of this study.

## Acknowledgments

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