

**Happiness and Public Satisfaction in East Asian Confucius Societies (China, Korea, Japan)
and Mongolia¹**

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Introduction

In this paper, I examine some questions about happiness and public satisfaction based on global, regional and local surveys through the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with various aspects of life and percentages expressing happiness and unhappiness and their balance. Given the limited empirical data available in existing archival sources, I cannot investigate the full range of accounts, measurements, and sources of happiness. However, three data sets will be used to conduct a comparative assessment of happiness and public satisfaction in Mongolia as well as three East Asian Confucius societies: China, Japan, and South Korea.

China, Japan and Korea are all three of Confucian-influenced countries which is one of the eight distinctive cultural zones (Inglehart et al., 2005). These societies have cultures that have largely been shaped by the teachings of Confucius and his disciples. For all these countries I can find comparable data from archived sources and surveys. The three data sets that I used here are: World Values Survey, AsiaBarometer Survey, and CCPR NUM² Survey.

For instance, the World Values Survey will be used in this paper as for comparison between China, Japan, and South Korea. Moreover, I test the questions with the AsiaBarometer surveys which widely focused on the daily lives of ordinary people in certain Asian countries. As the core spirit and scope of the AsiaBarometer is concentrated on the life of ordinary people (Inoguchi, 2005), it seems reasonable to consider how happy they feel about their lives; what they worry about and so on. As for Mongolia, the data from the survey conducted by the author in 2010 can be compared to the findings of the AsiaBarometer 2005 Survey, offering an invaluable insight into views of the Mongolians over this period of time.

In order to deal with the questions, I structured this paper into the following parts. The paper will, firstly, give an overview of the surveys I used here. In the second section, I highlight philosophical accounts of happiness while focusing on Confucianism and contemporary social science reviews of happiness. Then I explore the levels of happiness of ordinary people in Mongolia and East Asian Confucius societies like China, Japan, and Korea, in both a descriptive and comparative approach. Last but not least, I consider what satisfies East Asian and Mongolian society and the degree of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with various aspects of life including the private life and public system.

Methodology

Methodologically, this paper builds on the outcome of the following global, regional and local surveys which are undertaken in 2005, 2006 and 2010, respectively:

1. Global survey: The World Value Survey is a global research project that explores people's values and beliefs, how they change over time and what social and political impact they have. It is carried out by a worldwide network of social scientists who, since 1981, have conducted representative national surveys in almost 100 countries.
2. Regional survey: The AsiaBarometer Survey was conducted by Shin Joho Center in Tokyo and its partners in different countries. The AsiaBarometer is a comparative survey in Asia, focusing on the daily lives of ordinary peoples in Asia. It started in 2003 and has been conducted every year with different sets of countries surveyed each year. The survey was founded and led by professor Takashi Inoguchi from University of Tokyo (as of the survey year). The year 2005 survey focused on South and Central Asia comprising 14 societies, and Mongolia was included in it.

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3. Local survey: The CCPR Survey 2010, which was funded by the Asia Research Center³ of the National University of Mongolia, focused on public trust in political and public institutions in Mongolia. The survey was led by Turtogtoh Janar, professor at the National University of Mongolia, and it covered respondents in different areas in Mongolia.

What is Happiness?

Mencius, who was educated by the pupils of Zisi, Confucius' grandson, argued that there are three things that make a gentleman happy (Bruya 2005: 87). If he has these things and he was offered the whole land, he would not even consider the exchange.

- The first is to have his parents alive and well and to be on good terms with his brothers.
- The second is to not be ashamed when raising his head to Heaven or lowering his head to mankind.
- The third is to be able to teach the brightest and most talented students in the land.

If a gentleman has these three things to make him happy and you were to offer him the whole world, he would not even consider it. A gentleman's happiness comes from the satisfaction of his own nature, which can't be likened to any kind of happiness received from prizing exterior things.

Confucian philosophy concerning the constitution of "the human" can be summed up by intersubjectivity. When Confucianism speaks of *Ren* (Human Sensibility), *Xiao* (Filial Piety), *San Gang Wu Lin* (Three Principles, Five Bonds in human relationships), and the cultivation of self and family as the first step in the establishment of safe and sound government as well as world peace, it is to point out that the foundation of society is not the liberated individual as such, but the networking of intersubjective individuals.

Nature of human happiness (Vanier 2002) and human existence (Hudson 1996; Lane 2000) are must be in interconnectivity and be in harmonious. Happiness founds the quality of life, harmonization of human being. In *Ethics*, Aristotle clarified that happiness is main but final good.

Happiness is a feeling for a short duration. In this sense, one's happy feelings are often identified as the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain.

"Happy with" or "happy about" something is another use of happiness. These expressions mean "being satisfied with" or "contented with", and do not imply that one has any particular feeling.

In a broad sense, "happy" is used to characterize the quality of human life rather than making a statement about a particular aspect of life. Happiness is the key to life. In this sense, when one person says that he/she is happy, this means that he/she has a happy life, a life in which all of his life objectives come together to form as a harmonious and satisfying whole (Simpson 1975). Human being has always been in pursuit of happiness.

Having considered all above philosophical accounts of happiness, positive life experiences of enjoyment, satisfaction, and achievement constitute the three main components of happiness (Shin and Inoguchi 2009).

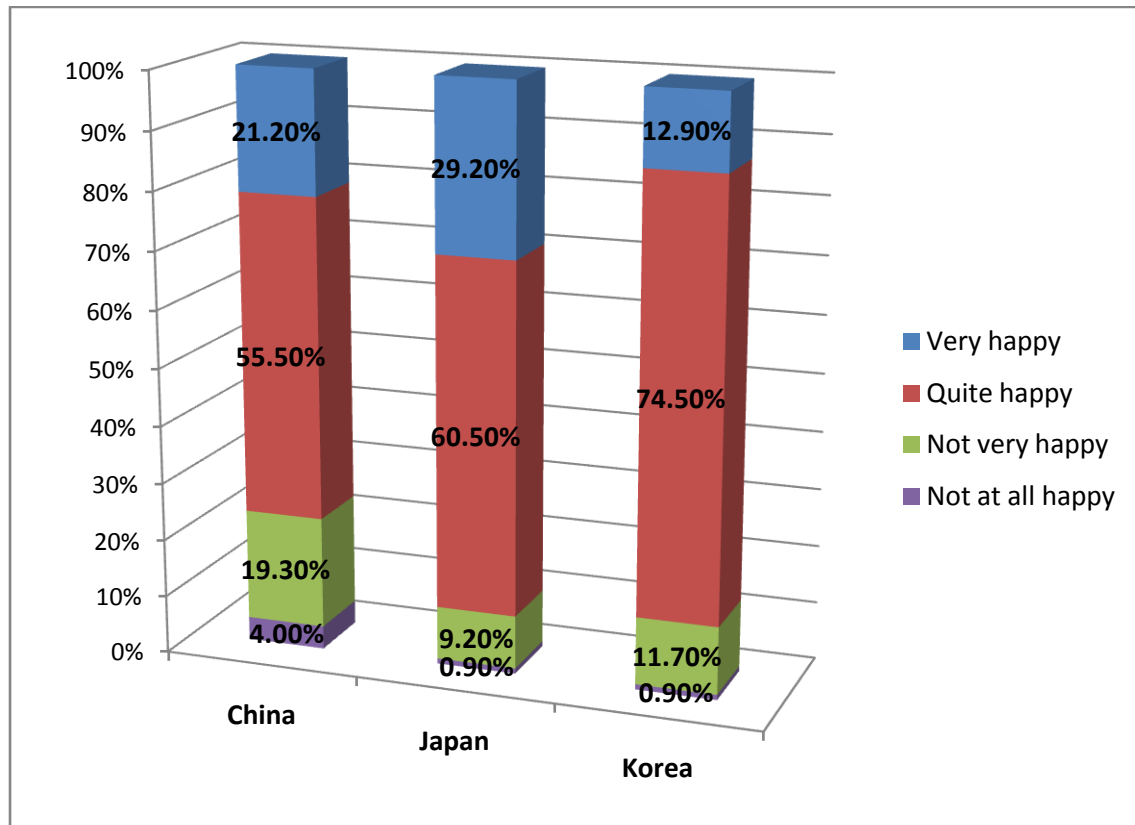
Happiness of Ordinary People

³ This research survey has been done within the framework of the project on "Public Confidence in Political and Social Institutions: A Comparative Study" supported by the Asia Research Center in Mongolia and the Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies, Korea, 2010-2011.

When asked about their feeling of happiness (“Taking all things considered, would you say you are happy these days?”), as in World Values Surveys, the respondents in China, Japan and Korea expressed their feelings (Figure 1).

For these countries, as indicated in World Values Survey 2005-2007, total sample was 4,267, and in those of Confucian societies, most of people are happy. Unhappy levels are significantly low in those societies, namely 23.3 percent in China, 10.1 percent in Japan, and 12.6 percent in Korea. Especially, Japanese respondents are dominating in this questionnaire by happy percentages as 89.7. Most happy people were Japanese in 2005.

Figure 1. Feeling of happiness



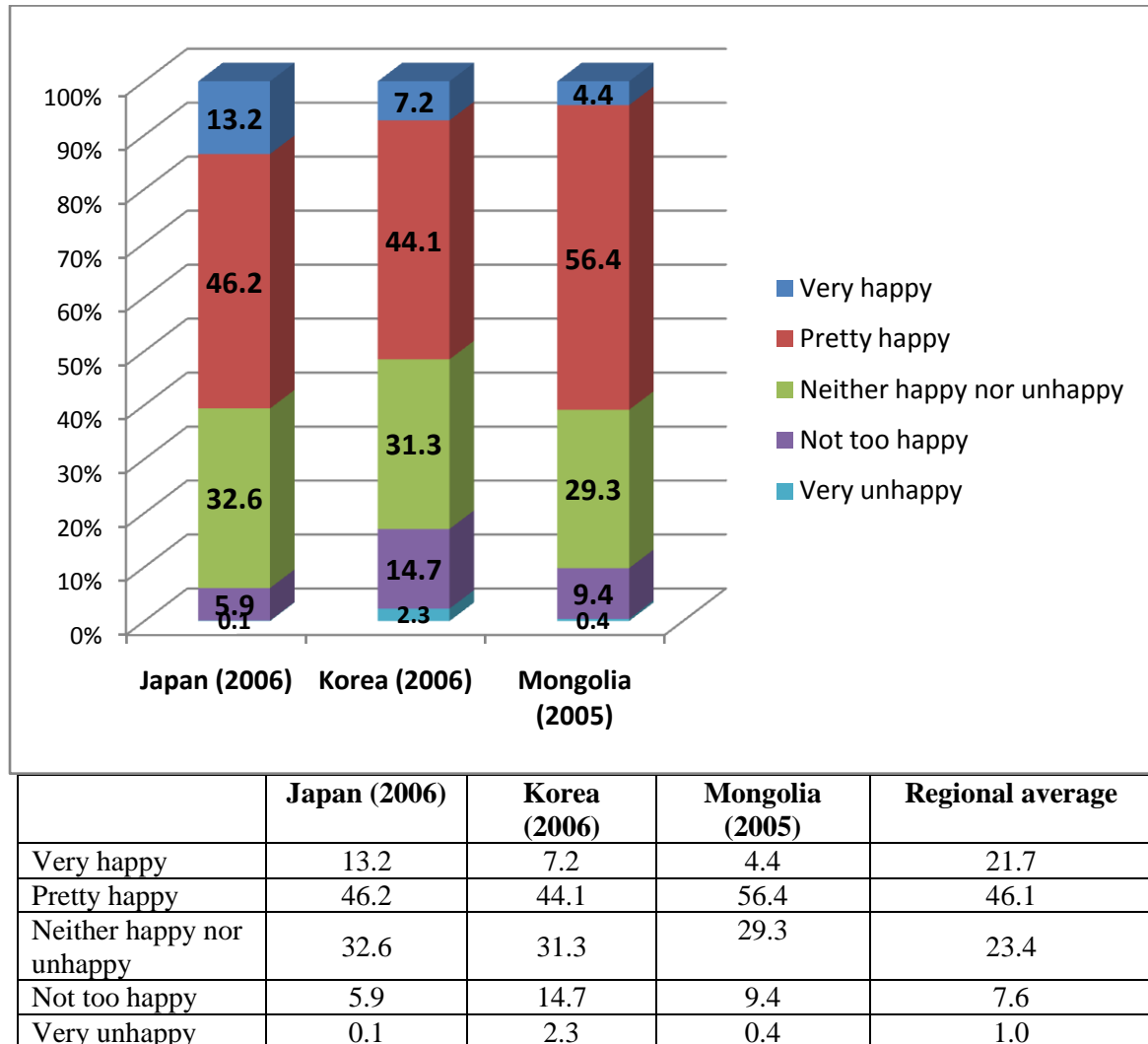
	Frequency	Total valid percent	China	Japan	Korea
Very happy	890	20.9%	21.2%	29.2%	12.9%
Quite happy	2650	62.1%	55.5%	60.5%	74.5%
Not very happy	625	14.6%	19.3%	9.2%	11.7%
Not at all happy	103	2.4%	4.0%	0.9%	0.9%
Total sample	4267	100%	2001	1066	1200

Source: World Values Surveys Databank – Selected countries/samples: China [2007], Japan [2005], South Korea [2005]

Although it is unclear, somehow, what constitutes happiness, the survey asked, “All things considered, would you say you are: -very happy, -quite happy, -neither happy nor unhappy, -not too happy, or -very unhappy these days?” However, this particular question enabled respondents to distinguish between being happy and feeling happy. In 2006 AsiaBarometer Survey covered those of Japan, Korea and Mongolia, and result was people in Japan happy as 59.4 percent while it was 51.3 percent in Korea, and 60.8 percent in Mongolia (Figure 2).

As of AsiaBarometer, Mongolians was the happiest comparing to those two of Confucian societies. Unhappy levels are increased for the Korean respondents. World Values Survey in 2005 shows 10.1 percent of Korean respondents are unhappy, and this increased to 17.0 percent in 2006.

Figure 2. Happiness (percentage of respondents)



Source: 2005 and 2006 AsiaBarometer Survey

Comparing Japan, Korea, and Mongolia, of the five response categories, Table 2 shows that respondents in Japan answered mostly positive as 13.2 percent is very happy and 46.2 percent is pretty happy whereas these levels in Korea is 7.2 percent and 44.1percent. The lowest score for very happy answers is 4.4 percent as of Mongolia. However, in terms of other levels of happiness, Mongolia is between Japan and Korea.

Happiness is based on a fairly subjective assessment and hence it is hard to generalize from these results to say more about life in these countries, expressed satisfaction with their daily lives. However, this is another issue.

As for the population groups all four cases can be compared in Table 1. Education brings happiness widely in selected countries, except Japan. But money really does in all cases. Married Japanese are most happy population groups as well. Mongolia is as same as Confucian societies, isn't it?

Table 1. The least and most happy of population groups

	Least happy	Most happy
China (2006)	-Unmarried -Low income	-High education -High income
Japan (2006)	-Unmarried -Low education	-Married -High income
Korea (2006)	-Old age -Low education	-High education -High income
Mongolia (2005)	-Mid age -Low income	-High education -High income

Source: 2005 and 2006 AsiaBarometer Surveys

However, the reasons of unhappy feelings are somehow different for the countries. Low income is same reason for Mongolians and Chinese, whereas low education is same for Japan and Korea. These are in contrast of happy groups. But unmarried people's case, Japan is same as China. Aged Koreans are another unhappy population groups, and mid-aged people in Mongolia is also least happy group.

Therefore, we can see that reasons to be happy and unhappy are almost similar in those of three Confucius societies and Mongolia. People feel the same in this region.

Assessment of Lives in Mongolia

Table 2 allows us to see more detailed on Mongolia's case. Total sample size is 800, and more than half of the Mongolian respondents are happy with their daily lives (4.4% very happy; 56.4% pretty happy). Women are happier than men. 61.7 percent of female respondents said that they are either very happy (4.9%) or quite happy (56.8%), whereas 59.6 percent of male respondents gave those answers. Aged or 60-69 age respondents are happy than other groups of age, however, if see overall mid-age people are higher than younger people. But least happy age is 40-49 in Mongolia.

High education gives high level of happy (70.0 % is for very happy and pretty happy answers), and mid education does high level of unhappy (10.7% which is higher for not too happy and very unhappy responses).

Self-employed people are less happy than employed people. 8.9 percent of self-employed ones are not too happy and 8.2 percent of employed people are not too happy and very unhappy.

The percentage of "very happy" and "pretty happy" is higher in the higher-income groups (73.9%) than in the mid- (63.1%) and low-income (49.0%) groups.

Table 2. Happiness in Mongolia

(Q: All things considered, would you say that you are happy these days?)

	Total	Very happy	Pretty happy	Neither happy nor unhappy	Not too happy	Very unhappy
(TOTAL)	800	4.4	56.4	29.3	9.4	0.4
[Gender]						
Male	374	3.7	55.9	28.3	11.2	0.5

Female	426	4.9	56.8	30.0	7.7	0.2
[Age]						
20-29	242	4.5	53.3	29.3	11.2	1.2
30-39	214	5.6	58.4	29.0	7.0	-
40-49	186	2.2	53.2	31.2	13.4	-
50-59	95	4.2	55.8	31.6	7.4	-
60-69	63	6.3	71.4	20.6	1.6	-
[Education]						
No	3	-	100.0	-	-	-
Low	205	2.0	53.2	35.6	8.8	0.5
Mid	395	3.8	54.9	30.4	10.4	0.3
High	197	8.1	61.9	20.8	8.1	0.5
[Occupation]						
Self	168	3.0	55.4	31.5	8.9	-
Employed	303	5.9	62.0	23.8	7.9	0.3
No	327	3.7	51.7	33.0	11.0	0.6
[Income]						
Low	214	3.7	45.3	36.0	14.0	0.9
Mid	474	5.1	58.0	29.3	7.2	-
High	111	2.7	71.2	16.2	9.0	0.9

Source: 2005 AsiaBarometer Survey

Note: "Do not know" answers are excluded in this table.

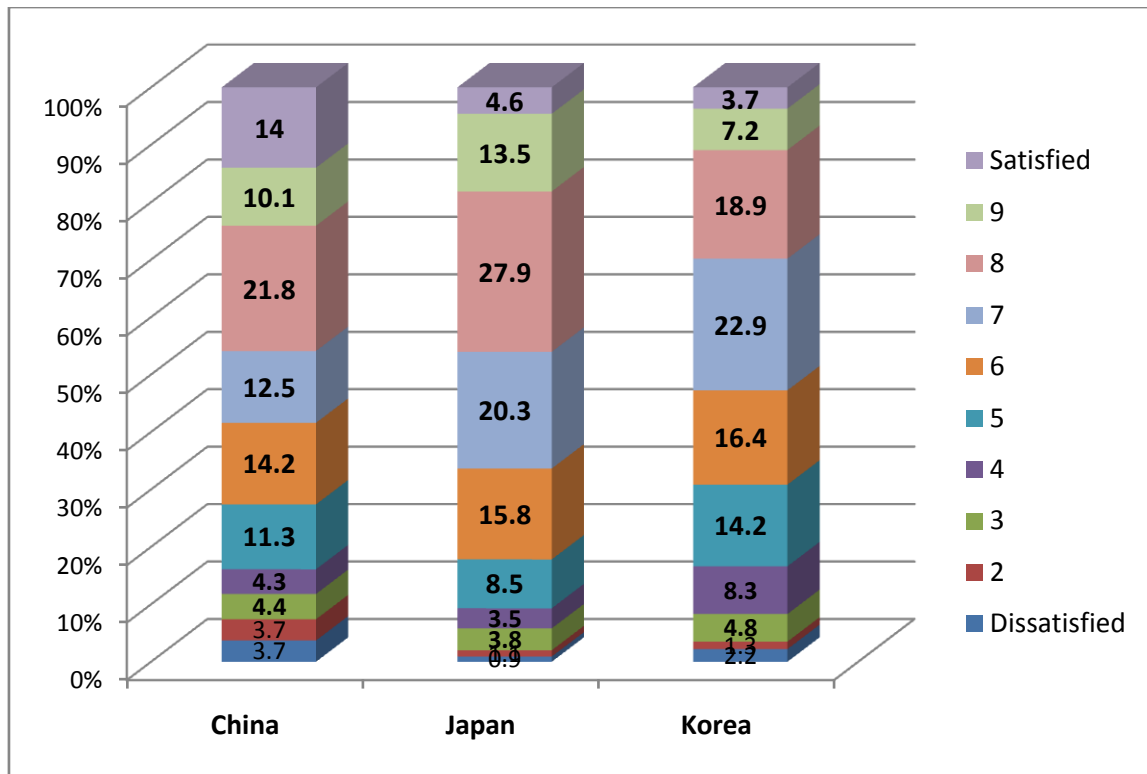
With going into the above explanations of happiness, this paper then moved to levels of satisfaction on a range of issues that affect people's daily lives.

Public Satisfaction and Dissatisfactions

In Case of East Asian Confucius Societies

Public satisfaction is one of the most popular subjects in happiness literatures. The World Values Survey asked the respondents about their satisfaction with life, and it's appeared in Figure 3 as in general comparison.

Figure 3. Satisfaction with life



	Frequency	Total valid percent	China	Japan	Korea
Dissatisfied	109	2.6%	3.7	0.9	2.2
2	100	2.4%	3.7	1.1	1.3
3	184	4.3%	4.4	3.8	4.8
4	223	5.3%	4.3	3.5	8.3
5	484	11.4%	11.3	8.5	14.2
6	646	15.2%	14.2	15.8	16.4
7	738	17.4%	12.5	20.3	22.9
8	954	22.5%	21.8	27.9	18.9
9	430	10.2%	10.1	13.5	7.2
Satisfied	369	8.7%	14.0	4.6	3.7
Total sample	4311	100%	1959	1080	1198

Source: World Values Surveys Databank – Selected countries/samples: China [2007], Japan [2005], South Korea [2005]

The variables that affect personal life received the highest score of 10 as most satisfaction and 1 is the most dissatisfaction. As indicated in the Surveys, most satisfied people with their lives are Chinese. 10 score is the highest amount of level to this country as 14.0 percent while this is 4.6 percent for Japanese and 3.7 percent for Koreans. However, most dissatisfaction level (1) is also higher in China than other two societies. This is 3.7 percent (China), and only 0.9 percent in Japan. 2.2 percent of the Korean respondents are most dissatisfied with their lives.

For all those of three societies, generally, more satisfied answers are dominating. The people in the Confucius societies as observed through the above sample survey results generally feel satisfied about their daily lives.

In Case of Mongolia

This part is mainly focused on the CCPR 2010 Survey results and findings which main research aim was identify Mongolian public satisfaction and dissatisfaction with various aspects of life. However, use of the AsiaBarometer 2005 Survey data is justified by following reasons. First, the CCPR 2010 Survey took several questions and answer options from the AsiaBarometer survey questions on satisfaction⁴. This gives us a chance to see the different survey's results in a same desk. Second, the CCPR survey sample size is limited to 300. Thus we need to expand a comparison by other international survey like the AsiaBarometer that determined its sample size in Mongolia around 800. Third, the author joined the AsiaBarometer with preparing the country profile based on the survey in 2005 and led the CCPR survey in 2010. The author's familiarity with these two surveys became another reason why the AsiaBarometer is cited here.

The AsiaBarometer 2005 and the CCPR 2010 Surveys both explored the sources of dissatisfaction and anxiety for people across the region and the country.

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) with various aspects of their lives such as Housing, Job, Leisure, Education, Standard of Living, Household Income, Marriage, Friendships, Health, Family Life, Neighbors, Public Safety, Spiritual Life (it was not included in 2010 Survey), Social Order (this aspect is formulated in 2010 Survey instead of public safety), the democratic system, Social welfare system, and the condition of the environment (see Table 3).

Mongolians were happy with the human relations aspects of their lives: marriage (68.8%), friendships (50.1%), family life (31.9%), and neighbors (26.6%). In addition 29.5% of the respondents were very satisfied with their housing. Although percent of very satisfaction level is slightly decreased after five years, these human relations aspects of people have remained with full satisfaction comparing to other aspects. However, Mongolian respondents were largely dissatisfied with public safety (20.5%) and social welfare system (19.5%); job (18.1%) and household income (12.1%); the condition of the environment (16.6%) and the democratic system (11.6%). Dissatisfaction level has changed for job (6%) and household income (3%) which are connected aspects through the 2010 Survey. It tells us there was little improvement within five years of period in the level of public economic well-being.

Table 3. Levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with various aspects of life in Mongolia
(% of respondents)

Satisfaction about	Very satisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Very dissatisfied		Somewhat dissatisfied	
	AB 2005	CCPR 2010	AB 2005	CCPR 2010	AB 2005	CCPR 2010	AB 2005	CCPR 2010
Housing	29.5	18	33.4	33	6.0	3	10.5	15
Job	16.5	9	24.4	24	18.1	6	14.5	7
Leisure	14.6	14	32.9	37	5.8	6	13.4	15
Education	13.9	13	34.5	41	4.9	0	16.6	10
Standard of Living	7.3	8	23.6	54	7.4	4	23.4	11
Household Income	3.9	6	20.8	46	12.1	3	23.6	18
Marriage	68.8	33	21.9	9	0.2	7	1.4	2
Friendships	50.1	30	33.4	19	0.9	1	3.0	2
Health	14.5	19	39.1	31	5.1	0	16.4	11
Family Life	31.9	34	4.1	18	0.9	1	5.1	1
Neighbors	26.6	27	39.3	31	3.0	8	6.4	13
Public Safety	5.0	N.A	15.6	N.A	20.5	N.A	28.0	N.A
Spiritual Life	16.0	N.A	35.6	N.A	2.8	N.A	8.5	N.A
Social Order	N.A	3	N.A	27	N.A	31	N.A	35

⁴ The AsiaBarometer 2005 Survey questions are not limited to public trust issues.

The democratic system	6.8	15	30.1	32	11.6	16	16.0	28
Social welfare system	3.3	3	13.4	32	19.5	18	28.3	36
The condition of the environment	6.9	5	21.3	31	16.6	24	26.6	38

Question: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of your life? [Single answer for each institution]. (the comparative data is for CCPR Survey of 2010 and AsiaBarometer Survey of 2005)

Note: “Do not know” and “neither” answers are excluded in this table.

In contrast, dissatisfaction with public system such as social order, the democratic system, social welfare system, and the condition of the environment is relatively high among Mongolians. A quarter of the respondents are still very dissatisfying with the condition of the environment, one-third dissatisfied today’s social order (which we have chosen as aspects instead of public safety), and 18% dissatisfied with social welfare system and 16% very dissatisfied with the democratic system.

Thus, the low level of trust in political institutions or national decision-making political institutions can be explained by the above high level of dissatisfaction with public system.

Satisfaction with social status of daily life has remained almost same. There are slightly differences between the survey results in terms of satisfaction with leisure (very satisfaction is 14.6% in 2005, and 14% in 2010; very dissatisfaction is 5.8% in 2005, 6% in 2010), education (very satisfaction is 13.9% in 2005, and 13% in 2010; somewhat dissatisfaction is 16.6% in 2005, 10% in 2010), health (satisfaction is 53.6% in 2005, and 50% in 2010), and neighbors (very satisfaction is 26.6% in 2005, and 27% in 2010). It can be explained as there have not been significant changes in results by public policy on social status aspects of people since 2005.

Within five years, public satisfaction with their private life slightly increased through job and household income, satisfaction with social status of life is continuing same, and their dissatisfaction with public system has been decreasing. When we look at the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the levels of trust in institutions, all those correlations can be compared through the surveys I used here.

Concluding Remarks

The surveys show that happiness in East Asian selected Confucius societies such as China, Japan and Korea is at the pretty same level. And this goes same in Mongolia even though the country is not advanced economy as Japan and Korea, and not powerful in world economies as China. Moreover, most happy population groups in those of three societies and Mongolia are almost same. The least happy people are same in those four societies two by two (China and Mongolia; Japan and Korea).

The respondents of China are much contrasted compare to others. They are most satisfied as well as most dissatisfied. Less Koreans satisfied with their lives than ones in China and Japan.

As indicated by respondents in both the AsiaBarometer 2005 and the CCPR 2010 Surveys, public institutions in Mongolia, although they enjoy a certain level of trust, they do not have a high level of public confidence. Limited satisfaction with these institutions is an expression of hope that these institutions will eventually function properly and will deal with the concerns of public. For particular concerns, people’s hopes are closely connected to the improvement of their well-being and raising their incomes in light of current social and political conditions.

Satisfaction with standard of living, household income, and family life has increased, and dissatisfaction level (both very and somewhat dissatisfied answers) of these aspects has decreased. These could have been reasonable. However, if we consider dissatisfaction at the social level with economic problems and living standards has certain political implications such as dissatisfaction with the state of democracy in the country. But such a correlation is difficult to interpret above satisfaction level increasing.

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