ARTICLE

Experiences of Chinese international students living in Australia: Wellbeing from "we" to "me"

Lanxi Huang · Margaret L. Kern · Lindsay G. Oades

Abstract: Whilst there is evidence of subjective wellbeing being related to academic success, good performance within and beyond university, degree attainment, and positive subsequent physical, mental, economic, and social outcomes in the university student population, less is known on how different student populations perceive, experience, and cultivate wellbeing. The current study explored the perspectives and experiences of one such population: Chinese international students at several universities across Australia. Semi-structured interviews with 30 students indicated that participants mainly experienced wellbeing through experiences of competence, feeling supported by family and friends, low levels of pressure, and giving to others. Almost half of the participants believed that people around them had low wellbeing. Students indicated drawing upon intrapersonal activities as the primary pathway to support their own wellbeing, whereas they pointed to interpersonal activities to support other's wellbeing. The findings show the mismatch between students' wellbeing experiences and pathways, shed light on understanding students' wellbeing in the higher education context, and identify some of the contextual and cultural factors that contribute to wellbeing experiences and pathways. Implications for interculturally nuanced approaches to understanding and supporting wellbeing are considered.

Keywords: subjective wellbeing, intercultural experiences, studying abroad, Chinese international students, higher education, phenomenographic approach

1. Introduction

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized wellbeing as a basic human right (United Nation, 1948). Yet with the many competing demands and stakeholder interests that countries worldwide navigate, wellbeing has often been neglected over other rights, equated with economic prosperity or the treatment of mental illness, and policies have prioritised the perspectives and priorities of those with power (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Subjective perspectives of wellbeing of all people, regardless of background, have often been ignored, fuelling inequities that disproportionality affect minority groups. Indeed, the need for greater focus on wellbeing remains crucial. Over 70 years later, amongst 17 goals that United Nations proposed to transform the world for sustainable development, goal 3 specifically affirms that nations need to be committed to ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all people across all ages (United Nation, 2015).

Importantly, to ensure healthy life and wellbeing, it is critical to understand what wellbeing means and pathways to reach it for diverse populations. In this study, we specifically focus on Chinese international students within Australia. Such students represent emerging adults from a traditionally Eastern culture, living within a Western culture, navigating not only pressure from

Lanxi Huang
The University of Melbourne
lanxi.huang1@unimelb.edu.au

their studies, but also language and cultural differences, separation from family and friends, and communication and supports that are often misaligned with their values and needs. Although many higher education institutions have introduced study support services, peer support, and mentoring programs to assist students in managing academic issues and transition to the higher education environment (Horgan, McCarthy, & Sweeney, 2013; Rodger & Tremblay, 2003). However, counselling services and support programs face ongoing difficulties of being accessible and effective for numerous vulnerable students (McKenzie, Murray, Murray, & Richelieu, 2015; Robertson, Holleran, & Samuels, 2015). The significant number of mental health and wellbeing challenges that already existed for international students have further been accentuated through the COVID-19 pandemic (Dodd et al., 2021), but services remain ineffective. This may arise, in part, from limited understanding about the specific strategies that might support students well, from their own perspectives (Huang, Kern, & Oades, 2020).

Given the significant number of around 1,061,511 Chinese international students studying abroad in 2021, there is both a need and opportunity to explore the complexities and tensions that one's cultural background brings to wellbeing constructions and experiences (Education-fair, 2022). The current study explores students' wellbeing experiences and strategies they use to strengthen their own and others' wellbeing. Rather than assuming what students want from theoretical models and providing traditional psychological treatment from a Western perspective, hearing students' own voice potentially can provide a culturally-sensitive and contextual-responsive to supporting student wellbeing that better matches students' needs.

1.1 The experience of wellbeing

Over the past several decades, scholars have proposed various models, frameworks, and approaches to wellbeing, with the common assumption that wellbeing is more than the lack of mental illness and poor functioning. It is generally represented as "feeling good and functioning well" (Huppert & So, 2013, p. 893). Still, wellbeing can be experienced differently across different populations—shaped, interpreted, and experienced by one's culture, upbringing, experiences in life, and perceptions of those experiences (Kern et al., 2020; Scott, Rowe, & Pollock, 2018; Wexler, 2009; Wong, 2011). In this paper, we focus upon intercultural aspects of wellbeing, specifically focusing on a population living between two complementary yet different cultures.

1.2 Culture and wellbeing

A growing number of studies have examined whether and how cultural factors impact on wellbeing (Calma, Dudgeon, & Bray, 2017; Lazarevic, 2017; Lomas, 2015). More than 40 years ago, Gallup (1976) conducted a global survey to collect wellbeing data of people's satisfaction and needs, sampling two-third of the world population. The findings showed that health, economic wellbeing, and family life consistently arose as general concerns across cultures and regions. However, short-term concerns and hopes for the future varied across developing and developed areas. Subsequent research by Gallup continually shows that these areas impact and are relevant to cultural conceptions of wellbeing. Veenhoven (1993) comprehensively analysed happiness in 56 nations and proposed a "liveability" concept, which suggested that if a society can provide certain universal human conditions, people will experience a high level of subjective wellbeing. Together, these studies suggested that economic/material factors, such as income, economic growth, and social equality, may be more consequential to wellbeing than cultural aspects.

However, over the past several decades, other studies have identified a number of culturally-relevant aspects that do impact upon experiences of wellbeing, including individualism or

collectivism and cultural homogeneity (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 2009); self-esteem (Campbell, 1981); independent and interdependent goal pursuit (Oishi & Diener, 2009); self-construal processes (Suh, Diener, & Updegraff, 2008); satisfaction of daily events (Oishi, Diener, Choi, Kim-Prieto, & Choi, 2007); emotional experiences (Eid & Diener, 2009); needs and values (Tay & Diener, 2011); and identity consistency (Suh, 2002). Still, statistical comparisons across cultures do not necessarily capture experiences of wellbeing by a specific culture (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Kahneman & Krueger, 2006), with ongoing issues in untangling confounding factors (Spector, Liu, & Sanchez, 2015)

Tov and Diener (2007) highlighted the importance of understanding wellbeing within the framework of each culture, as "there are also culture-specific patterns that make cultures unique in their experience of wellbeing" (Tov & Diener, 2007, p. 691). With growing globalization, migration, and mobility patterns, culture does not simply refer to a monoculturalism-dominated way of life that people lead, but also to the individual and collective choices that are made through evolving global cultural exposure (Mathews, 2012). Culturally sensitive studies that explore subjective experiences for individuals with co-existing cultures are needed to inform strategies and approaches for adequately supporting wellbeing in a given context. The current study begins to explore this need by focusing on one specific population.

1.3 Chinese international students in Australia

As the largest portion of the international education market, Chinese international students draw increasing scholarly attention and have been the target population in various studies, such as exploring pull and push factors of their study-abroad decision-making (Bodycott, 2009; Chen, 2016), acculturation and experience (Bertram, Poulakis, Elsasser, & Kumar, 2014; Li et al., 2017), academic performance and challenges (Liu, 2016; Yan & Berliner, 2009), and mental health (Chen, Liu, Zhao, & Yeung, 2015; Han, Han, Luo, Jacobs, & Jean-Baptiste, 2013). Mental health and wellbeing have increasingly emerged as a critical topic that requires greater focus, especially with additional stresses and challenges that have arisen from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently, studies on the wellbeing of Chinese international students have demonstrated the important role of perceived language competence and social connection (Guo, Li, & Ito, 2014; Luo, Wu, Fang, & Brunsting, 2019; Pang, 2018; Wang, We, & Chen, 2015). Age, length of stay in the host country, and English proficiency also are closely associated with the acculturation process and wellbeing (Li, Wang, & Xiao, 2019; Li, Liu, Wei, & Lan, 2013). Depression has been identified as the most frequently reported mental illness in this population, but struggling students are less likely to seek professional help than domestic students (Miller, Yang, Hui, Choi, & Lim, 2011; Wei et al., 2007). Specifically within the Australian context, Martin (2020) identified limited access to reliable local information, exploitation of rental accommodations, racial discrimination and social exclusion, restricted intercultural mixing opportunity, limited employment opportunities and exploitation at the workplace, difficulties in understanding Australian police process, and the challenges in navigating Australian health systems, especially in accessing mental health support as significant barriers that prevent students from seeking and receiving professional support.

While these studies paint a concerning picture, few studies have focused on positive aspects of mental health, including students' experiences of wellbeing and aspects that effectively support wellbeing. Using a prototype analysis design, Huang, Kern, and Oades (2022) explored Chinese international students' conceptualisations of wellbeing, finding that wellbeing concepts were prototypically structured, with relationships, security, positivity/ optimism, physical health, and self-strength identified as key components to their wellbeing conceptualisations. In a mixed

methods study exploring how Chinese international students understand wellbeing, Huang et al. (2020) identified mental and physical health, security, relationship support, and prosperity as key themes. Extending these findings, the current study analyses qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews to understand the wellbeing experience of Chinese international students living in Australia, to further investigate the strategies students use to support wellbeing for themselves and explore how students perceive and support wellbeing in others.

2. Method

2.1 Phenomenographic approach

The aim of this study is to explore the wellbeing experience and pathways of Chinese international students from an intercultural perspective. Although many studies have tried to highlight mental health problems and challenges faced by international students, there are limited descriptive studies to hear students' voices, particularly from a non-pathologising viewpoint. Therefore, the current study chooses to understand students' lived experiences and their world, which is qualitative in nature. Phenomenology is an interpretive approach to understanding phenomena, which concerns the meanings that individuals attribute to phenomena and their interactions with them (Luttrell, 2010). And the principle of this approach highlights the subjective perceptions of individuals' realities and their experiences (Marton, 1981). We chose this theoretical framework as the phenomenon under investigation here is Chinese international students' subjective wellbeing experiences/ pathways in the intercultural and interlanguage spaces. Also, in phenomenographic research, individuals' direct experiences with and understandings of various aspects of their world are highly valued via observing, interviewing, protocol writing, and examining journals and logs (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Marton, 1981; Van Manen, 1997). Consequently, phenomenography has been selected to explore the wellbeing experiences and pathways of Chinese international students in the Australian context, and the most appropriate data collection instrument is the semi-structured interview.

2.2 Procedure

The current study extends Huang et al. (2020) and Huang et al. (2022), with a specific focus on qualitative data collected from a sub-set of participants (Chinese international students in several universities across Australia). Interviews conducted by the first author between September 2019 and February 2020, and all procedures were approved by the [blinded for review] ethics review board. After completing an online survey (see Huang et al., 2020 for details), students were invited to participate in an in-depth semi-structured interview, with details on the study, a consent form, and a brief questionnaire asking a series of demographic questions (gender, age, education level, current education status, English proficiency levels, and length of stay within Australia). Upon receiving digital consent and demographic information form, confirmed participants were scheduled to be interviewed online by using WeChat. Participants could choose English, Mandarin, or a mix of English and Mandarin during the interview and each interview lasted 40 to 60 mins.

Semi-structured interviews aimed to explore how Chinese international students and the people around them experience wellbeing, and identify what action or strategy they took to support the wellbeing of self and others (i.e., "What experience of wellbeing do you have?", "How do you think about others' wellbeing experience?", "If you want to promote your

wellbeing, what will you do?", "If you want to promote others' wellbeing, what will you do?"). At the end of the interviews, participants were asked about their reflections of the interview and their willingness of receiving the general results of the study and were provided with additional mental health and wellbeing support information.

2.3 Participants

To be included in the study, participants had to: (1) be a Chinese international student; (2) be studying at a tertiary education institution in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; (3) be at least 18-years old; and (4) had stayed in Melbourne between three months and four years (to ensure that participants had sufficient experiences in both Chinese and Australian cultures).

Of 123 participants who completed the online survey, 45 indicated interest in being involved in the interview, and 30 gave consent and participated in the semi-structured interviews. Table 1 summarizes demographic information. One-third of participants were female, and the majority were between 21 and 29 years of age. More than 60% of students had an undergraduate degree and currently studying for a Master's degree. Approximately 70% of students had good or excellent English proficiency levels. About four in five participants had lived in Melbourne for more than one year.

Table 1. Participants' demographic characteristics details.

Characteristics	Category		N (%)
Gender	Male		10 (33.3%)
	Female		20 (66.7%)
Age	18-20		2 (6.7%)
	21-29		26 (86.7%)
	30-39		2 (6.7%)
Education level	High school graduate, diploma/the equivalent		4 (13.3%)
	Undergraduate degree		22 (73.3%)
	Graduate degree		4 (13.3%)
Education Status	Foundation course/university credit		0 (0%)
	Bachelor's degree		3 (10.0%)
	Graduate certificate or diploma		0 (0%)
	Master's degree		19 (63.3%)
	Doctorate degree		8 (26.7%)
English level	Comprehensive	Excellent	8 (26.7%)
		Good	15 (50.0%)
		Competent	5 (16.7%)
		Modest	2 (6.7%)
	Reading	Excellent	7 (23.3%)
		Good	15 (50.0%)
		Competent	7 (23.3%)
		Modest	1 (3.3%)
	Writing	Excellent	6 (20.0%)
		Good	9 (30.0%)
		Competent	9 (30.0%)
		Modest	6 (20.0%)
Length of stay	3 months – 12 months		4 (13.3%)
	13 months – 24 months		15 (50.0%)
	25 months – 36 months		8 (26.7%)
	37 months – 48 months		3 (10.0%)

2.4 Data analyses

Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, repetitions and ramblings were removed, and identifiable information was removed. As most interviews were conducted in Mandarin (n=29), content analyses were conducted in Chinese to avoid meaning distortion, and then translated into English for reporting. The translation process was assisted by a professional translator with certification of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), and the cited quotations reported there had been confirmed by the translator. Double translation (re-translate the English text into Chinese and compare it with the original Chinese version) was used in this process to maximize the authenticity of the translation. Qualitative content analysis coding was used to explore texts within their context of communication (Mayring, 2015). Specifically, phenomenographic seven coding steps were followed, which include (1) familiarisation, (2) condensation, (3) comparison, (4) grouping, (5) articulating, (6) labelling, and (7) contrasting (Dahlgren & Fallsberg, 1991). The first author read through the interviews multiple times to become familiar with the content in detail and select the statements that deliver the message of a certain phenomenon. Then, comparing, grouping, and categorising common responses results in a set of broad patterns. Similar responses were combined into main themes and sub-themes. Corresponding themes and sub-themes were then labelled and summarised with representative quotes that we present here to show the similarities and differences. The second and third authors supervised the coding process, affirming the categorisations and resolving uncertainties, and confirming the alignment of themes, sub-themes, and representative quotes.

3. Results

3.1 Personal experiences of wellbeing

We first examined students' experiences of wellbeing. 39 sub-themes were identified via analysis (with size and colour indicating frequency that the sub-theme was mentioned), which clustered into 11 main themes (see Appendix 1). The themes, sub-themes, provides representative quotes, and indicates the number and percentage of mentioned were further summarized (see Appendix 2).

Experiences of wellbeing were commonly reflected in feelings of competence, including having a sense of achievement, a sense of control, and feeling that they were valued. For instance, one participant experienced wellbeing *"when what I like matches what society needs… and achieve self-value"*. Having intimate relationship support from family and friends, giving love and support to others, and receiving broader social support from society were commonly mentioned. For instance, students mentioned that *"not only receive love, you can have wellbeing if you also give love"*, *"I also participate in some voluntary work and this is also a part of my wellbeing"*, and *"celebrate LGBT Day at the company and show inclusiveness"*. Students also mentioned mental-oriented experiences, noting that *"there is no pressure during the whole process, and there is no schedule, too"* and *"compared to not good life status I feel satisfied with my life when I in good status"*. Three participants struggled to describe wellbeing, instead pointing to negative aspects such as academic challenge and depression, mental dysfunction, illness, and sickness. For instance, one student identified that he *"had a terrible feeling and hard to express, feel like I can't do anything and anything good"*.

3.2 Activities supporting wellbeing

We next examined activities that participants engage in to promote their own wellbeing. Two broad categories were apparent, intrapersonal activities and interpersonal activities, which further could be classified into seven major themes and 32 subthemes (see Appendix 3 - 4).

Across participants, 69.23% of activities were intrapersonal activities done alone, with remaining activities involving connecting with others. Intrapersonal activities included growth and development and physical activities, such as achieving goals, having financial independence, planning, and doing exercise. For instance, one student expressed that *"after I find a suitable way, I will work harder and quicker to achieve the goals, such as graduate from PhD"*. Over a third of participants pointed to physical activity, noting for instance, *"I will go to the gym and exercise to release my emotion"*. A quarter of participants mentioned psychological-oriented and self-refresh activities to maintain wellbeing, including changing attitudes and perspective, task management, exceeding expectation, self-discipline, self-talk, taking a sense of control from a cognitive perspective, telling self to cheer up, eating, and having "me" time.

Interpersonally, participants pointed to the value of social support along with willingness to give help, noting that *"I will try my best to help others, my friends and family, in my life"*. Participants also highlighted social connection by participating in more social activities, such as *"make more friends with local people, participate in some social activities"*, and *"I will connect more with people around me or reach out to make friends"*. Only one participant mentioned seeking professional help from counselling services, believing it is helpful to *"let me systematically understand myself"*. Notably, seeking intimate relationship support from family connection was only mentioned once, despite support and connection from family noted as one of the top wellbeing experiences.

3.3 Reflections on others' wellbeing

Beyond exploring participants own experiences of wellbeing, we asked about their perceptions of others. Three main themes were identified (negative, positive, and neutral/ personal), which could further be broken into 17 sub-themes (see Appendix 5).

About half of responses perceived negative experiences such as having mental/physical illness and difficulties, complaining, and having issues around family, finances, and study. Notably, more than two-thirds of participants mentioned that the people (both Chinese and local) around them experience mental illness and difficulties, expressing that *"they are stressed"* or *"they have anxiety and depression"*. Around thirty percent of students pointed to positive aspects, including being generally positive and good, having a work-life balance, being carefree, and seemingly satisfied with life. For instance, students mentioned that the people *"most of them live in a positive way"*. Eight students suggested that wellbeing experiences are very personal and varied. For instance, one said that *"I do not think I can comment on others' wellbeing experience, because it's quite personal"*. Two students also compared wellbeing experiences between local and Chinese international students, suggesting that *"compared to the local, I think a lot of Chinese international students do not experience high wellbeing"*.

3.4 Activities to support others' wellbeing

Finally, participants reflected upon the activities they engage in to support the wellbeing of people around them. We identified seven major themes and 13 sub-themes (see Appendix 6).

Of activities noted, most (90%) were other-oriented in nature. Over half of participants indicated chatting or talking with others, such as *"I will chat with them, that's what I mostly do, ask their difficulties and figure out what I can do"*. Students pointed to the importance of being a good

listener, for instance noting, *"I think for family, most importantly are companion and listen, let them feel your love"*. Multiple activities were action-oriented, such as social activity, accompanying others, and physical exercise with others. Eight students pointed to offering opportunities of doing social activities together to show their kindness and care, such as *"I will ask her out for dinner or play together"*, *"I will organize travel together"*, and *"go shopping, watch a movie"*. Students also pointed to providing support based on what is needed, noting that *"I won't do something purposefully. But, if necessary, I will support them in a way they need"*. In terms of self-oriented activities, the responses focused on improving one's own wellbeing with the purpose of positively influencing others, only sharing good news and not bad energy, and achieving self-financial independence as a more indirect forms of support.

4. Discussion

Wellbeing is a human right, identified as a critical goal for sustainable development (United Nation, 2015). Aligned with the philosophical perspective that wellbeing necessarily involves values-laden aspects (Alexandrova, 2017; Kern et al., 2020; Tiberus, 2018), how wellbeing is understood and cultivated is impacted by one's culture, background, context, experiences, and perceptions (Kern et al., 2020). With growing globalisation, mobility, and migration, further complexities arise for those at the intersection of cultures (Mathews, 2012), especially when there are clashes in values and perspectives across those cultures (Kern et al., 2020).

To understand and support wellbeing for all people, regardless of background, studies that are sensitive not only to macro cultures (e.g., Western versus Eastern countries), but also micro-cultures (e.g., people from one culture living within another) are needed (Tov & Diener, 2007). The current study focused on one such micro-culture – Chinese international students living and studying within Australia. In-depth semi-structured interviews with 30 students explored their experiences of wellbeing, activities they draw on to support their wellbeing, their perceptions of the wellbeing of those around them, and how they support others. The mixture of the host living English context and students' original Chinese cultural background provides an opportunity to investigate the complexities of wellbeing experienced by a cross-cultural population.

4.1 Experiences of wellbeing

In considering how they experienced wellbeing, participants pointed to both intrapersonal-related (i.e., competence, mental-oriented, autonomy, learning and growth, fulfilment & contentment, and physical-oriented) and interpersonal-related experiences (i.e., relationship support, giving, community support, and nature and environment). Most mentioned experiences were relatively positive in nature, although a few participants pointed to negative experiences regarding academic challenges, depression, mental dysfunction, and mental illness. This was further evident in the reflection of people's wellbeing status around this group of students that believed about half of them had negative experiences. Notably, participants were more likely to point to positive experiences for themselves, but negative experiences for those around them.

The understanding of wellbeing reflecting both positive and negative aspects could be influenced by how Chinese international students conceptualise wellbeing as a concept, which could be influenced by conflations of how the words "mental health", "mental illness", and "wellbeing" are often conflated in literature and resources provided to students. For instance, at the University of Melbourne, the website on "health and wellbeing" first points to resources for mental health challenges, with wellbeing resources pointing primarily to strategies for managing stress (https://students.unimelb.edu.au/student-support/health-and-wellbeing). Alternatively, the intersections of the positive and negative could arise from their Chinese background,

especially as most participants chose to complete the interview in Chinese, not English. According to Huang et al. (2020), Chinese international students viewed this concept as fundamental and neutral, noting it "could include both positive side and negative side" (p. 10). Chinese Taoism encourages the acceptance of both fortune and misfortune in life, and believes the ups and downs come in turn, so that achieving a state of mind with calm and peace, referred to as "no happiness and no worries", is viewed as true wellbeing, (Yang & Zhou, 2017). Further, Buddhism interprets suffering as an essential pathway to set people free from desire and enter nirvana, similar to enter heaven and paradise (Hong & Si-Ping, 2012). Thus, negative experiences are appreciated or at least seen as indispensable to human life. Hence, it may not be surprising to see Chinese wellbeing experiences have a mixture of positive and negative sides.

When considering their own experiences of wellbeing, feelings of competence was the most frequently mentioned. Students expressed that having a sense of achievement, such as *"accomplish a task which I thought was impossible to me before"*, *"achieve a goal I set"*, and *"completing a project"*, can make students *"feel good"* and *"achieve wellbeing"*. Other competencies like the sense of control, meet expectations, and be valued were also key indicators in the wellbeing experiences. The emphasis on individual competence to achieve wellbeing aligns with Confucianism. In ancient Chinese, wellbeing could be expressed by the word "Le", which means the feeling of joy and happiness. Confucius believed that there are two levels to achieve "Le" in life: (1) to satisfy the basic living needs in life, and (2) to support your family, share your wealth and contribute to your community. In the first level, individuals should be safe and comfortable, to achieve "Fu", including health, material wealth, moral character, no worries, and a peaceful life. The first level expects the Chinese to enhance their competencies to take care of themselves and achieve mundane success (the personal value). After passing the first level, people are capable and encouraged to support family and community, at the second level of "rational happiness" (the social value) (Yang & Zhou, 2017). As it is said in Chinese folklore: if you are poor, you should focus on self-cultivation and self-perfection; if you are wealthy, you should care about others and contribute to your community. The self-cultivation and self-perfection mentioned above could be understood as the process to gain self-competence. Although Chinese culture was viewed as collective, the Confucian pathway to achieve wellbeing starts from the individual.

Participants also frequently mentioned the importance of relationship support, with both receiving and giving support contributing to experiences of wellbeing. The idea of giving back aligns with the core concept of virtue, in the Confucianism second level of rational happiness (Lu, 2001). It is expected that people with virtue should share the mundane joy (e.g., material wealth, moral character, free from worries) with others and be concerned with the world's welfare. Like a poem in the Song dynasty explained, a person is considered to have virtue when they are "the first to worry about the word and be the last to enjoy the pleasure", and even in the lack of material wealth or external difficulties, wellbeing is achievable as long as people have virtue (Huo, Chen, & Guo, 2013). Creating a harmonious environment and practising benevolence in the community is considered the ideal status of wellbeing. The Confucians' wellbeing develops from material to spiritual and individual to collective, influencing how Chinese understand and experience wellbeing.

4.2 Pathways for wellbeing
Students identified a variety of activities that they engage in to support their own wellbeing. Activities associated with growth and development, physical and psychological oriented, are the most preferred ones. For instance, students highlighted the importance of physical exercise, changing attitude and perspective, achieving goals, and having financial independence, and

believed planning their future and working hard are crucial regarding achieving wellbeing. The students' strategies focus on themselves in line with Confucians' concept of self-cultivation and self-perfection (Hong & Si-Ping, 2012). As noted above, the seeking of collective rational happiness starts from individual efforts to pass the first level of wellbeing, such as health, material wealth, and peace. For students, doing physical exercise, achieving study goals, and having financial independence are considered as the key indicators of taking good care of themselves at this life stage.

Another interesting finding is the mismatch between wellbeing experiences and wellbeing pathways. For example, physical exercise was the top endorsed activity with more than one-third of participants. However, only one student mentioned having exercise as a way to experience wellbeing in the previous question. Another contrasting example is relationship support. Only one student noted proactively seeking family support and connection to enhance wellbeing, even as experiencing relationship support is one of the top contributors to wellbeing. The gap between the experience and strategies can be interpreted by the theories of the "Liking" approach and the "Needing" approach based on hedonic and eudemonic accounts. According to Jayawickreme, Forgeard, and Seligman (2012), "Liking" approaches relate to what people like and feel, accounting on self-report positive emotion (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004) and life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The "Needing" approach, on the other hand, focuses on what people need to live the best possible life and wellbeing. The findings in the current study align with the "Linking" and "Needing" approaches that what Chinese international students experienced referred to what they like (positive relationship) and the pathways that students chose referred to what they need to achieve wellbeing (growth and development), reflecting Confucians' concept of self-cultivation and self-perfection (Hong & Si-Ping, 2012). In addition, physiological needs and security needs (Maslow's hierarchy of needs) (Maslow, 1971), meaning in life (Meaning) (Stillman et al., 2009), self-acceptance and autonomy (Ryff's psychological wellbeing approach) (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), competence and relatedness (Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory) (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and engagement (Seligman's wellbeing theory) (Seligman, 2004) are examples of what people believe they need to achieve wellbeing in Western literature and also revealed in the current study, which shows that some wellbeing components may be universals despite cultural diversity.

4.3 Perceptions of others' wellbeing

For perceptions of others' wellbeing experiences, multiple participants believed that wellbeing is personal, such that they should not comment on other's wellbeing. This might reflect cultural beliefs that emotional expression is impolite and inappropriate. Chinese children are often told to keep calm and have peace. Extreme emotional arousal is often viewed as inappropriate in Chinese culture. From Taoism's point of view, extreme pleasure could also mean no pleasure and even lead to extreme suffering, so that intense hedonic emotions are discouraged, and people intend to adopt a restrained expression of emotion, keep calm and have peace, and be humble (Lu, 2001).

It is also interesting that some participants compared Chinese international students' wellbeing to the locals' wellbeing, mentioning that local people enjoy better work-life balance and have more quality time with family and friends. From a cultural perspective, the Chinese are encouraged to work hard from a young age, with little emphasis on having rest and enjoying hedonic pleasures. The expectation of working overtime in current Chinese culture, such as the "996" (work from 9am to 9pm for six days a week) working schedule, makes the work-life balance

concept foreign (Wang, 2020). Also, because they are far away from home and their original social network, having quality time with family and friends is not easily achievable.

4.4 Implications

This study illustrates the lived experience of wellbeing, how wellbeing is perceived, and how those perceptions and experiences translate into behaviours to support wellbeing. Compared to current literature on university students' wellbeing status, this study focuses on the positive aspects to provide insights on students' wellbeing from a cultural perspective. The findings contribute to the academic literature on the experiences relating to wellbeing that may be culturally specific, leading to the internal complexities of how cultures influence wellbeing in a multi-layered way. According to Hofstede's six national cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011), Chinese culture has been viewed on the collectivist side in the individualism versus collectivism dimension, in which people are expected to have a strong, cohesive tie with groups from birth onwards. The findings on wellbeing experiences align with Chinese mainstream cultures in Hofstede's model that positive relationship support was one of the greatest sources for wellbeing experience. However, the primary pathways that Chinese students chose to support their wellbeing indicate that some subcultures are more individualistic. The intrapersonal and interpersonal activities students engage in to support their wellbeing provide insights on how culture diversity may have varying degrees of impact on the needs of wellbeing, and help identify more universal wellbeing components that persist across multiple cultures.

Also, contrary to Western cultures that assume that personal happiness with the absence of negative affect is one of the most values in life (Eid & Diener, 2009; Held, 2002; Morris, 2012), cross-cultural studies provide evidence that wellbeing has tended to be overlooked and that this assumption does not apply to non-western cultures, with some cultures are even averse to happiness (Joshanloo & Weijers, 2014; Suh, 2000; Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004). Researchers also have called for studies that examine wellbeing across different circumstances and spheres of life, which can show considerable diversity (Alexandrova, 2013). In the current study, the findings suggested that the quest for happiness is not a supreme value among students with Chinese cultural backgrounds. Positive mentally-oriented experiences only ranked third as the key experience themes, and negative experiences with mental dysfunction and mental illness/sickness were also viewed as a part of wellbeing. Those perceptions of wellbeing further reflect on the students' behaviours that improving capability through growth and development is key to strengthen wellbeing. The findings illustrate the importance of human culture and emphasise that life circumstances including culture should be given consideration in future studies on wellbeing.

4.5 Limitations and future directions

Our study is one of the few studies that specifically investigates the positive aspects of Chinse international students' wellbeing experiences, the related perceptions, and pathways for supporting wellbeing from an intercultural perspective. The study also has several limitations. In the interview, no straightforward questions were asked to let participants identify what and how their cultural background/s and living context/s influenced their wellbeing experiences. Future studies could be more explicit on exploring cultural/contextual factors in shaping and interpreting wellbeing experience. In addition, the reflection of other's wellbeing experiences could be more specific to detail the cultural/demographic background of the people that students reflected on, which could provide more information on the similarities and differences between Chinese international students and the local people.

This study focuses on Chinese international students within Australia, the findings might not generalize to other international students with different cultural backgrounds or other countries' contexts. Replication and extension would be beneficial, exploring other populations and contexts to achieve a comprehensive understanding of international students' wellbeing in various contexts, and further offer guidelines for higher education institutions to support international students' wellbeing.

4.6 Conclusion

Wellbeing has become a growing concern for both individuals and communities, with its importance further accentuated through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The current study focused on a population of people living at the intersections of two cultures, providing unique perspectives and insights for supporting the many people living at the intersections of cultures. The in-depth interviews reveal the mismatch between Chinese international students' wellbeing experiences (more appreciate 'we') and wellbeing pathways (focusing on 'me') in the Australian context. Findings contribute both to enhancing culturally sensitive and contextually responsive insights about wellbeing, as well as revealing potential practical pathways for better supporting students within higher education institutions. In all, this study sheds light on how intercultural complexities shape wellbeing experiences and calls for further culturally specific consideration in wellbeing science.

Authors

Lanxi Huang
Centre for Wellbeing Science, The University of Melbourne
lanxi.huang1@unimelb.edu.au

Margaret L. Kern
Centre for Wellbeing Science, The University of Melbourne

Lindsay G. Oades
Centre for Wellbeing Science, The University of Melbourne

References

Alexandrova, A. (2013). Doing well in the circumstances, *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, *10*(3), 307-328. https://doi.org/10.1163/174552412X628814

Alexandrova, A. (2017). *A philosophy for the science of wellbeing*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1086/698735

Bertram, D. M., Poulakis, M., Elsasser, B. S., & Kumar, E. (2014). Social support and acculturation in chinese international students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 42*(2), 107-124. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2014.00048.x

Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland chinese parents and students rate as important. *Journal of Research in International Education, 8*(3), 349–373. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240909345818

Calma, T., Dudgeon, P., & Bray, A. (2017). Aboriginal and torres strait islander social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. *Australian Psychologist, 52*(4), 255-260. https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12299

Campbell, A. (1981). *The sense of well-being in America: Recent patterns and trends*. New York: McGraw-Hill. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/61.1.332

Chen, J. A., Liu, L., Zhao, X., & Yeung, A. S. (2015). Chinese international students: An emerging mental health crisis. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 54*(11), 879–880. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2015.06.022

Chen, J. M. (2016). Three levels of push-pull dynamics among chinese international students' decision to study abroad in the canadian context. *Journal of International Students, 7*(1), 113-135. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v7i1.248

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). New York: Routledge.

Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED500417

Dahlgren, L. O., & Fallsberg, M. (1991). Phenomenography as a qualitative approach in social pharmacy research. *Journal of Social and Administrative Pharmacy: JSAP, 8*(4), 150-156.

Diener E., Diener M., Diener C. (2009) Factors predicting the subjective well-being of nations. In: Diener E. (eds) *Culture and well-being,* (pp. 43-70). Social Indicators Research Series, vol 38. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2352-0_3

Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*(1), 71-75. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13

Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E. (2003). Personality, culture, and subjective well-being: Emotional and cognitive evaluations of life. *Annual Review of Psychology, 54*(1), 403-425. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145056

Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 5*(1), 1-31. https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.0963-7214.2004.00501001.x

Dodd, R.H.; Dadaczynski, K.; Okan, O.; McCaffery, K.J.; Pickles, K. (2021). Psychological wellbeing and academic experience of university students in Australia during COVID-19. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(3), 866. https://doi.org/ 10.3390/ijerph18030866

Education Fair. (2022). *Market report China.* Retrieved 3 July 2022 from https://www.educationfair.nl/market-reports/asia/china/

Eid M., Diener E. (2009) Norms for experiencing emotions in different cultures: Inter- and intranational differences. In: Diener E. (eds) *Culture and well-being,* (pp. 169-202). Social indicators research series, vol 38. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2352-0_9

Gallup, G. H. (1976). Human needs and satisfactions: A global survey. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 40*(4), 459-467. https://doi.org/10.1086/268332

Guo, Y., Li, Y., & Ito, N. (2014). Exploring the predicted effect of social networking site use on perceived social capital and psychological well-being of chinese international students in Japan. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 17*(1), 52-58. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0537

Han, X., Han, X., Luo, Q., Jacobs, S., & Jean-Baptiste, M. (2013). Report of a mental health survey among chinese international students at Yale University. *Journal of American College Health, 61*(1), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2012.738267

Held, B. S. (2002). The tyranny of the positive attitude in America: Observation and speculation. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 58*(9), 965-991. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.10093

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2*(1). https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014

Hong, Z., & Si-Ping, G. (2012). "Le": The chinese subject well-being and the view of happiness in China tradition culture. *Acta Psychologica Sinica, 44*(7), 986-994. http://journal.psych.ac.cn/acps/EN/Y2012/V44/I7/986

Horgan, A., McCarthy, G., & Sweeney, J. (2013). An evaluation of an online peer support forum for university students with depressive symptoms. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, 27*(2), 84-89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2012.12.005

Huang, L., Kern, M. L., & Oades, L. G. (2020). Strengthening university student wellbeing: language and perceptions of chinese international students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17*(15), 5538. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17155538

Huang, L., Kern, M. L., & Oades, L. G. (2022). Chinese international students' conceptualizations of wellbeing: A prototype analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.939576

Huo, Y., Chen, Y., & Guo, Z. (2013). An exploration on the inter complementary optimistic psychological thoughts of the confucianism and taoism in the traditional chinese culture. *Acta Psychologica Sinica, 45*(11), 1305-1312. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.3724/SP.J.1041.2013.01305

Huppert, F. A., & So, T. T. (2013). Flourishing across europe: Application of a new conceptual framework for defining well-being. *Social Indicators Research, 110*(3), 837-861. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9966-7

Jayawickreme, E., Forgeard, M. J., & Seligman, M. E. (2012). The engine of well-being. *Review of General Psychology, 16*(4), 327-342. https://doi.org/10.1037%2Fa0027990

Joshanloo, M., & Weijers, D. (2014). Aversion to happiness across cultures: A review of where and why people are averse to happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 15*(3), 717-735. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-013-9489-9

Kahneman, D., & Krueger, A. B. (2006). Developments in the measurement of subjective well-being. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 20*(1), 3-24. https://doi.org/10.1257/089533006776526030

Kahneman, D., Krueger, A. B., Schkade, D. A., Schwarz, N., & Stone, A. A. (2004). A survey method for characterizing daily life experience: The day reconstruction method. *Science, 306*(5702), 1776-1780. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1103572

Kern, M. L., Williams, P., Spong, C., Colla, R., Sharma, K., Downie, A., Taylor, J. A., Sharp, S., Siokou, C. & Oades, L. G. (2020). Systems informed positive psychology. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 15*(6), 705-715. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1639799

Lazarevic, V. (2017). Effects of cultural brokering on individual wellbeing and family dynamics among immigrant youth. *Journal of Adolescence, 55*, 77-87. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.12.010

Li, J., Wang, Y., & Xiao, F. (2014). East asian international students and psychological well-being: A systematic review. *Journal of International Students, 4*(4), 301–313. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v4i4.450

Li, J. Q., Liu, X., Wei, T., & Lan, W. (2013). Acculturation, internet use, and psychological well-being among chinese international students. *Journal of International Students, 3*(2), 155-166. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v3i2.508

Li, Z., Heath, M. A., Jackson, A. P., Allen, G., Fischer, L., & Chan, P. (2017). Acculturation experiences of chinese international students who attend american universities. *Professional psychology: Research and Practice, 48*(1), 11-21. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/pro0000117

Liu, D. (2016). Strategies to promote chinese international students' school performance: resolving the challenges in american higher education. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education, 1*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-016-0012-9

Lomas, T. (2015). Positive cross-cultural psychology: Exploring similarity and difference in constructions and experiences of wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 5*(4), 60-77. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v5i4.437

Lu, L. (2001). Understanding happiness: A look into the chinese folk psychology. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 2*(4), 407-432. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1013944228205

Luo, Z., Wu, S., Fang, X., & Brunsting, N. (2019). International students' perceived language competence, domestic student support, and psychological well-being at a US university. *Journal of International Students, 9*(4), 954-971. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v0i0.605

Luttrell, W. (Ed.). (2010). *Qualitative educational research: Readings in reflexive methodology and transformative practice.* London: Routledge.

Martin, F. (2020). *Chinese international students' wellbeing in Australia: The road to recovery.* The University of Melbourne. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/11343/240399

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography—describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science, 10*(2), 177-200. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00132516

Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The father reaches of human nature,* New York: The Viking Press. Retrieved from https://www.slideshare.net/imbangjtrenggana/abraham-h-maslow-the-farther-reaches-of-human-nature-penguin-nonclassics-1993

Mathews, G. (2012). Happiness, culture, and context. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 2*(4). 299-312. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v2.i4.2

Mayring P. (2015) Qualitative content analysis: Theoretical background and procedures. In: Bikner-Ahsbahs A., Knipping C., Presmeg N. (eds) *Approaches to qualitative research in mathematics education.* Advances in Mathematics Education. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9181-6_13

McKenzie, K., Murray, K. R., Murray, A. L., & Richelieu, M. (2015). The effectiveness of university counselling for students with academic issues. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 15*(4), 284-288. https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12034

Miller, M. J., Yang, M., Hui, K., Choi, N.-Y., & Lim, R. H. (2011). Acculturation, enculturation, and asian american college students' mental health and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*(3), 346-357. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0023636

Morris S.G. (2012) The science of happiness: A cross-cultural perspective. In: Selin H., Davey G. (eds) *Happiness across cultures. Science across cultures: The history of non-western science* (pp. 435-450), vol 6. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2700-7_29

Oishi S., Diener E. (2009) Goals, culture, and subjective well-being. In: Diener E. (eds) *Culture and well-being* (pp. 93-108). Social Indicators Research Series, vol 38. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2352-0_5

Oishi, S., Diener, E., Choi, D.-W., Kim-Prieto, C., & Choi, I. (2007). The dynamics of daily events and well-being across cultures: When less is more. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 93*(4), 685–698. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.93.4.685

Pang, H. (2018). Exploring the beneficial effects of social networking site use on chinese students' perceptions of social capital and psychological well-being in Germany. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 67, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.08.002

Robertson, L. H., Holleran, K., & Samuels, M. (2015). Tailoring university counselling services to aboriginal and international students: Lessons from native and international student centres at a canadian university. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 45*(1), 122-135. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1061088.pdf

Rodger, S., & Tremblay, P. F. (2003). The Effects of a peer mentoring program on academic success among first year university students. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 33*(3), 1-17. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ788475.pdf

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68-78. Retrieved from https://uvi.edu/files/documents/College_of_Liberal_Arts_and_Social_Sciences/social_sciences/OSDCD/National_Self_Determination_Richard_Ryan_and_Edward_Deci.pdf

Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*(4), 719-727. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719

Schilling, J. (2006). On the pragmatics of qualitative assessment. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 22*(1), 28-37. https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759.22.1.28

Scott, K., Rowe, F., & Pollock, V. (2018). Creating the good life? A wellbeing perspective on cultural value in rural development. *Journal of Rural Studies, 59*, 173-182. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.07.001

Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment. New York: Free Press. Retrieved from https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Authentic-Happiness/Martin-E-P-Seligman/9780743222983

Spector, P. E., Liu, C., & Sanchez, J. I. (2015). Methodological and substantive issues in conducting multinational and cross-cultural research. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behaviour, 2*(1), 101-131. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032414-111310

Stillman, T. F., Baumeister, R. F., Lambert, N. M., Crescioni, A. W., DeWall, C. N., & Fincham, F. D. (2009). Alone and without purpose: Life loses meaning following social exclusion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*(4), 686-694. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2009.03.007

Suh, E. M. (2000). Self, the hyphen between culture and subjective well-being. In E. Diener & E. M. Suh (Eds.), *Culture and subjective well-being* (pp. 63–86). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2000-16279-003

Suh, E. M. (2002). Culture, identity consistency, and subjective well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(6), 1378-1391. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1378

Suh, E. M., Diener, E., & Updegraff, J. A. (2008). From culture to priming conditions: Self-construal influences on life satisfaction judgments. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 39*(1), 3-15. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022022107311769

Tay, L., & Diener, E. (2011). Needs and subjective well-being around the world. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*(2), 354-365. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023779

Tiberus, V. (2018). *Well-being as value fulfillment: How we can help each other to live well.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198809494.001.0001

Tov, W., & Diener, E. (2007). Culture and subjective well-being. In S. Kitayama, & D. Cohen. (Ed.), *Handbook of cultural pscyology* (pp. 691-713). New York: Guiford Press. https://www.guilford.com/books/Handbook-of-Cultural-Psychology/Cohen-Kitayama/9781462544172

Uchida, Y., Norasakkunkit, V., & Kitayama, S. (2004). Cultural constructions of happiness: theory and emprical evidence. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 5*(3), 223-239. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-004-8785-9

United Nation. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. UN General Assembly Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

United Nation. (2015). *Sustainable Development Goals: 17 goals to transform our world*. Retrieved from https://sdgs.un.org/goals

Van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315421056

Veenhoven, R., Ehrhardt, J., Ho, M. S. D., & de Vries, A. (1993). *Happiness in nations: Subjective appreciation of life in 56 nations 1946–1992.* Erasmus University Rotterdam. Retrieved from https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1994-97239-000

Wang, J. J. (2020). How managers use culture and controls to impose a '996' work regime in China that constitutes modern slavery. *Accounting & Finance, 60*(4), 4331-4359. https://doi.org/10.1111/acfi.12682

Wang, K. T., Wei, M., & Chen, H.-H. (2015). Social factors in cross-national adjustment: Subjective well-being trajectories among chinese international students. *The Counseling Psychologist, 43*(2), 272-298. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0011000014566470

Wei, M., Heppner, P. P., Mallen, M. J., Ku, T.-Y., Liao, K. Y.-H., & Wu, T.-F. (2007). Acculturative stress, perfectionism, years in the United States, and depression among chinese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(4), 385-394. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0167.54.4.385

Wexler, L. (2009). The importance of identity, history, and culture in the wellbeing of indigenous youth. *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth, 2*(2), 267-276. https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.0.0055

Wong, P. T. P. (2011). Positive psychology 2.0: Towards a balanced interactive model of the good life. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, 52*(2), 69-81. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0022511

Yan, K., & Berliner, D. C. (2009). Chinese international students' academic stressors in the United States. *College Student Journal, 43*(4), 939-960. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2013.0010

Yang, D., & Zhou, H. (2017). The comparison between chinese and western well-being. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 5*(11), 181-188. https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2017.511013

Appendices

Appendix 1. Sub-themes indicating participants' experiences of wellbeing, with size and colour reflecting the percentage that the sub-theme was mentioned (i.e., larger and darker were more frequently mentioned).

Appendix 2. Chinese international students' experiences of wellbeing, with themes, sub-themes, representative quotes, and number and percentages that themes and sub-themes occurred.

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes	n	%
Competence 22.50%	sense of achievement	"After completed a landmark project, I will have a sense of achievement."	9	11.25%
	sense of control	"Have a sense of control to do the things I liked."	3	3.75%
	meet expectation	"There is no surprise in life, and I feel satisfied… everything goes as expected"	2	2.50%
	be valued	"What I like matches what society needs… and achieve self-valued."	1	1.25%
	self-recognition	"It gives me a sense of self-recognition."	1	1.25%
	self-regulation	"I feel like I am good at self-regulation of my emotion."	1	1.25%
	solve problems	"As a person with high wellbeing, he will first calm down when having problems and solve them."	1	1.25%
Relationship support 21.25%	family company & support	"For example, I feel wellbeing when I chat with my family pleasantly."	7	8.75%
	friendship support	"When I stay with friends, I feel like I get cohort support."	7	8.75%
	pet	"My wellbeing increased a lot after I have cat."	2	2.50%
	harmony	"Have harmony in family and life."	1	1.25%
Mental-oriented 13.75%	no pressure	"There is no pressure during the whole process, and there is no schedule, too."	4	5.00%
	comparison between good and bad status	"Compared to not good life status I feel satisfied with my life when I in good status."	2	2.50%
	positive attitude	"In terms of study, I have a good, positive attitude."	2	2.50%
	appreciation	"I appreciate small, beautiful things in life that others not noticed"	1	1.25%
	good mood	"Sometimes, if I have a good mood, I will have the feeling of wellbeing."	1	1.25%
	passion and energetic	"I am energetic to work harder, very passionate about working every day."	1	1.25%
Giving 10.00%	giving love & support	"Not only receive love, you can have wellbeing if you also give love."	5	6.25%
	voluntary work	"I also participate in some voluntary work, and this is also a part of my wellbeing."	2	2.50%
	giving positive feedback	"Put a note of positive feedback to my colleagues can foster wellbeing."	1	1.25%
Community support 8.75%	good social welfare and insurance system	"University provides some free course to teach how to study, have some discounts to travel."	4	5.00%
	diversity and inclusion	"Celebrate LGBT Day at the company and show inclusiveness."	2	2.50%
	campus service support	"Disability people have been taken good care of by social welfare and insurance system."	1	1.25%
Autonomy 6.25%	freedom and hobbies	"If I want to go out for dinner, I can choose any restaurant I want to eat", "hope my parents can leave me alone."	4	5.00%
	time to relax	"I have a lot of time to play, feel very happy."	1	1.25%
Learning and growth 5.00%	challenge myself	"If I can fully understand a paper, I will feel good and wellbeing."	1	1.25%
	keep learning	"I can feel a strong feeling of wellbeing when I study."	1	1.25%
	new start	"At the beginning of a task, I feel most energetic and positive."	1	1.25%
	self-actualization	"A sense of self-actualization and need goals to become a valuable person."	1	1.25%

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes	n	%
Nature and environment 3.75%	campus life	"I have the sense of wellbeing when I walked in campus, see different old buildings with the sense of history, the sunlight in the lawn, the blooms threes and confident students chat happily."	1	1.25%
	good weather	"Maybe the weather is good today, and I will have the feeling of wellbeing."	1	1.25%
	spacious living area	"Live in a big house is feeling very good."	1	1.25%
Negative experience 3.75%	academic challenge and depression	"I feel depressed when I feel very hard to achieve goals, or I have a different opinion about my research with supervisors."	1	1.25%
	mental dysfunction	"Had a terrible feeling and hard to express, feel like I can't do anything and anything good."	1	1.25%
	mental illness and sickness	"When I see the doctor, I feel wellbeing is very important, and it's the functional basis for daily life."	1	1.25%
Fulfillment and contentment 2.50%	contentment	"Have a sense of contentment and satisfy my life."	1	1.25%
	fulfillment	" I feel fulfilment in my life and keep learning little by little."	1	1.25%
physical-oriented 2.50%	exercise	"For example, exercise."	1	1.25%
	physical comfortable	"The sofa in Baillieu library feels comfortable, and I can have a sense of wellbeing."	1	1.25%