

TECHNICAL NOTES ON USE OF THE MEANING AND VALUE MODULE

This note seeks to provide some technical guidance regarding use of the Meaning and Value module in survey work. Please note that a further treatment of the motivation underlying the selection of the indicators and their past use is provided in Samman (2007). This note seeks to address the following issues involved in implementing the survey:

1. Implementation of the psychological wellbeing questions
2. Computation of Meaning in Life and Basic Psychological Needs scores
3. Domain selection in the life satisfaction questions
4. Sequencing of the questions
5. Potential incorporation of empowerment questions in this module
6. Statistical analysis of data on psychological/subjective wellbeing

1. Implementation of the psychological wellbeing questions

Note that the concepts included in this module may seem quite challenging, and so it is important for enumerators to take time to understand them fully. We have tried to use as clear language as possible but it may need to be simplified – while retaining the meaning – in order to enhance respondent understanding. The survey implementer ought to consider, ideally on the basis of careful pretesting, whether the text is appropriate or whether it ought to be amended.

2. Computation of Meaning in Life and Basic Psychological Needs

Please note that the 3 items of the Meaning in Life scale should be weighted equally in computing the resulting indicator. For the autonomy, autonomy and competence scales, the components should also be weighted equally in measuring each of these concepts; moreover, the scores from these three scales can be summed to obtain an overall measure of Basic Psychological Need fulfillment.

3. Domain selection in the life satisfactions questions

As described in Samman (2007), psychological, philosophical and participatory studies demonstrate a great deal of convergence in identifying the components of a ‘good life’ and the module has drawn upon this work in identifying the domains asked in this question. We also were careful to incorporate the four domains covered in the larger survey – employment, empowerment, dignity and physical safety. However, please note that additional categories could be added here should qualitative research suggest their importance in a particular setting.

4. Sequencing of the questions

The sequencing of questions within a survey is of course important, particularly for questions relating to perceptions, as in this module. Particular care should be taken to locate these questions, and especially the overall life satisfaction and happiness questions, at a point in the survey in which they are unlikely to be biased by the response to the previous question. Further, the overall life satisfaction and happiness questions should not be asked in sequence; while both are included as they seek to measure somewhat distinct concepts, asking them in sequence might lead the respondent to assume the same question is being asked twice, and therefore to give the same answer to both. Inserting them at different points in the survey should surmount this problem.

5. Potential incorporation of empowerment questions

The survey implementor interested in empowerment will want to consider what questions from that module might best fit here. For example the question on religion in this module could ‘anchor’ the domain-specific empowerment questions pertaining to religious expression (see Technical Notes on Use of the Empowerment Module). Further, the questions in the empowerment module on ‘Would you like to change anything in your life?’ and ‘What three things would you most like to change?’ could be asked alongside the question on the three things the respondent would most like to preserve in his/her life.

6. Analysis of data on psychological and subjective wellbeing

Analysis of data from this module could serve to 1) validate the questions; 2) describe levels of and the distribution of psychological and subjective wellbeing within the sample 3) generate a composite measure of either/both concepts and 4) analyse the relationship between either/both concepts, other standard dimensions and other Missing Dimensions.

Validation of the questions is an important first step as many of these questions – particularly those relating to psychological wellbeing – have not been fielded extensively in nationally representative household surveys. The questions require external validation through qualitative work (to ensure that the questions are in fact seeking the concepts they purport to measure) and internal validation through statistical work.

In terms of the quantitative analysis, the analyst should begin with internal validity testing. In the first instance, this would involve looking at the frequency of responses for each question to ensure the response structure was appropriate and intelligible. They might then consider factor analysis of the multi-item questions – i.e., the responses to the Meaning in Life and to the Basic Psychological Needs scales to determine whether the response structure is sound – i.e., if the responses across domains are loading upon the same factors as the response structure would predict. Simple correlation analysis could be used to determine whether items that purport to measure the same or similar concepts in fact relate to one another. Descriptive analysis might consider the distribution of various

indicators of psychological/subjective wellbeing by subgroup (according to gender, ethnicity, religion, region, education, income etc.). The analyst might wish to create a composite indicator of psychological and/or subjective wellbeing through factor analysis or by simply constructing an average. If the latter, the analyst might weight the indicators equally or assign more weight to some than to others.

To relate the psychological/subjective indicators (or a composite) to other dimensions, the analyst might opt for multivariate regression analysis (to study correlates/determinants) or to consider how psychological/subjective wellbeing contributes to income poverty or other dimensions of illbeing. Finally the analyst might want to use these indicators along other dimensions to construct a multidimensional poverty index, bearing in mind that the appropriate use of data derived from perceptions is a subject of debate. Many such indices exist, however Alkire and Foster (2008) in OPHI Working Paper no. 7 provide a simple and intuitive set of indices that provide a multidimensional analogy to the unidimensional FGT measures.

KEY REFERENCES

www.ophi.org - contains full Empowerment module, detailed working papers on the Module (and other Missing Dimensions), and on the Alkire/Foster multidimensional poverty indices.

Samman, Emma (2007), "Psychological and subjective wellbeing: A proposal for internationally-comparable indicators", *Oxford Development Studies* 35:4, December. Please note that a version of this paper containing additional Appendices is available at: http://www.ophi.org.uk/pubs/Samman_Psych_Subj_Wellbeing_FINAL.pdf.