PERMA PROFILER: ADAPTATION TO SINHALA

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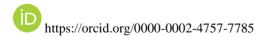Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge[3]
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ABSTRACT

Recent history has seen an increased interest in wellbeing. This interest has been observed in clinical settings as well as at the level of state policies and at corporate levels. Following this interest, many models of wellbeing have been developed. The PERMA model of wellbeing was a more recent development forwarded by Martin Seligman, which measures the five core elements of wellbeing that are referred to as PERMA. The acronym stands for positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. This model is based on the conceptual framework of positive psychology. PERMA profiler is a psychometric measure of wellbeing, which is based on the PERMA model. This tool has been gaining recognition as a reliable and valid tool for the measurement of wellbeing, especially in occupational settings. The current study aimed to adapt the PERMA profiler to Sinhala, which is the language used by the majority of Sri Lankans. The tool was translated by two psychologists and was synthesised to one single translated version by a panel of three experts, and it was evaluated for clarity and relevance by another panel of experts. The pre-testing was done in a sample of 15 individuals and the back translation was carried out by a professional translator. The adaptation was completed in consultation with the original authors of the scale. Results indicated that the Sinhalese adaptation of the PERMA profiler was deemed to be well-suited to be used with Sinhalese speaking populations with an average education.

KEYWORDS: *PERMA model of wellbeing, Sri Lanka, adaptation, Sinhala*

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is Wellbeing?

Recent discussions on wellbeing at the scholarly level and political levels have concentrated on making wellbeing a state policy for the governments. Scholars argue that if mental illnesses are caused by the loss of wellbeing, governments have the responsibility to take measures to improve public wellbeing as the loss of it would lead to increased costs in the treatment of mental illnesses (1). This is a departure from the traditional model of using economic indicators as the sole policy of development. This also shows the impact of the recent surge of interest in wellbeing has had at the macro level of society (2,3). The wellbeing budgets of the United Kingdom and New Zealand are good examples for this (4,5).

Importance of wellbeing in psychology

Before the 1950s, psychology was mostly based on abnormal and clinical approaches; however, later on, it shifted to humanistic approaches such as person-centred therapy and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Then, the psychological concepts were expanded to the wellness of an individual, group, or society at the macro or micro level from a positive psychological perspective.

The need for a wellbeing approach arose because disciplines that were focusing on human psychology were narrowly focused on an illness approach rather than on a wellness approach. Wellness and wellbeing approaches are considered an important milestone in expanding the understanding of human psychology, which was long confined to the narrow illness focus. Following this paradigm shift, there has been a proliferation of psychometric tools for the measurement of wellbeing. As wellbeing is a multifaceted concept, there are many conceptualizations of wellbeing in the current research literature. Psychometric tools have also been developed along with these different conceptualizations (6).

There are two prominent conceptual views of wellbeing. One is the Hedonic view of wellbeing. It focuses on the subjective feelings of positivity. The other is the eudaimonic view of wellbeing, which conceptualises wellbeing as living in a "flourishing" or well-developed manner. This view conceptualises wellbeing in terms of pursuing goals and activities that are consistent with one's values and identity (7), yet there are criticisms on the use of these models as who is considered as an optimally functional human being can be different from person to person.

Additional models of Wellbeing which do not fall into both the above-described models have been forwarded in the recent past. One such theory is the theory of flow states. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi was the first person to forward these concepts in the 1960s (8). Flow states are believed to be characterised by higher levels of engagement, concentration and pleasant feelings. Positive antecedents of flow states in the workplace are shown to be job resources such as social support, opportunities for professional development, and supervisor coaching (9).

Another model is the PERMA model forwarded by Martin Seligman, based on the model of positive psychology (10). PERMA stands for positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement, which are considered as the five pillars of wellbeing. There is increased research evidence for the validity of this model as the field of positive psychology continues to grow.

a. PERMA model of wellbeing

The PERMA model of wellbeing springs from the conceptual assumptions of positive psychology. One of the main tenets of positive psychology on wellbeing is that it is not simply the absence of negative functioning. In addition to the absence of negative functioning, "flourishing" of the individual is seen as wellbeing. The state of flourishing is defined as a dynamic, optimal state of functioning. Flourishing is seen as the outcome of optimal functioning in many different domains (11).

It is important that these abstract concepts of wellbeing are translated into more specific, measurable ones and when measuring them, intervene for improving wellbeing. Martin Seligman delineates positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and

engagement as the measurable constructs of Wellbeing. The acronym PERMA stands for these five concepts (12).

b. PERMA profiler

The PERMA profiler is a psychometric measure for the measurement of wellbeing, which has been forwarded by Julie Butler and Magaret L. (11). It has been widely used and has been adapted for being used in multiple settings with multiple populations (13, 15) PERMA profiler has particularly been identified as a reliable and valid tool to be used in occupational settings. In addition to this, it has been used as a measure of wellbeing, particularly in occupational settings across many cultures (15-18). The website of the PERMA profiler lists 13 adaptations to other languages. Among these are the Asian languages of Korean, Japanese and Chinese.

The PERMA profiler consists of 23 items. There are 15 questions pertaining to the 05 PERMA domains of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and engagement. Each domain is measured via 03 questions. Other questions measure the domains of health, negative emotion, loneliness and overall happiness. These act as filler questions in providing further details pertaining to the wellbeing of the test taker.

Importance of PERMA profiler in the Sri Lankan context

Several well-being scales have already been validated to Sinhala. The WHO5 wellbeing index, which is a short rating of wellbeing, has been validated to Sinhala. Yet, WHO 5 is seen as more suitable to be used in high income settings. It is quite useful as a quick, short measure in busy settings (19). In addition, the Warwick, Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale has also been adapted to Sinhala. It is based on Hedonic and eudaimonic conceptualizations of wellbeing (20). Nevertheless, The PERMA profiler is the first psychometric tool on wellbeing which has been adapted to Sri Lanka, which is based on the positive psychological concepts. The PERMA model is one of the latest psychological approaches which emphasises mental wellbeing beyond the absence of mental illness.

As the tool has a wide recognition of its validity, the authors believe that it would be a value addition to the repertoire of wellbeing measurements in Sinhala for Sri Lanka. Further, this model has been identified as a valuable framework for assisting professionals to measure wellbeing. Thus, having a tool that measures these core dimensions in the Sri Lankan population is important. Therefore, the current study adapted the PERMA profiler for Sinhala speakers of Sri Lanka.

 The current adaptation study received ethical clearance from the Ethics Review Committee (ERC) of the faculty of medical sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

2. METHODOLOGY

a. Translation
The PERMA profiler was translated into Sinhala by two psychologists from Sri Lanka after obtaining the necessary permissions from the original authors of the scale. One was the principal investigator who is a licensed clinical psychologist. The second was a Forensic psychologist, holding a master's degree in forensic psychology. Both have experience working with clinical populations and have been involved in many initiatives related to wellbeing both at the clinical and research level. Both translators were fluent in both Sinhala and English languages. Two independent Sinhala translations were produced by the translators as the first step of the adaptation.

b. Committee synthesis

The two translations were presented to an expert panel of three psychologists. The panel consisted of two counselling psychologists and one clinical psychologist. The experts were requested to compare the two translated items for each original item and rate the relevance of the two translated items in a Likert scale. The Likert options ranged from 1-5 with scores of 01 for least relevant, 02 for less relevant, 03 for modest in relevance, 04 for relevant and 05 most relevant. In relation to the measurement of the relevance of the translated items, an average of 12 was expected. A score of 12 was equivalent to a score of 04 (relevant) from each panel member. Items which received a score below 12 were identified as low score

items. When there were similar scores for the two translated items or when both items received low scores, discussions were held with the expert panel as well as language experts outside the expert panel and the items were modified, until the desired scores were obtained. When equal scores were obtained by both translated items, the two translators discussed with each other and selected the item which was deemed more appropriate.

c. Expert panel evaluation for clarity and relevance

The final translated Sinhala version of the PERMA profiler was presented to another expert panel of three members to gauge the clarity and relevance of the items. This panel consisted of three psychologists: one clinical psychologist, one counselling psychologist and one applied psychologist. Content Validity Indices (CVI) for the scale and individual items were calculated based on these ratings.

d. Comprehension test

A convenient sample of fifteen participants were recruited for the comprehension test. As the adapted scale is expected to be used with the Sri Lanka army, the test is expected to be understood by all categories of the army personnel. As per the website of the Sri Lanka army, the minimum educational criterion for recruitment is having an education up to grade 10. Therefore, 05 individuals with General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level (G.C.E. O/L) qualifications were included in the sample. O/L examinations are held after the completion of 11th grade in Sri Lanka. Therefore, these individuals were seen as close in knowledge and skills to the minimum educational criterion required by the Sri Lanka army. Other than that, 04 individuals with General Certificate of Education, Advanced Level (G.C.E. A/L) qualifications, 03 individuals who were undergraduates and 03 individuals with master's degree qualification were included in the sample. Accordingly, a total of 15 individuals participated in the comprehension test and all of them were residents of Colombo district.

Participants rated the items on a Likert scale of 1-5 on the ease of comprehension. 1 was indicated as the lowest level of comprehension (I did not understand anything) to 5 being the highest level of comprehension (I completely understood).

e. Back translation

The final Sinhala translation of the PERMA profiler was forwarded to a sworn translator for the purpose of back translation. The translator was contacted via an online advertisement. Upon receipt of a quotation for the translation the Sinhala PERMA profiler was emailed to the translator with proof of payment. The translator emailed the authors the English translation of the PERMA profiler in three days' time. A copy of the back translation was sent to the original authors for their feedback.

f. Materials

At all stages of the adaptation, free google forms were designed to obtain ratings. Participants who agreed to participate were sent the google form link after obtaining consent. Whenever meetings were required, these were done online via Zoom. These measures were employed as the study took place when the risk of COVID – 19 infection was high.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the course of synthesising the two forward translations of the PERMA profiler, there were modifications proposed by the expert panel. For eight items the panel requested changes in the choice of Sinhala words. Complete modifications of items were not required. There were two items which received equal scores. The two translators decided on the final item to be selected after a discussion as to which item would be easily understood and would convey the original meaning best. Five low score items were identified. These were modified after discussing with the panel members, and language experts from a state university until a minimum score of 12 was obtained from the panel members.

After presenting the translated version to the second expert panel, CVI scores were calculated. The S-CVI was 0.72. All items received an ICVI score of 0.5 or above. Ten items received an ICVI score of 01, and ten items received an ICVI score of 0.6. The rest of the

items received an ICVI score of 0.5. The total number of items were 27, and this included the title and response choices of the scale which were translated to Sinhalese. Items which received less than 01 were modified with the expert suggestions.

During the comprehension test, the majority of the items had received a score of above three on their level of comprehension. The lowest score received was 03, which was only received by less than five items.

When the back translation was presented to the original authors, they proposed edits on seven items. As per their suggestions, modifications were made and the scale was finalised. The revised back-translation was presented to the original authors. During the current study which was aimed at culturally adapting the PERMA profiler to Sinhala, the researchers faced a few challenges. The main challenge was finding suitable Sinhala words to generate the meaning provided in the original scale. It was to translate the English words denoting emotions to Sinhala. It is speculated that this may be because emotions are not very frequently discussed in Sinhala cultural context. Yet, this is merely a speculation and needs to be studied further to be evidence based. During the discussions held with the expert panels in deciding upon the final terms denoting emotions, the most frequent observation was that a single term may have multiple meanings and may be understood by different people in different ways. Therefore, to ensure the content validity of the scale, a careful consideration was required in the choice of words.

The challenge of choosing appropriate words also arose from the fact that written or formal Sinhala language is quite different from the spoken form of the language. The advice of the expert panel was to use a semi- formal language format. This way, it was expected to convey the concepts of wellbeing in a simple, well understood written format of the language.

During the pre-test, it was apparent that the terms were easily understood, and therefore we can state that the process of adaptation, where the choice of the words was considered with careful discussion and analysis, yielded positive results.

It can be concluded that the Sinhala adaptation of the PERMA profiler is well suited to be used in the Sinhala speaking population. The scale is well suited to be used with individuals with average literacy levels. In the case of non-literate population of Sinhala speakers, this may be interview-administered. The semi-formal language format used in the translation would be appropriate for interview-administering the tool.

Ethics Statement

The current adaptation study received Ethical clearance from the Ethics Review Committee (ERC) of the faculty of medical sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Source(s) of support

There was no source of funding available for the study, and the researchers managed the study through their personal funds.

Conflict of interests

There are no conflicts of interest

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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