

Exploring Differences in the Well-Being of International and Domestic Graduates: Implications for University Quality Assurance

Research Overview (English 50 words or Chinese 75 words)

Student well-being is essential for fostering proactive engagement and high-quality learning outcomes. Despite differences between international and domestic graduate students, comparative research on their well-being remains limited. Using teaching and learning IR data from a Japanese university, this study examines these differences to enhance quality assurance in higher education.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine differences in well-being between international and domestic graduate students using teaching and learning IR (Institutional Research) data from Waseda University, a highly selective institution in Japan. Specifically, the study compares response patterns on individual well-being-related items across the two groups, and analyzes differences in their learning experiences related to well-being. Based on these aims, the following research questions are established:

RQ1: What differences exist in responses to well-being-related items between international and domestic graduate students?

RQ2: How does the relationship between well-being and learning experiences differ between international and domestic graduate students?

The study also explores educational approaches to enhancing the well-being of both groups, offering insights that can contribute to the management of teaching and learning and to improving the quality of higher education.

Research Methods

This study analyzes teaching and learning IR data obtained from Waseda University's student survey conducted by the Center for Higher Education in March 2026. The analysis focuses on data from 852 master's graduates (211 international and 641 domestic students).

The well-being-related items were developed based on prior research, including Seligman (2011), and consist of 14 items, including those related to life satisfaction and positive emotions. To address the research questions, two analytical studies were conducted. For RQ1, t-tests were used to examine differences in well-being-related items between the two groups. For RQ2, factor analysis of those well-being-related items yielded a single factor, from which a composite "Well-being" score was calculated using mean values. Thirty-eight learning experience items were initially considered; stepwise multiple regression identified seven key variables. Separate multiple regression analyses (forced entry method) using these variables were then conducted for international ($N = 155$) and domestic ($N = 504$) graduate students, with Well-being score as the dependent variable.

Results and Discussion

For RQ1, t-tests revealed significant differences in seven of the 14 well-being-related items. These differences were observed in areas such as future outlook, pride in the university, and sense of belonging, with international graduate students reporting higher mean scores. No significant differences were found in the remaining items related to satisfaction and sense of security. These findings indicate that international and domestic graduate students differ across specific well-being-related dimensions.

For RQ2, the study found that the relationship between Well-being and learning experiences differed between the two groups. Among domestic graduate students, higher well-being was associated with meeting good faculty members ($\beta = .206$), being dedicated to study in their field of expertise ($\beta = .148$), and consciously creating time to actively rest ($\beta = .122$) (adjusted $R^2 = .273$). Among international graduate students, the strongest predictor was

learning practical knowledge and skills that may be useful in the future ($\beta = .375$). Additionally, consciously creating time to actively rest ($\beta = .240$) and meeting good faculty members ($\beta = .171$) were also significant predictors (adjusted $R^2 = .343$).

While baseline well-being (i.e., satisfaction and sense of security) appears similar across the two groups, important differences emerge in how well-being is related to their learning experiences. For international graduate students, well-being is more strongly tied to instrumentality and future orientation. In contrast, domestic graduate students' well-being is more closely associated with their current academic integration.

Student well-being serves as an indispensable foundation that fosters proactive engagement and facilitates high-quality learning outcomes. The findings of the study suggest that Japanese universities should expand opportunities for international graduate students to acquire practical, career-relevant skills as part of efforts to enhance their well-being. More broadly, institutions should encourage students to allocate time for rest and foster supportive teaching environments that promote positive student–faculty interactions. Future research should examine specific dimensions of well-being and diverse patterns among graduate student populations to enable more in-depth analyses of student well-being and learning outcomes, thereby improving the quality of higher education globally.

Keywords (maximum five)

Well-Being; Graduate Students; Institutional Research; Quality Assurance in Higher Education

References

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. Free Press.