Cultural validation of the PERMA-Profiler: A well-being measure for Vietnamese college students

Phan Tra Khuc[1*], Gene Gloeckner[1]

[1]Colorado State University, Colorado, United States
[*]Corresponding author: khucphan@colostate.edu

ARTICLE INFO

DOI:10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.16.3.3765.2026

Received: October 01st, 2024

Revised: December 06th, 2024

Accepted: December 17th, 2024

Keywords:

higher education; PERMA-Profiler; validation; Vietnam; well-being

ABSTRACT

Psychological well-being issues have become more prevalent among college students worldwide in recent years, especially during and after the Covid-19 outbreak (Nurunnabi et al., 2020). Given the critical role that psychological well-being plays in improving academic success for college students, researchers have focused on developing and validating various measurement tools to assess it. The PERMA-Profiler has become one of the most widely used instruments. This questionnaire has been tested for validity and reliability across Western and Latin American populations; however, its applicability in Vietnamese contexts remains unexplored. This study aimed to translate and adapt the PERMA-Profiler for Vietnamese college students and determine its validity and reliability using factor analysis, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability. After analyzing the factor structure and reliability, the questionnaire was shortened from 23 items to 18 items, with four factors identified: *relationships, meaning and achievement*, *positive emotion*, and *negative emotion.* Internal consistency of each factor ranged from minimally acceptable to high, with Cronbach's Alpha values of .65, .89, .85, and .83. Test-retest reliability demonstrated minimal to adequate temporal stability for three of the four factors, with values of .66 ($p = .001$), .68 ($p = .001$), and .77 ($p < .001$) over 11 weeks. These results demonstrated that the adapted instrument provides a reliable and valid tool for assessing psychological well-being among Vietnamese college students.

1. Introduction

Psychological well-being issues have grown increasingly common among college students. Recent studies highlighted concerning trends across different regions: over 60% of U.S. university students reported mental health challenges (Lipson et al., 2022), while more than 50% of UK students showed clinical levels of anxiety and depression (Chen & Lucock, 2022). The situation is similar in Southeast Asia. A study across six countries in the region, including Vietnam, found that 11.7% of college students reported experiencing suicidal thoughts (Peltzer et al., 2017).

Several studies have highlighted the crucial role of psychological well-being on college students' academic success (Sajid et al., 2015; Stelnicki et al., 2015; Wilcox & Nordstokke, 2019). However, despite the increasing global attention given to student well-being and the

recognition of the importance of assessing psychological well-being to improve academic and life outcomes, there is a lack of research instruments specifically designed for measuring psychological well-being in the context of higher education in Vietnam. This gap limits efforts to evaluate student well-being and adequately support Vietnamese college students.

Martin Seligman, the father of positive psychology, developed the PERMA model as a framework for understanding and promoting well-being (Seligman, 2011). Building on this model, Butler and Kern (2016) created the PERMA-Profiler, a self-report questionnaire widely used in educational, counseling, and business settings. This questionnaire has been tested for validity and reliability in various populations, such as the U.S., Australia, Germany, Brazil, Portugal, and Mexico. However, its applicability in Vietnamese contexts has not been established. Vietnamese society strongly emphasizes collectivism, hierarchy, filial piety, family harmony, and academic achievement (Różycka-Tran et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2024), values that differ from Western and Latin American cultures. These cultural distinctions may influence how psychological well-being is experienced and expressed, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive assessment tools for accurately assessing and supporting psychological well-being in Vietnam.

This study aims to validate the PERMA-Profiler for Vietnamese college students. Specifically, it describes translating the questionnaire from English into Vietnamese. It evaluates its reliability and validity using factor structure analysis, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability assessment.

2. Methodology

This section provides an overview of the procedures used to translate and validate the PERMA-Profiler with college students from Vietnam. It also provides insight into the study participants, including demographic details and the recruitment process. Furthermore, a detailed description of the instrument used in this study is provided, covering its development, content, and validation.

2.1. Procedures

We tested the applicability of the PERMA-Profiler to college students in Vietnam through four stages. The first stage focused on translating the questionnaire into Vietnamese and ensuring it was comprehensible in the Vietnamese language. In the second stage, we assessed the questionnaire's validity and reliability with 30 Vietnamese college students, leading to some initial revisions. Principal axis factoring was used to examine the factor structure, as this method is appropriate for identifying latent constructs. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each identified factor. The third stage involved testing the questionnaire again with a larger group of 58 Vietnamese college students. In the final stage of our research, we conducted a test-retest analysis using Pearson and Spearman rho correlation coefficients with a subset of 22 students from the third stage to evaluate the stability and consistency of this questionnaire over time. The objective was to assess the PERMA-Profiler's effectiveness in measuring the intended constructs and determine the questionnaire's internal consistency.

2.2. Participants

Using a convenience sampling approach, ninety-one students were recruited through social media and university postings. The validity and reliability of the PERMA-Prolifer were tested using the responses provided by these participants. Demographic information was not

collected for 30 students in stage two. Of the remaining 61 students, 13.11% were male, 1.64% were non-binary, and 85.25% were female. Regarding location, 30.50% were from rural areas, and 59.5% were from urban areas. Regarding academic standing, there were 57 first-year students (64.04%), 31 sophomores (34.83%), and one third-year (1.13%) student. All participants were undergraduate college students from different universities across Vietnam. While the sample size is relatively small and unrepresentative of the broader population, this study is an exploratory effort to validate the PERMA-Profiler in the Vietnamese context.

2.3. Instrument - the PERMA-Profiler

The PERMA-Profiler is a 23-item self-report measure of well-being. The items in the survey are structured on a "0" to "10" scale, with a rating of "0" indicating extremely low levels and "10" indicating extremely high levels. Fifteen of these items measure the five constructs of the PERMA model (*positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement*). The additional eight items include three measuring *negative emotion*, three for *physical health*, one for *loneliness*, and one for *overall happiness*. These items are grouped into seven factors, with the *overall happiness* item and the *loneliness* item treated individually as single items.

The PERMA-Profiler was selected for this study for several reasons. First, it was thoroughly developed, rigorously tested, and has demonstrated strong psychometric properties across diverse populations (Giangrasso, 2021). Second, beyond measuring *positive emotion* - a common component in most well-being scales - the PERMA-Profiler includes additional dimensions that align with Vietnamese cultural values. The *relationships* component reflects Vietnam's emphasis on social harmony and collective well-being (Różycka-Tran et al., 2021), while the *achievement* dimension corresponds to the high cultural value placed on academic and career success (Tran et al., 2024). Similarly, the *meaning* component resonates with traditional Vietnamese values inherited from Buddhism, emphasizing love for others, helping friends, and contributing to social harmony (Nguyen, 2016). While the *engagement* dimension is not traditionally emphasized in Vietnamese cultural discourse, it is relevant to contemporary Vietnamese students who, like their global peers, increasingly seek personal and professional fulfillment (Nagy & Tomm, 2023).

The authors of the PERMA-Profiler tested its model fit, reliability, and validity with a large population (N = 31,966) for all versions developed and adjusted over four years (Butler & Kern, 2016). For model fit, this measure was tested in a confirmatory factor model to assess the instrument's factor structure and examine the data's fit to the proposed factor model. The PERMA-Profiler was found to have an acceptable model fit (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation = .055, Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual = .037). Test-retest reliability for each PERMA factor with 1,372 participants showed r ranging from .61 to .80, indicating minimal to good stability. The researchers assessed the convergent and divergent validity of the PERMA model factors by correlating them with the original 199-item PERMA questionnaire and the PAC-10 measure. The results showed that the PERMA factors exhibited strong positive correlations with flourishing and life satisfaction, moderate positive correlations with physical health, and inverse correlations with negative emotion and loneliness. Additionally, the factors displayed strong positive correlations with the PAC-10 scale.

Various other studies have been conducted to test the reliability and validity of the PERMA model in populations outside of the United States. These studies evaluated the PERMA-Profiler with participants from Australia (adults) (Ryan et al., 2019), Germany (adults) (Wammerl et al., 2019), Portugal (adults) (Alves et al., 2023), Brazil (adults) (de Carvalho et

al., 2023), and Mexico (university students and employees) (Chaves et al., 2023). Overall, these studies provided mixed support for the reliability and validity of the PERMA-Profiler. The questionnaire demonstrated strong internal consistency for all factors across various populations, except for the engagement factor, which exhibited minimal internal consistency in studies involving adults from Australia, Germany, Portugal, and Brazil (alphas = .66, .68, .62, .59, respectively). The model fit for the five factors was also good for Mexico, Germany, and Brazil but poorer for the other two countries. Although the PERMA-Profiler shows promise as a well-being measure, additional refinement and validation work across diverse cultural groups appears needed to ensure appropriate reliability and validity across all subscales. The following section reports on the translation and validation results of the PERMA-Profiler in the Vietnamese context.

3. Results

3.1. Stage one: Translation and comprehensibility of the instruments

The PERMA-Profiler was translated using a forward-backward process conducted by Author 1, a native Vietnamese speaker with advanced English proficiency. Author 1 first translated the questionnaire from English to Vietnamese, then back-translated it to English to verify accuracy. A bilingual version was created, with each item in English and Vietnamese. Two Vietnamese English teachers who were proficient in English with an IELTS 8.0 were then invited to give feedback on the translation to ensure its accuracy. Each teacher independently reviewed the questionnaire and provided suggestions for improving the translation via email. Considering their input, we made several wording revisions to refine the questionnaire. Table 1 displays the Vietnamese equivalents of the questionnaire items alongside their English counterparts.

To ensure the questionnaire was student-friendly, three Vietnamese students (one first-year, one sophomore, and one senior) were invited to participate in the think-out-loud process in which they shared their thoughts and feedback while completing the PERMA-Profiler. This technique helped detect potential issues in understanding the intended meaning of each item (Wammerl et al., 2019). At the end of each session, we asked participants for feedback on the questionnaire. All students reported understanding the response scale and agreed that the questionnaire was clear and coherent. During the think-out-loud process, two participants said, "How would you say your health is?" and "How satisfied are you with your current physical health?" seemed redundant. The third participant also confirmed feeling confused about this repetition when asked.

Although all three participants had upper-intermediate English proficiency skills or higher, which allowed them to comprehend the questionnaire in English without difficulty, all relied on the Vietnamese version. One participant quickly scanned the English version before referring to the Vietnamese version. However, when reflecting on their responses, she primarily utilized Vietnamese wording. The other two participants solely engaged with the Vietnamese version. In instances where they perceived items to be "broad," such as "In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile?" and "In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?", or "unexpected," like "How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?" they referred to the English version to verify the accuracy of the translation.

3.2. Stage two: Initial validity and reliability assessment

Thirty college students were invited to complete the PERMA-Profiler to assess its validity and reliability. Principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to determine the underlying structure for the 23 items of the PERMA-Profiler questionnaire. Items with factor loadings less than .3 were removed. The determinant of these 23 items was small (9.405E-10), indicating high correlations, making it difficult to identify distinct and meaningful factors or extract reliable factor loadings. During stage one, the participants also noticed the repetition of items related to physical health and expressed confusion. Given that physical health and loneliness exhibited high correlations with other factors, these items were removed from this instrument. Following the removal, the determinant increased to a small value (1.619E-6). Although the determinant would have been larger if one more item from each of the five PERMA factors had been removed, we decided to retain all the PERMA items in the analysis. This decision ensured at least three items were identified to identify factors and estimate reliability in the structural model (Butler & Kern, 2016).

The revised questionnaire included a total of 19 items, consisting of 15 PERMA items, three *negative emotion* items, and one *overall happiness* item. Since the positive focus of the PERMA measure does not diminish the significance of negative emotions (Kern et al., 2015), including *negative emotion* items in the scale was necessary to acknowledge the importance of considering both positive and negative elements of the well-being spectrum. Including one *happiness item is also valuabl*e since it enables participants to comprehensively assess their well-being after considering specific aspects from other questions (Butler & Kern, 2016). Butler and Kern (2016) also recommended retaining this item to calculate overall well-being by taking the average of the main 15 PERMA items and the overall happiness item.

Table 1

The PERMA-Profiler Items in English and their Translated Vietnamese Equivalents, along with their Associated Factors

English	Vietnamese	Factor
1. To what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?	Nhìn chung, bạn đang sống một cuộc sống có mục đích và ý nghĩa đến mức độ nào?	Meaning 1*
2. How often do you feel you are making progress toward accomplishing your goals?	Bạn có thường cảm thấy rằng mình đang tiến bước hoàn thành những mục tiêu của mình không?	Achievement 1*
3. How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	Bạn có thường xuyên làm việc của mình một cách say mê không?	Engagement 1*
4. In general, how often do you feel joyful?	Nhìn chung, bạn có thường xuyên cảm thấy vui vẻ không?	Positive emotion 1*
5. To what extent do you receive help and support from others when you need it?	Bạn nhận được sự giúp đỡ và hỗ trợ từ người khác ở mức độ nào khi cần?	Relationship 1*
6. In general, how often do you feel anxious?	Nhìn chung, bạn có thường cảm thấy lo âu không?	Negative emotion 1*

English	Vietnamese	Factor
7. How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?	Bạn có thường xuyên đạt được những mục tiêu quan trọng mà bạn đã đặt ra cho mình không?	Achievement 2*
8. To what extent do you feel that what you do is valuable and worthwhile?	Nhìn chung, bạn cảm thấy những gì bạn làm trong cuộc sống của mình có giá trị và đáng làm ở mức độ nào?	Meaning 2*
9. In general, how often do you feel positive?	Nhìn chung, bạn có thường cảm thấy tích cực không?	Positive emotion 2*
10. To what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?	Nhìn chung, bạn cảm thấy hứng thú và quan tâm đến những việc xung quanh mình đến mức nào?	Engagement 2*
11. In general, how often do you feel angry?	Nhìn chung, bạn có thường cảm thấy tức giận không?	Negative emotion 2*
12. To what extent have you been feeling loved?	Bạn cảm thấy mình được yêu thương đến mức nào?	Relationship 2*
13. How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?	Bạn có thể làm tròn trách nhiệm của mình với mức độ thường xuyên như thế nào?	Achievement 3*
14. To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction?	Nhìn chung, bạn cảm thấy có mục tiêu và hướng đi trong cuộc sống đến mức nào?	Meaning 3*
15. How satisfied are you with your relationships?	Bạn hài lòng về mối quan hệ cá nhân đến mức nào?	Relationship 3*
16. In general, how often do you feel sad?	Nhìn chung, bạn có thường cảm thấy buồn không?	Negative emotion 3*
17. How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?	Bạn có thường bị mất ý niệm về thời gian khi làm điều mình thích không?	Engagement 3*
18. In general, to what extent do you feel contented?	Nhìn chung, bạn cảm thấy hài lòng trong cuộc sống đến mức nào?	Positive emotion 3*
19. Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?	Khi xem xét tất cả các yếu tố trên, bạn cảm thấy mình hạnh phúc đến mức nào?	Overall happiness – single item

Note. *a number was assigned to each item within a factor to facilitate easy referencing within the paper. The aggregated data of the authors group

Six factors were requested since the items were designed to index six constructs: *positive emotion*, *engagement*, *relationships*, *meaning*, *achievement*, and *negative emotion*. All these items indexed had positive loadings except for the *negative emotion*-related items. After rotation, the first factor accounted for 19.0% of the variance, the second factor 13.5%, the third 13.3%, the fourth 11.4%, the fifth 9.2%, and the sixth 9.1%. Cumulatively, these six factors accounted for 75% of the total variance in the data. This outcome offered support for the validity of the questionnaire.

Cronbach's Alphas were computed to determine the internal consistency reliability of the items within each factor. The first factor, comprising six items, demonstrated good internal consistency reliability with an alpha of .86. The second, third, and fourth factors showed adequate internal consistency with alphas of .72, .72, and .73, respectively. The alpha coefficient for the last factor was .63, indicating a minimal level of internal consistency reliability (Morgan et al., 2019).

3.3. Stage three: Second validity and reliability assessment

Fifty-eight college students were invited to check the validity and reliability of the revised bilingual PERMA-Profiler, which had 19 items consisting of 15 PERMA items (three for each of the five well-being dimensions), one for *overall happiness*, and three for *negative emotion*. The validity and reliability of the instrument were assessed one more time with this population to examine the correlation between questionnaire items. Six factors were requested to measure their six constructs. Items with factor loadings less than .3 were removed.

As shown in Table 2, the first factor includes one *engagement* item, three *meaning* items, and three *achievement* items. The correlation between *meaning* and *achievement* items is understandable, given that accomplishing meaningful goals fosters a heightened sense of purpose and meaning in life (Kashdan & McKnight, 2009). The factor also includes the *engagement* item "How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?" which aligns logically because achievement can involve activities that require deep engagement and immersion (Baumann & Scheffer, 2011). Given the substantial loadings of these items, we chose to retain them all under a new factor named *meaning and achievement.*

The second factor could be termed *positive emotion* because it includes two items related to *positive emotion* and one about *overall happiness*. Additionally, the *engagement* item, "In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?" also aligns with the theme of positive emotion since it explicitly addresses excitement and interest. The item "Relationship 3" shows cross-loadings with several factors. We relocated this item to the fourth factor to enhance clarity and coherence, forming the *relationships* factor alongside the other two positive relationship items. Similarly, "Positive Emotions 3" demonstrates cross-loading with the second factor with a low load (.43). However, we chose to include this item in the second factor for consistency. The second factor, *positive emotion,* consists of three *positive emotion* items, "Engagement 2," and the *overall happiness* item.

The third factor can be referred to as *negative emotion,* which includes three items that measure this factor. Another item, "Engagement 3," which asks, "How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?" was also found to correlate with three *negative emotion*-related items with a lower loading (.54). However, this item seems unrelated to *negative emotion*. Therefore, we removed this particular item from this factor.

After conducting an exploratory factor analysis, we identified four factors for the adapted PERMA-Profiler instrument. The first three factors have shown high internal consistency, with alphas of .89, .85, and .83, respectively. The fourth factor, *relationships,* has a lower and minimally acceptable internal consistency with an alpha of .65. Overall, after stage three, we have reduced the PERMA-Profiler to only 18 items that measure four factors: *meaning and achievement* with seven items, *positive emotion* with five items, *negative emotion* with three items, and *relationships* with three items.

3.4. Stage four: Test-retest reliability assessment

Twenty-two students from stage three participated in a retest conducted 11 weeks later to investigate the consistency of their well-being scores over time. Test-retest reliability was assessed using Pearson and Spearman rho correlation coefficients. The test-retest reliability of *overall well-being* scores revealed a correlation coefficient of .63, indicating minimal temporal stability. Examining factor-specific correlations, *negative emotion*, and *meaning and engagement* displayed correlation coefficients of .66 (p = .001) and .68 (p = .001). The correlation coefficient for the *relationships* between the initial assessment and the retest was.77 (p < .001), indicating adequate stability in positive relationship experiences over the 11 weeks. However, *positive emotion* did not correlate significantly (p = .2, r = .3), indicating a lack of meaningful association.

Table 2

PERMA-Profiler: Factor Loadings for the Rotated Factors

Item	Factor Loadings					
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Meaning 3	.770					
Achievement 1	.769					
Meaning 1	.747	.420				
Engagement 1	.743					
Achievement 2	.621	.357				
Meaning 2	.618	.454				
Achievement 3	.608					.438
Positive Emotion 2		.764				
Engagement 2	.326	.739				
Overall Happiness		.708			.384	
Positive Emotion 1		.684	-.387	.334		
Positive Relationship 3	.368	.435		.342		.390
Negative Emotion 3			.917			
Negative Emotion 1			.809			
Negative Emotion 2			.695			
Engagement 3			.535			
Relationships 1				.694		
Relationships 2				.587		.317
Positive Emotion 3	.425	.308			.731	
% of variance	21.58	16.74	14.40	7.06	5.86	3.63

Note. Loadings < .30 are omitted. The data are from "IBM SPSS for introductory statistics: Use and interpretation" (6th ed.) by G. A. Morgan, K. C. Barrett, N. L. Leech, and G. W. Gloeckner, 2019, Routledge

4. Discussion

This study aimed to translate and validate the PERMA theory of well-being for Vietnamese college students. To achieve this aim, we created a bilingual (English-Vietnamese) version of the PERMA-Profiler and tested it on 91 college students in Vietnam. After the second testing stage with 30 Vietnamese students, we reduced the number of items from 22 to 19. We then conducted psychometric testing on a sample of 58 students, resulting in a version demonstrating satisfactory validity and reliability for the target population.

Besides the *negative emotion* factor, the adapted bilingual version of the PERMA-Profiler identified only three factors of the PERMA model. In contrast, the original study and studies with German and Brazilian adults confirmed five factors. Our exploratory factor analysis results indicated that the items representing two factors, *meaning* and *achievement*, have loaded into a new factor, which we called *meaning and achievement*. In contrast, the *engagement* factor has disappeared from the observed factor structure. These results reflect important cultural nuances in how well-being constructs manifest in Vietnamese contexts.

The emergence of a combined *meaning and achievement* factor can be understood through developmental and cultural lenses. According to Seligman (2018), *meaning* revolves around making life worth living and finding purpose by serving something larger than individual needs. However, the three *meaning*-related items on the PERMA-Profiler - "In general, to what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?", "How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?" and "To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?" - while capturing personal value and purpose, do not explicitly address serving beyond the self. The population in this study comprised mainly first- and second-year college students transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. These students were transitioning away from, perhaps still experiencing, parental control or overprotection typical of Vietnamese parenting (Thuong, 2021). During this period, they may focus more on self-discovery than pursuing higher purposes. This could explain why, for these young individuals, the concept of *meaning* is associated with leading a purposeful life by setting and achieving personal goals aligned with the *achievement* factor. Moreover, given that reputation and family obligation are core values in Vietnamese culture (Nguyen, 2016), the merging of *meaning and achievement* factors likely reflects how Vietnamese students view personal achievement as inherently connected to family honor and societal contribution.

While potentially concerning, the absence of the engagement factor offers essential insights into the cross-cultural measurement of psychological well-being. Previous studies have found the *engagement* factor to be the most problematic, exhibiting weaker reliability than others in previous studies (Butler & Kern, 2016; de Carvalho et al., 2023; Ryan et al., 2019). When developing the PERMA-Profiler, Butler and Kern (2016) also noted that measuring *engagement* was a challenging task due to the complexity of the construct. The construct comprises emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, making it difficult to capture precisely through a brief scale with only three items. In a collectivist culture like in Vietnam, people tend to prioritize the group's interests over their interests (Triandis & Suh, 2002); therefore, individual pursuits of optimal experiences like flow or engagement may not be encouraged or perceived as wholly positive. Thus, the Vietnamese participant sample of this study may not interpret *engagement*-related items on the PERMA-Profiler in the same way as Western populations. The limited number of items and potential cultural differences in views on engagement could contribute to the disappearance of this factor when testing with Vietnamese college students.

The test-retest results of the adapted PERMA-Profiler revealed support for stability in an 11-week interval with the overall well-being scores and each factor, except for *positive emotion*. The internal consistency of the *relationship* factor was minimally acceptable. Additionally, one of its items demonstrated a higher loading with the *positive emotion* factor than with its factor. This indicates this factor (*relationships*) needs further refinement. In collectivist cultures like Vietnam, with a strong emphasis on group cohesion, individuals tend to be more sensitive to social influence (Jamaluddin et al., 2021; Truong & Underwood, 2020). As a result, relationship dynamics can impact psychological well-being, resulting in positive and negative effects. Since social factors are crucial in this context, we decided to keep the *relationships* factor despite its marginal reliability. However, further research is needed to improve the accuracy of this scale by adding more items that better capture the nuances of relational dynamics within this cultural context.

While our sample size was modest, the emergence of clear factor structures and reliable subscales suggests robust underlying patterns. The findings provide valuable initial evidence for how Western well-being constructs translate to Vietnamese contexts. Identifying culturally specific factor combinations (*meaning and achievement*) and the absence of the *engagement* factor provide insights for cross-cultural well-being research, even with limited participants. These results lay crucial groundwork for larger-scale validation studies while providing immediate practical utility for Vietnamese educational settings.

5. Strengths and limitations

This study provides the first evidence of the validity and reliability of the PERMA-Profiler with the Vietnamese population. It had several strengths, including its thorough, multi-stage approach. We first tested the bilingual PERMA-Profiler on 30 students to allow for initial revisions and adaptations. Then, the adapted questionnaire was tested on a larger sample of 58 students to continue refining it. The test-retest reliability was also assessed over 11 weeks to ensure the questionnaire's consistency over time. However, the study was limited by its small sample size and gender bias, with a disproportionately large number of female student participants. The scale should be tested on larger, more diverse samples for future research to establish validity. Additionally, future research can consider the outcome variables the PERMA profiler can predict to provide evidence of between-network validity.

6. Conclusion

The lack of validated research instruments to assess well-being specifically for Vietnamese higher education populations highlights the need to translate and validate existing tools, such as the PERMA-Profiler, one of the most widely used instruments for global well-being (Giangrasso, 2021). This study created and validated a bilingual (English-Vietnamese) version of the PERMA-Profiler for the target population. After examining the factor structure and reliability in this participant sample, the questionnaire was shortened from 23 to 18 items with four factors: *meaning and achievement*, *positive emotion*, *negative emotion*, and *relationships*. The validation process revealed the strengths and limitations of applying Western well-being constructs in the Vietnamese context. While some PERMA components translated effectively, the emergence of combined factors (*meaning and achievement*) and the absence of a distinct *engagement* factor suggest cultural differences in how well-being is experienced and expressed among Vietnamese students. These findings highlight the need for culturally adapted tools that reflect the unique perspectives of this population. This shortened version can be used to assess psychological well-being among

Vietnamese college students. Hopefully, this will encourage future research to explore the nuances of well-being assessment in the Vietnamese context, as this remains an under-explored topic in this setting.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

The manuscript clearly identifies a research gap; the manuscript opens new directions for further research; the manuscript provides empirical evidence.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CRediT: **Phan Tra Khuc**: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing Original Draft, Writing Review & Editing; **Gene Gloeckner**: Supervision, Methodology, Writing - Review & Editing.

FUNDING

This research received no external funding.

NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest in this article.

References

Alves, M. A., Palmer, S., & Gouveia, M. J. (2023). Psychometric properties of the Portuguese version of the PERMA-Profiler. *Trends in Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43076-023-00261-3

Baumann, N., & Scheffer, D. (2011). Seeking flow in the achievement domain: The achievement flow motive behind flow experience. *Motivation and Emotion, 35*(3), 267-284. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-010-9195-4

Butler, J., & Kern, M. L. (2016). The PERMA-Profiler: A brief multidimensional measure of flourishing. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 6*(3), 1-48. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v6i3.526

Chaves, C., Ballesteros-Valdés, R., Madridejos, E., & Charles-Leija, H. (2023). PERMA-Profiler for the evaluation of well-being: Adaptation and validation in a sample of university students and employees in the Mexican educational context. *Applied Research in Quality of Life, 18*(3), 1225-1247. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-022-10132-1

Chen, T., & Lucock, M. (2022). The mental health of university students during the Covid-19 pandemic: An online survey in the UK. *PLOS ONE, 17*(1), e0262562. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0262562

de Carvalho, T. F., de Aquino, S. D., & Natividade, J. C. (2023). Flourishing in the Brazilian context: Evidence of the validity of the PERMA-profiler scale. *Current Psychology, 42*(3), 1828-1840. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01587-w

Giangrasso, B. (2021). Psychometric properties of the PERMA-Profiler as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being measure in an Italian context. *Current Psychology, 40*(3), 1175-1184. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-018-0040-3

Jamaluddin, S. F., Adi, S. P., & Lufityanto, G. (2021). Social influences on cheating in collectivistic culture: Collaboration but not competition. *Group Dynamics, 25*(2), 174-189. https://doi.org/10.1037/gdn0000122

Kashdan, T. B., & McKnight, P. E. (2009). Origins of purpose in life: Refining our understanding of a life well lived. *Psihologijske Teme, 18*(2), 303-316.

Kern, M. L., Waters, L. E., Adler, A., & White, M. A. (2015). A multidimensional approach to measuring well-being in students: Application of the PERMA framework. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 10*(3), 262-271. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.936962

Lipson, S. K., Zhou, S., Abelson, S., Heinze, J., Jirsa, M., Morigney, J., Patterson, A., Singh, M., & Eisenberg, D. (2022). Trends in college student mental health and help-seeking by race/ethnicity: Findings from the national healthy minds study, 2013 - 2021. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 306*, 138-147. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2022.03.038

Morgan, G. A., Barrett, K. C., Leech, N. L., & Gloeckner, G. W. (2019). *IBM SPSS for introductory statistics: Use and interpretation* (6th ed.). Routledge.

Nagy, D., & Tomm, S. J. (2023). *Thriving or surviving? A study of job satisfaction among Gen z* [Jönköping University]. https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hj:diva-61612

Nguyen, Q. T. N. (2016). The Vietnamese values system: A blend of oriental, Western and socialist values. *International Education Studies, 9*(12), 32-40. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n12p32

Nurunnabi, M., Almusharraf, N., & Aldeghaither, D. (2020). Mental health and well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic in higher education: Evidence from G20 countries. *Journal of Public Health Research, 9*(suppl 1), Article 2010. https://doi.org/10.4081/jphr.2020.2010

Peltzer, K., Yi, S., & Pengpid, S. (2017). Suicidal behaviors and associated factors among university students in six countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). *Asian Journal of Psychiatry, 26*, 32-38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2017.01.019

Różycka-Tran, J., Jurek, P., Truong, T. K. H., & Olech, M. (2021). The implications of filial piety in study engagement and study satisfaction: A Polish-Vietnamese comparison. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.525034

Ryan, J., Curtis, R., Olds, T., Edney, S., Vandelanotte, C., Plotnikoff, R., & Maher, C. (2019). Psychometric properties of the PERMA Profiler for measuring wellbeing in Australian adults. *PLOS ONE, 14*(12), e0225932. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225932

Sajid, A., Ahmad, T., & Khalid, T. (2015). Stress in medical undergraduates; its association with academic performance. *Bangladesh Journal of Medical Science, 14*(2), 135-141. https://doi.org/10.3329/bjms.v14i2.21815

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being* (pp. xii, 349). Free Press.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2018). PERMA and the building blocks of well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 13*(4), 333-335. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1437466

Stelnicki, A. M., Nordstokke, D. W., & Saklofske, D. H. (2015). Who is the successful university student? An analysis of personal resources. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 45*(2), 214-228.

Thuong, M. (2021). *Parental ethnotheories of children's play on child development and parent-child relationship: A phenomenological study of Vietnamese parents* [Doctoral dissertation, Fielding Graduate University]. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2511368637/abstract/51BEB425C0514948PQ/1

Tran, T. V., Nguyen, H. T. L., Tran, X. M. T., Tashiro, Y., Seino, K., Vo, T. V., & Nakamura, K. (2024). Academic stress among students in Vietnam: A three-year longitudinal study on the impact of family, lifestyle, and academic factors. *Journal of Rural Medicine, 19*(4), 279-290. https://doi.org/10.2185/jrm.2024-012

Triandis, H. C., & Suh, E. M. (2002). Cultural influences on personality. *Annual Review of Psychology, 53*(1), 133-160. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135200

Truong, T., & Underwood, J. (2020). Constructing social cohesion in Vietnamese public schools: The methods, and students' forgotten identities. *Kultura i Edukacja, 130*(4), 25-42. https://doi.org/10.15804/kie.2020.04.02

Wammerl, M., Jaunig, J., Mairunteregger, T., & Streit, P. (2019). The German version of the PERMA-profiler: Evidence for construct and convergent validity of the PERMA theory of well-being in German speaking countries. *Journal of Well-Being Assessment, 3*(2), 75-96. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41543-019-00021-0

Wilcox, G., & Nordstokke, D. (2019). Predictors of university student satisfaction with life, academic self-efficacy, and achievement in the first year. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 49*(1), 104-124.

©2026 The Author(s). Published by Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science - Social Sciences. This article is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.