The Relationships Between Personal Identity, National Identity, and Well-Being

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Introduction

Youth cope with the fundamental tasks of developing their personal and social identities (Crocetti et al., 2023). Personal identity development unfolds in multiple domains being crucial for youth well-being (Erikson, 1968). Similarly, youth develop their social identity (Tajfel, 1978) in reference to multiple groups. National identity is one such social identity relevant for youth, referring to a subjective/internalized sense of belonging to a nation (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). Although research has found that personal and social identities are closely related (Albarello et al., 2018; Sugimura et al., 2025), few studies have tackled national identity (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2021; Meca et al., 2017), especially in youth in a majority group in Asia despite the increased interest in this identity for all youth in countries facing increased immigration and socio-political transformation requiring renewed national consciousness and solidarity (Dimitrova et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2012). To address this gap, this study focused on youth belonging to a majority group in Japan. While Japan has valued cultural homogeneity (Sugimura, 2020), the number of foreigners living in Japan is increasing. Amid this change, Japanese youth may have become more aware of their national identity. Thus, we addressed relationships between personal and national identity processes

and their links to well-being.

Method

Participants were 968 university students aged 18–29 years (M_{age} = 20.06, SD = 1.17; 51.34% women) who identified their nationality as Japanese. Personal identity was measured using the Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (Crocetti et al., 2008). National identity was assessed using an adapted version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Roberts et al., 1999). Well-being was assessed using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988).

Results

We conducted two path analyses. First, personal identity commitment and in-depth exploration were positively associated with national identity exploration and commitment, whereas personal identity reconsideration of commitment was positively associated with national identity exploration (Figure 1). Second, personal identity commitment and national identity exploration were positively related to well-being, and personal identity reconsideration of commitment was negatively related to well-being (Figure 2).

Discussion

First, positive associations between personal identity commitment and in-depth exploration and national identity exploration and commitment suggest that youth who are in the process of consolidating their personal identity may also deepen understanding of and invest in their nationality as a life area that provides them with the meaning of existence in a larger social context. Positive associations between personal identity reconsideration of commitment and national identity exploration imply that youth who are questioning their personal identity may also actively search for the meaning of their nationality. Second, the results pointed to the relevance of personal identity processes and to the contribution of national identity exploration in promoting youth well-being, providing novel knowledge of the positive role of national identity exploration in well-being.

Conclusion

This study contributes to understanding the interplay between personal and national identity and their relations with well-being among youth in a majority group outside Western countries.

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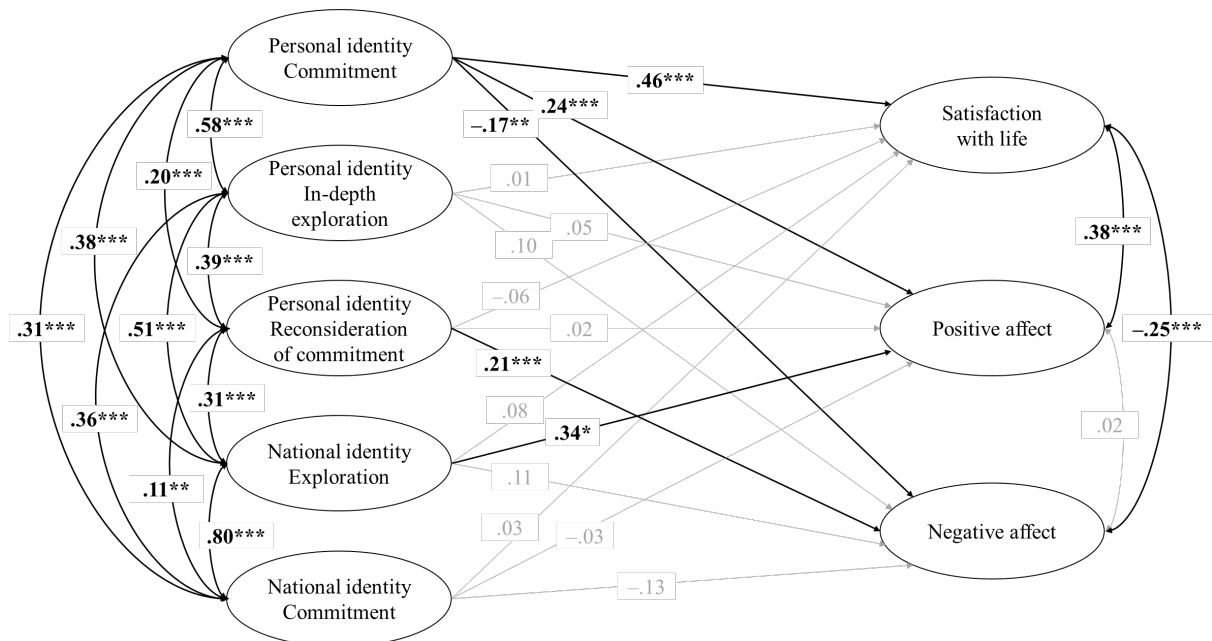Dimitrova, R., Musso, P., Naudé, L., Zahaj, S., Solcova, I. P., Stefenel, D., Uka, F., Jordanov,

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Figure 1
Relations Between Personal Identity and National Identity
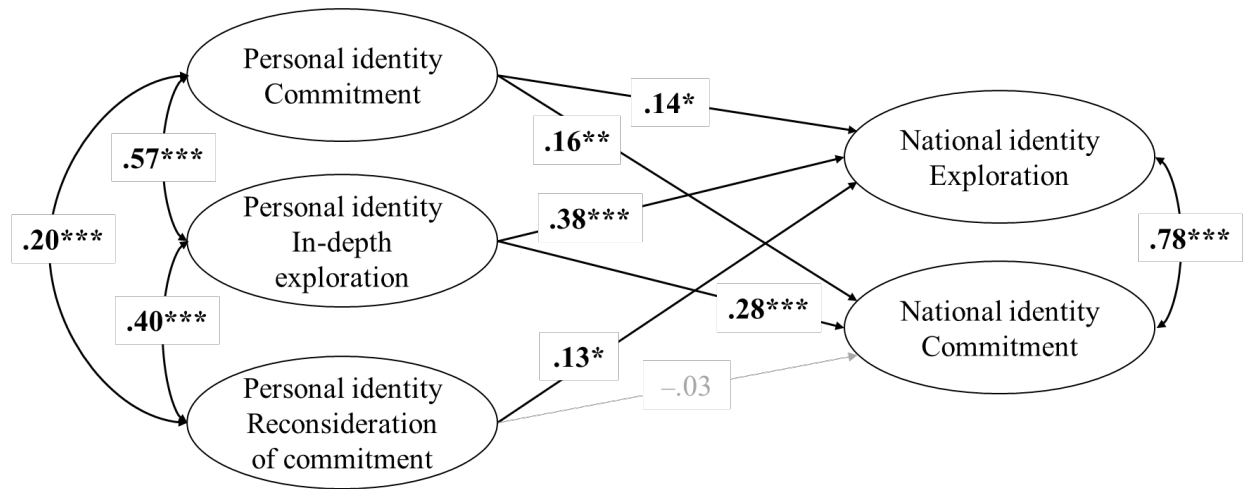
Note. Bold paths indicate the statistically significant associations, while gray paths indicate the statistically insignificant associations. For the sake of clarity, path coefficients from control variables are not displayed.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure 2
Associations of Personal and National Identity with Well-Being

Note. Bold paths indicate the statistically significant associations, while gray paths indicate the statistically insignificant associations. For the sake of clarity, path coefficients from control variables are not displayed.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.