

**The Pursuit and Intersectionality of Ikigai and Performance Excellence**

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COUNS 6210-Psychology of Performance Excellence

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## **Introduction**

The following is a summary of how having “Ikigai” (i.e., a reason for being) impacts overall health and well-being; how Ikigai is present in my life; acknowledging the value of combining eastern and western philosophies in the achievement of performance excellence and overall well-being. According to Sone, et al., (2008), having Ikigai has a profound impact on our overall health. The findings from Sone, et al., (2008) indicate that people with Ikigai live longer, have better social status, are more likely to have a significant other, did not suffer with cardiovascular disease, and were less susceptible to strokes and cancer. On the other hand, those without Ikigai did not live as long and were more likely to die from cardiovascular disease, cancer, and strokes (Sone, et al., 2008). Further, people without Ikigai were more likely to be lonely and have lower social status. The preceding findings illustrate the significant value that having Ikigai has on our performance excellence, over-all wellbeing, and lifespan .

## **The Intersectionality of Ikigai and Eastern and Western Philosophies of Performance Excellence**

In reference to the Ikigai Diagram, there are four components that intersect to create Ikigai (Sone, et al., 2008; Dreamstime, 2020). The four components that intersect include, LOVE- what you love; What you’re GOOD at; What you can be PAID for; and What the world NEEDS. To illustrate the value of each component the intersection of the various components will be highlighted. For instance, when LOVE and what you are GOOD at intersect it can be defined as your PASSION. In addition, when LOVE and what the world NEEDS intersect it can

be defined as your MISSION. Additionally, when what you are GOOD at and what you can be PAID for intersect it can be defined as your PROFESSION. Further, when what the world NEEDS and what you can be PAID for intersect it can be defined as your VOCATION. Each component holds its own value, however without the intersection of all four parts, there are aspects that are missing from what brings us value as a whole (Sone, et al., 2008). In other words, by combining all four components we have the opportunity to experience Ikigai (i.e. a reason for being) because we honor what we LOVE (i.e. giving us a sense of value and fulfilment), master what we are GOOD at (i.e. giving us a sense of satisfaction and achievement), address a NEED in the world (i.e. giving us a sense of purpose), and get PAID for it (i.e. giving us a sense of security) (Sone, et al., 2008).

These four components align to allow me the opportunity to experience Ikigai with my pursuit of performance excellence in the field of Sport Psychology. I will illustrate the preceding with 3-4 statements for each component. For the component of LOVE, my four statements include the following: 1) I love helping people to discover their potential. 2) I love helping people to maximize their potential. 3) I love helping people to achieve performance success. 4) I love reaching people in a way that allows them to reach themselves. For the component of What you are GOOD at, my four statements include: 1) I am good at helping people to achieve success and overcome obstacles. 2) I am good at communicating to help people understand concepts that will support them. 3) I am good at listening and understanding people. 4) I am good at approaching people with individualized approaches to help them to maximize their individual potential. For the component of What the world NEEDS, my statements include: 1) I am providing kindness and compassion as I approach all people to spread more love in the world. 2) I am providing a service that allows people to achieve their potential in their own respective

disciplines. 3) I am listening to people, so they feel heard and understood to help them to feel more valued in a world that often prefers people to question their value. For the component of What I can be PAID for, my statements include: 1) I can be paid for my ability to communicate and support people in their own performance excellence. 2) I can be paid for the time that I take to support people as they overcome obstacles and achieve performance success. 3) I can be paid for listening and helping people to develop the best strategies to support them in performance. 4) I can be paid for helping people feel valued.

After completing this exercise, it illustrated how eastern philosophies can complement western approaches. Eastern philosophies tend to approach people more holistically and consider people and community as a whole, whereas western philosophies are generally more individualistic and focus on self-fulfillment and self-knowledge (Difference Between, 2020). As mentioned on the Difference Between (2020), “The Eastern philosophy is drawn much more into groups or society or people’s actions and thoughts as one, in order to find meaning in life as they try to get rid of the false “me” concept and find meaning in discovering the true “me” in relation to everything around them, or as part of a bigger scheme. In contrast, the Western civilization is more individualistic, trying to find the meaning of life here and now with self at the center as it is already given and part of the divine...Eastern philosophy is also more about the spiritual while Western philosophy is more of a hands-on style. The difference is the “I” of the West, and the “We” of the East, as one focuses on finding truth and meaning” (Difference Between, 2020). By combining the approaches of eastern and western philosophies, we have the potential to create a more holistic experience and existence for people.

Eastern philosophies offer us the opportunity to understand our spiritual being, including our mind, beliefs, and our relation to others, whereas the western philosophies focus more on the

hands-on self in our physical form, including our individual sense of fulfilment, such as our work, diet, exercise, and individual goal achievement (Difference Between, 2020). Therefore, by combining the eastern philosophies with the western philosophies, we address ourselves as individuals, who are entitled to individual fulfilment and well-being, as well as beings who are connected to others and their beliefs, which have the potential to add even greater fulfilment for us.

The eastern philosophies offer us the perspective to think of ourselves in relation to others and how we can use that to bring us fulfilment, such as by acting in the service of others. While the western philosophies offer us the perspective to think of ourselves as individuals to find our individual fulfilment. By combining the two philosophies we have the potential to not only find our own individual fulfilment, pursue our individual goals, achieve our own performance excellence, but we can understand how we have the potential to use our individual fulfillment to positively influence and support others as well, ultimately providing us with the opportunity to experience Ikigai (Sone, et al., 2008).

The preceding illustrates the differences between the eastern and western philosophies and ultimately how they can be used to complement one another. These two differing philosophies not only help support us as individuals (e.g. individual goals, fulfilment, and achievement), but they have the potential to help support society as a whole (e.g. supporting others as we pursue our own goals, such as in sport psychology- helping clients to achieve their own personal excellence).

## References

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