Abstract

In three studies, we examined the association between perceived flexibility to initiate or cease interpersonal relationships (relational mobility) and well-being. We found that people who perceive greater relational mobility in their environment reported feeling greater well-being, which was mediated by the increased quality of their relationships with close others (Studies 1 and 2). Moreover, differences in national level of relational mobility explained differences in national well-being, again accounted for by the quality of relationships (Study 3). These findings persisted after controlling for factors that may contribute to well-being including extraversion, self-construal, and financial circumstances. These findings demonstrate the importance of perception of one's surrounding environment on well-being, indicating potential interventions to increase well-being of individuals and societies.

Keywords: Relational mobility, Well-being, Interpersonal relationships, Culture

The role of relational mobility in individual and national well-being: Assessing relationships among relational mobility, relationship quality, and personal well-being

There is a popular belief that maintaining old relationships is important in life. This wisdom is reflected in different proverbs and apothegms. Just to name a few, “Be slow in choosing a friend, slower in changing” (Benjamin Franklin); “True friendship is a plant of slow growth” (George Washington); and “Age appears to be best in four things: old wood best to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust, and old authors to read” (Francis Bacon).

One of the reasons relationships are valued would be because the feeling of being related to others is a key influence on happiness (Argyle, 1987; Demir, 2008; Myers, 1999). Having stable and supportive relationships even contributes to resilience across the lifespan (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998) (see Ryan & Deci, 2001 for a review). However, regardless of the popular belief that maintaining old relationships is good for one’s life, not everyone remains in their long-term relationships by choice. Specifically, while entering into and exiting relationships is relatively easy in some societies, in other societies, relationships with friends, romantic partners, and family members are largely fixed, and opportunities to change these relationships are limited. This flexibility in the case of interpersonal relationships and networks is known as “relational mobility” (Kito et al., 2017; Yuki & Schug, 2012).

Importantly, relational mobility influences relationship quality, one of the key predictors of well-being (Nezlek, 2000). In a recent study examining the relational mobility of 39 different nations (Thomson et al., 2018), people in societies with higher relational mobility reported a higher quality of interpersonal relationships with their friends and partners. Indices of relationship quality included reporting disclosing secrets more often to social partners, providing greater social support to social partners, experiencing greater levels of intimacy with social partners, and even being more likely to trust strangers. This research suggests that, because

one's social partners may have (or may be perceived as having) more opportunities to look for alternatives in societies characterized by high relational mobility, people engage in more pro-active behaviors to prevent their social partners from leaving them, ultimately enhancing the quality of the relationships. Thus, contrast to popular belief, maybe people who perceive their environment as providing frequent opportunities to change relationships enjoy better quality of relationships, which would be ultimately associated with increased well-being.

To our knowledge, however, the direct associations among relational mobility, quality of relationships, *and* well-being have been understudied. One exception is a study that found greater self-esteem contributes to happiness more for people from a society with greater relational mobility (i.e., Americans) compared to people from a society with lower relational mobility (i.e., Japanese) (Yuki et al., 2013). Nevertheless, a direct investigation of the effect of relational mobility on well-being is needed, in part to provide insights into potential interventions for improving well-being and understanding the mechanisms that drive national differences in well-being around the world.

In the present research, we hypothesized that people who perceive greater relational mobility around them would report having greater well-being, an effect that would be accounted for by an increase in quality of interpersonal relationships with their friends, family members, and partners. In Study 1, we explored the associations among individuals' levels of relational mobility, quality of relationships, and their well-being. In Study 2, we examined the influence of relational mobility on two specific aspects of well-being: eudaimonic (meaning of life; Ryff, 1989) and hedonic (pleasant feeling; Diener et al., 2002) well-being.

Although we measured relational mobility on the *individual* level in Studies 1 and 2 based on the successful demonstrations from previous studies showing that individual differences in relational mobility can explain national differences (Yamada et al., 2017; Yuki et al., 2013) and also can be manipulated at the level of individuals (Yuki et al., 2013), relational mobility is a sociocultural factor. In Study 3, we took advantage of having this index be a

societal and cultural construct and examined whether the national level of relational mobility could account for any national differences in well-being, again mediated by differences in quality of relationships.

Study 1

Method

Participants

One hundred and ten Mturkers who passed the attention check questions, out of total 160, were included in the analyses (44.5% female; age M = 34.67, S.D. = 9.77). The sample size was determined based on a separate task included in the battery, not analyzed for this study ([Blinded for peer review]). The post-hoc power analysis for the indirect effect model (Schoemann et al., 2017; https://schoemanna.shinyapps.io/mc_power_med/) revealed that we acquired strong power (power = .89) with this sample size.

Materials

As part of a large battery survey, participants completed the relational mobility scale (Thomson et al., 2018) (see Supplementary Section 1A for the attention check questions, instructions and measures). Participants' well-being was measured with the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; e.g., *"I am satisfied with life"*, ranging from 1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree; Diener et al., 1985) and the Positive Relations with Others (PRO) subscale of the Psychological Well-being scale (e.g., *"I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others (R)"*, ranging from 1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree; Ryff, 1989; Ryff et al., 2010). Participants' quality of relationships was assessed with questions probing how likely participants would be to share their secrets and worries with their best friend and closest family member (self-disclosure, ranging from 1: not at all likely – 5: extremely likely; Thomson et al., 2018; Yuki & Schug, 2012) and their subjective closeness to their best friend and closest family member (ranging from 1: not at all close – 10: extremely close; Thomson et al., 2018;

Yuki & Schug, 2012). Additionally, a Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling et al., 2003) was administered; familial socio-economic status (SES; *"What is your family's socioeconomic level?" lower income, lower middle income, middle income, upper middle income, upper income*) was also measured. Personality and SES factors have been shown to be relevant to both well-being (Pavot et al., 1990) and the freedom to choose relationships (Carey & Markus, 2017; Carey & Zhang-Bencharit, 2018; Palisi & Ransford, 1987) so were controlled for in further analyses (see Supplementary Section 2 for Cronbach's alpha values). For this study and Study 2, all procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at [Blinded for peer review].

Analyses and Results

First, we created composite values of participants' well-being by averaging SWLS and PRO scales. An exploratory factor analysis showed that these two variables loaded on the same factor (Supplementary Section 3A). We then generated composite values of participants' relationship quality with their best friend and closest family member by averaging their self-disclosure scores to their best friend and closest family member and their subjective closeness ratings for their best friend and closest family member[1]. An exploratory factor analysis showed that these variables loaded on the same factor (Supplementary Section 3A) (see Supplementary Section 4A for findings without aggregations).

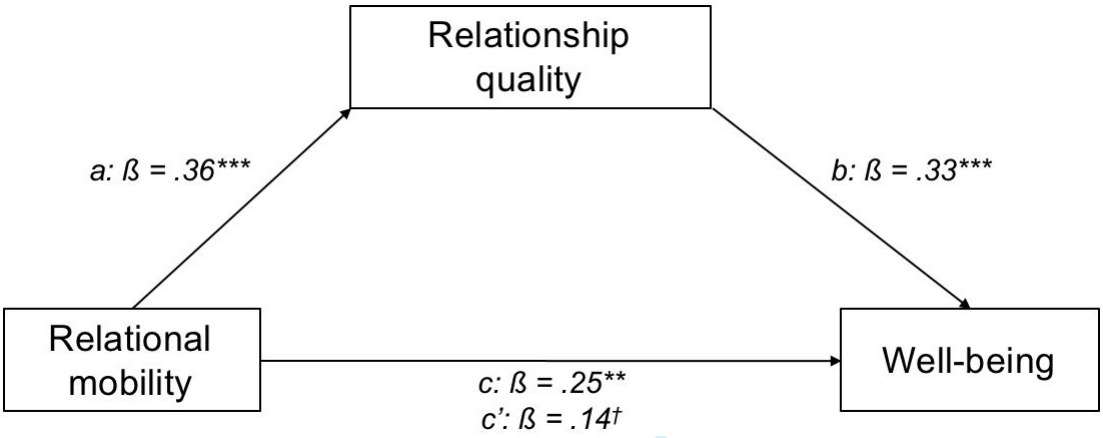
We then examined the indirect effect of relational mobility on the well-being composite, entering the relationship quality composite as the mediator, controlling for extraversion and SES, using the "INDIRECT" macro (bootstrapped n = 1,000) (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). As predicted, relational mobility was significantly associated with relationship quality (B = .35, S.E. = .08, *ß* = .36, $t = 4.21$, $p < .001$), which was in turn associated with well-being (B = .56, S.E. = .14, *ß* = .33, $t = 4.15$, $p < .001$). The significant total effect of relational mobility on well-being (B = .42, S.E. = .12, *ß* = .25, $t = 3.40$, $p = .001$) became marginal after entering relational quality

[1] Subjective closeness scores were rescaled by multiplying by 1/2 to match the range of the self-disclosure scale before submitting it to the aggregation.

in the model (B = .23, S.E. = .13, ß = .14, *t* = 1.80, *p* = .075), Standardized indirect effect = .12, S.E. = .04, 95% CI = [.05, .21] (Figure 1). For all studies, all data and code are available from the first author upon request.

Figure 1

Increased perception of relational mobility was associated with enhanced relationship quality, which was in turn associated with enhanced well-being. Trait extraversion and socio-economic status were controlled for.



Note. †*p* < .01, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Study 1 Discussion

We found evidence for an association between relational mobility and well-being, mediated by relationship quality. These initial findings suggest that an environment that facilitates relationship choice may also support enhanced relationships, which may in turn lead to enhanced well-being.

We note, however, that the well-being measures used in Study 1 were limited and did not cover diverse aspects of well-being. Furthermore, differences in relational mobility often co-occur with differences in cultural concepts such as a culturally shaped view of self (Yuki et al., 2013). Study 2 addresses these limitations.

Study 2

Previous research has found that the antecedents of relational mobility often overlap with antecedents of other cultural concepts such as a culturally influenced view of self. For instance, relational mobility is higher in North America, where an independent view of self is more predominant, and lower in East Asia, where an interdependent view of self dominates (Thomson et al., 2018; Yuki et al., 2013). Other studies have also suggested that herding societies are more individualistic than farming societies (Uskul et al., 2008), similarly giving rise to high versus low relational mobility, respectively (Thomson et al., 2018).

Cultural characteristics can also covary with individuals' well-being. For example, previous research has revealed an association between an independent, individualistic view of self and greater well-being (Elliott & Coker, 2008). Even the meaning of happiness itself can be shaped by cultural context (Uchida et al., 2004). To account for potential overlaps between individualism and relational mobility, and the concurrent effect of these variables on well-being, we measured the degree to which participants endorsed an independent, individualistic view of self versus an interdependent, collectivistic view of self in Study 2 and controlled for these views in the model.

Finally, past literature has suggested diverse aspects of well-being. For example, while feeling pleasure and feeling satisfied are thought to comprise well-being (Hedonic well-being), living the "good life" (being moral, virtuous, achieving growth) is also critical to well-being (Eudaimonic well-being; Linley et al., 2009; Phillips et al., 2011; Phillips et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Tiberius, 2013; Tiberius & Hall, 2010). In Study 2, we examined the effect of relational mobility on these different aspects of well-being, controlling for individuals' view of self, and replicating the Study 1 findings. The hypotheses and research methods are preregistered at [https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=5yt9m4].

Methods

Participants

Three hundred and fifty-four Mturkers who passed the attention check questions, out of total 392, were included in the analyses (44.9% female; age M = 37.12, S.D. = 10.99). Sample size was determined based on the effect size of a separate task included in the battery, not analyzed for this study ([Blinded for peer review]). The post-hoc power analysis for the indirect effect model (Schoemann et al., 2017; https://schoemanna.shinyapps.io/mc_power_med/) revealed that we acquired very strong power (power > .99) with this sample size.

Materials

As in Study 1, participants completed the relational mobility scale (Thomson et al., 2018) and measurements of relationship quality. To capture various aspects of participants' well-being, we administered the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985), Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; e.g., *"In general, I consider myself: 1: Not a very happy person --- 7: A very happy person"*, Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), Affect Valuation Index (AVI; e.g., *"Over the course of a typical week, I actually feel…"*, ranging from 1: never – 5: all the time, Tsai et al., 2006; actual high-arousal positive states *[enthusiastic, excited, elated, euphoric]*, actual low-arousal positive states *[calm, relaxed, peaceful, serene]*), Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; e.g., *"Indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week"*, ranging from 1: very slightly or not at all – 5: extremely, Watson et al., 1988; positive experiences *[interested, excited, strong, enthusiastic, proud, alert, inspired, determined, attentive, active]*, negative experiences *[distressed, upset, guilty, scared, hostile, irritable, ashamed, nervous, jittery, afraid]*), and all Psychological Well-being subscales in addition to PRO (e.g., Autonomy *["I am not afraid to voice my opinions"]*, Environmental Mastery *["I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live"]*, Personal Growth *["I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons (R)"]*, Purpose in Life *["I have a sense of direction and purpose in life"]*, Self-Acceptance *["When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out"]*, PRO; Ryff, 1989; Ryff et al., 2010).

As a control, the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994) was administered to measure the extent to which participants endorse independent (e.g., *"I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects"*) versus interdependent (e.g., *"I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact"*) self-construal (ranging from 1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree). We subtracted participants' interdependent self-construal scores from their independent self-construal scores, generating "independent minus interdependent self-construal" scores and included them in the further analyses to control for overlap between self-construal and relational mobility. Additionally, participants' extraversion and SES were measured, as in Study 1 (see Supplementary Section 1B for the instructions and measures; see Supplementary Section 2 for Cronbach's alpha values).

Results

First, we created the composite relationship quality index, by averaging self-disclosure to participants' best friend and closest family member, and subjective closeness to participants' best friend and closest family member, as in Study 1. An exploratory factor analysis showed that these variables loaded on the same factor (Supplementary Section 3B). We then generated the hedonic and eudaimonic well-being indexes. For hedonic well-being, we averaged SWLS, SHS, PANAS positive emotional experiences, reversed PANAS negative experiences, actual high-arousal positive states from AVI, and actual low-arousal positive states from AVI[2]. For eudaimonic well-being, we averaged all subscales of PWB. Exploratory factor analyses showed a converging pattern (Supplementary Section 3B)[3] (See Supplementary Section 4B for findings without the aggregations).

[2] We rescaled SWLS and SHS by multiplying these scores by 5/7 to match the range of other measures before creating the aggregations.

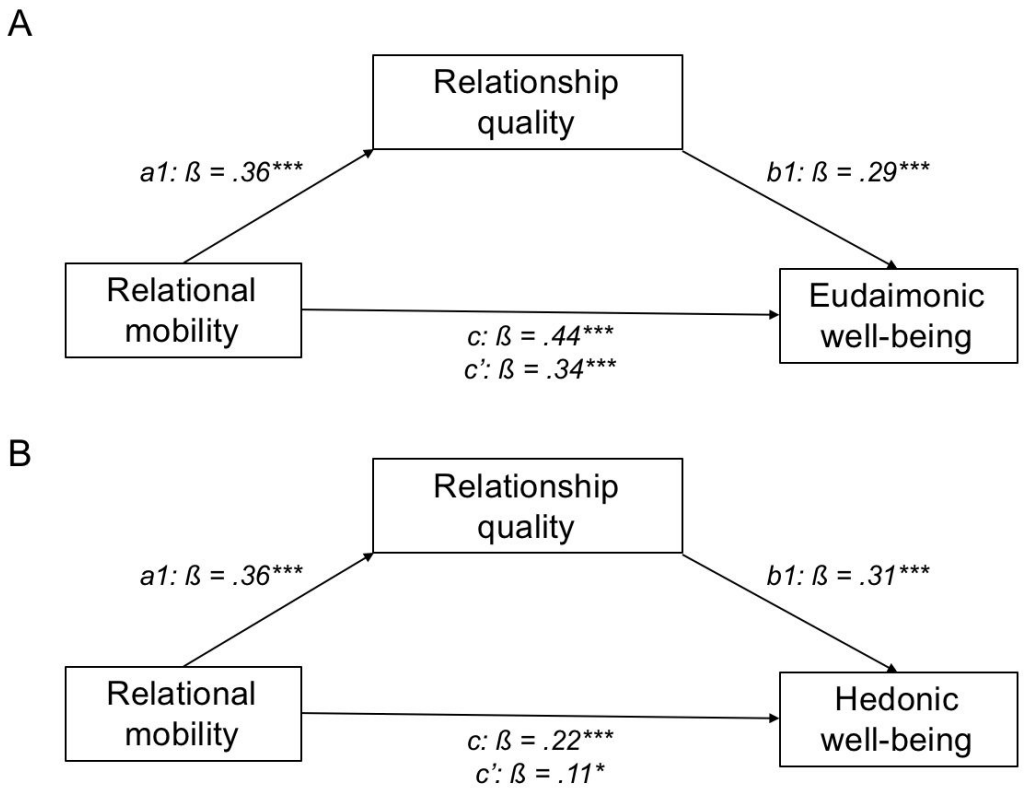
[3] Contrary to our prediction that experiencing less negative emotion would be associated with hedonic well-being, PANAS negative emotional experience loaded on eudaimonic well-being (Supplementary Section 3B). However, we found the same results after removing PANAS negative emotional experience from our hedonic well-being composite.

We used the "INDIRECT" macro (bootstrapped n = 1,000) (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to examine whether relational mobility could impact participants' eudaimonic and hedonic well-being, respectively, through enhanced relationship quality, controlling for participants' independent minus interdependent self-construal, extraversion, and SES.

First, with eudaimonic well-being as the dependent variable, relational mobility was significantly associated with relationship quality scores (B = .38, S.E. = .05, ß = .36, t = 7.22, p < .001). The relationship quality composite was in turn associated with eudaimonic well-being (B = .37, S.E. = .05, ß = .29, t = 6.87, p < .001). The significant total effect of relational mobility on eudaimonic well-being (B = .60, S.E. = .06, ß = .44, t = 10.61, p <.001) was reduced after entering relational quality scores in the model (B = .46, S.E. = .06, ß = .34, t = 8.05, p <.001), Standardized indirect effect = .10, S.E. = .02, 95% CI = [.07, .16] (Figure 2A).

Figure 2

Greater relational mobility was associated with enhanced quality of relationships, which in turn was associated with enhanced (A) eudaimonic well-being and (B) hedonic well-being. Trait extraversion, self-construal scores (independent minus interdependent), and socio-economic status were controlled for.



Note. *p < .05, ***p < .001.

Second, with hedonic well-being as the dependent variable, relational mobility was again significantly associated with relationship quality scores (B = .38, S.E. = .05, ß = .36, *t* = 7.22, *p* < .001), which were in turn associated with hedonic well-being (B = .30, S.E. = .04, ß = .31, *t* = 6.74, *p* < .001). The total significant effect of relational mobility on hedonic well-being (B = .23, S.E. = .05, ß = .22, *t* = 4.86, *p* < .001) reduced after entering relational quality scores in the model (B = .11, S.E. = .05, ß = .11, *t* = 2.38, *p* = .018), Standardized indirect effect = .11, S.E. = .02, 95% CI = [.07, .17] (Figure 2B).

Study 2 Discussion

In Study 2, we explored different aspects of well-being, i.e., eudaimonic and hedonic, and we found that the effects of relational mobility on relationship quality were consistent across both kinds of well-being.

We note, however, that these findings are restricted to participants who use the American online labor platform. Moreover, while some previous studies successfully demonstrated that relational mobility could be measured and manipulated at the level of individuals (Yamada et al., 2017; Yuki et al., 2013), the initial conceptualization of relational mobility was aimed at explaining cultural and national level variance (Thomson et al., 2018). Thus, to test the generalizability of these effects for a different sample, and to explore whether relational mobility can explain differences in well-being across nations, we analyzed the associations among relational mobility, relationship quality, and well-being on the national level in Study 3.

Study 3

In Study 3, we examined whether the associations among relational mobility, relationship quality, and well-being can be replicated using national level data retrieved from the world relationships survey (relationalmobility.org; Thomson et al., 2018) and Gallup world poll survey.

Methods

Nations

We focused on nations with available relational mobility data (Thomson et al., 2018), a complete set of relationship quality indices and well-being measures from the Gallup poll survey data. As a result, we were able to include a total of 38 nations[4] in our final dataset.

Materials

We extracted the national relational mobility data and measures of relationship quality data from the world relationships survey (relationalmobility.org; Thomson et al., 2018). To assess national levels of relationship quality, we used intimacy with romantic partner (averaged

[4] Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Hong Kong, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Taiwan, Puerto Rico, Palestinian Ter.

across 10 items, e.g., "I am able to count on [Name of the romantic partner] in times of need", ranging from 1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree), intimacy with closest friend, self-disclosure toward romantic partner (same as in Study 1), and self-disclosure toward closest friend, to find variables corresponding to subjective closeness and self-disclosure measures in Studies 1 and 2 and prior work (Schug et al., 2010). In addition, to assess national levels of well-being, we extracted global well-being index from the Gallup poll (2014-2015), the percentage of respondents who reported that they were thriving in three or more of the five elements of well-being (purpose, social, financial, community and physical)[5]. A separate analysis in which we additionally controlled for each nation's GDP per capita (International Monetary Fund, 2019) and individualism scores (Hofstede et al., 2010) revealed the same findings (Supplementary Section 5).

Analyses and Results

We created the aggregated relationship quality index by averaging intimacy with romantic partner, intimacy with closest friend, self-disclosure to romantic partner, and self-disclosure to closest friend[6] (see Supplementary Section 4C for findings without aggregations).

We used the "INDIRECT" macro (bootstrapped n = 1,000) (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to examine the associations among the national level of relational mobility, relational quality index, and global well-being. First, national relational mobility was positively associated with greater relationship quality (B = .65, S.E. = .13, *ß* = .64, *t* = 4.81, *p* < .001), which in turn was significantly associated with global well-being (B = .16, S.E. = .07, *ß* = .35, *t* = 2.29, *p* = .028). The direct effect of national relational mobility on global well-being (B = .29, S.E. = .06, *ß* = .63, *t*

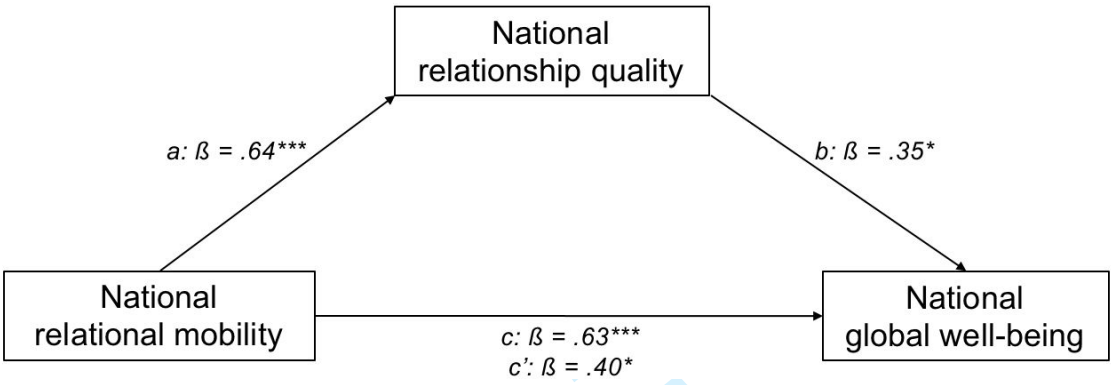
[5] To take the advantage of the rich dataset from the world relationships survey and the Gallup poll, we explored a variety of relevant variables measuring relationship quality and well-being, and examined their associations through exploratory factor analyses and indirect analyses. We found that the relationship quality, especially the perception that people could count on close others when needed, explained the association between relational mobility and well-being. However, because of the limited number of nations we could use in factor analyses, we only provide these findings in supplement (Supplementary Section 3C).

[6] We rescaled intimacy with romantic partner and intimacy with closest friend by multiplying these scores by 5/7 to match the range of the self-disclosure scores before creating the aggregations.

= 4.81, $p < .001$) reduced after entering relationship quality in the model (B = .18, S.E. = .07, ß = .40, $t = 2.54$, $p = .016$), Standardized Indirect Effect = .23, S.E. = .14, 95% CI = [.06, .60] (Figure 3).

Figure 3

The association between national relational mobility and national global well-being was explained by the national level relationship quality respondents reported having with their romantic partner and closest friend.



Note. *p < .05, ***p < .001.

Study 3 Discussion

In Study 3, we found that national levels of relational mobility were associated with national levels of well-being. This association was accounted for by the reported relational quality in nations with higher relational mobility. These findings suggest that individuals' perception of intimacy with and self-disclosure to close others might contribute to individuals' well-being, above and beyond other traditionally studied national features such as endorsing individualistic values and financial circumstances.

General Discussion

Does the freedom to seek alternative relationships contribute to personal well-being? The present research investigated this question, providing evidence that perceiving greater

relational mobility in one's social environment is associated with reporting having better relationships, which is in turn associated with reporting greater well-being. As indicated by prior research (Thomson et al., 2018; Yuki & Schug, 2012), the flexibility to start and end relationships may lead people to invest more in their existing relationships in order to keep their partners and friends from seeking out attractive alternatives; this extra investment may ultimately contribute to both improved relationships and well-being.

In Study 1, we found that the more relational mobility participants perceived in their environment, the better the quality of relationships they reported having with their best friend and closest family member, which in turn accounted for their reports of enhanced well-being. In Study 2, we diversified the measurements of well-being and assessed eudaimonic well-being and hedonic well-being separately. Relational mobility was associated with both aspects of well-being through enhanced quality of relationships. In Study 3, we expanded the scope of the research and examined whether national differences in relational mobility could explain national differences in well-being. The more relational mobility in a nation, the more likely people of that nation were to report greater well-being. This association was explained by the increase in quality of relationships, consistent with the individual level data.

In establishing these effects, the current work makes important contributions to multiple areas of psychology. First, strengthening the prior research (Yuki & Schug, 2012), the current findings address an important gap in the relationship literature regarding how social contexts shape the functioning of relationships within a society (Clark, 2018), providing further insight to advance relationship theory and research. For example, although people need to convince others that they would be a good choice in a friendship or romantic relationship (Clark et al., 2019), this need can depend on the society's relational mobility level. Second, this study expands the scope of well-being research and demonstrates the significance of one's surrounding environment in association with one's well-being, over and above other traditionally studied features such as stable personality traits and external financial circumstances.

Moreover, by exploring how social environment is associated with interpersonal relationships and personal well-being, we provide a detailed illustration of how external context and internal factors can interact to potentially impact well-being. Third, these findings inform our understanding of the possible mechanisms that drive individual and national differences in well-being, highlighting potential avenues for interventions aimed at enhancing societal well-being. Finally, this study builds on the rich literature on the effect of interpersonal relationships on well-being, uncovering relational mobility as a key factor for relationship quality.

We note that relational mobility is distinct from residential mobility, which is often measured as the frequency with which people have moved to a different residential area. Importantly, previous research showed that people who moved around more while growing up reported *decreased* well-being (Oishi, 2010; Oishi & Talhelm, 2012) especially when they are more introverted (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010). However, although relational mobility and residential mobility often go hand in hand, in this study we found that relational mobility was associated with *greater* levels of well-being. These findings suggest that above and beyond the physical residential movement, accompanied by potentially forced changes in relationships, perceived *freedom* of choosing the relationships based on one's own need and preference adds independent influence on human life. Indeed, in Studies 1 and 2, even after controlling for the number of new friendships and acquaintanceships participants actually formed in the past month and over the past three months, the associations between relational mobility and well-being persisted (Supplementary Section 6). These findings indicate that one's subjective interpretation of one's surrounding society, above and beyond one's actual social opportunities, was related to one's subjective sense of relationship quality and well-being.

Key questions remain to be addressed in future work. For example, what is the specific mechanism through which relational mobility influences relationship quality? As suggested in prior research (Thomson et al., 2018), the threat of one's close others' looking for other options can motivate people to invest more in their relationships, ultimately enhancing relationship

quality. Alternatively, in societies characterized by high relational mobility, people may freely leave unsatisfying relationships and end up selectively maintaining only high-quality relationships. In addition, while the current study demonstrates the associations between relational mobility, relationship quality and well-being, the specific causal direction should be further examined. For instance, although enhanced relationship quality in societies with higher relational mobility may in turn increase well-being, it is also possible that enhanced individual well-being in societies with higher relational mobility may facilitate having better quality of relationships. Following up individuals' approaches to changing or maintaining relationships over the lifespan and across different societies would be crucial for addressing this question. Lastly, a majority of our data was collected in the United States. An open question then is whether the associations between relational mobility and well-being would persist across other cultures, although previous research has demonstrated that relational mobility reported by participants in the United States and Japan could explain attitudes toward romantic partners (Yamada et al., 2017) and associations between self-esteem and happiness (Yuki et al., 2013). Similarly, we note again that, because relational mobility was conceived as a socioecological factor, caution should be paid when interpreting data acquired at the level of individuals.

Maintaining satisfying relationships with close others is critical for well-being. According to the common belief, remaining in old relationships would be especially important. However, in this research, we suggest taking into consideration another factor: whether one's surroundings force people to maintain the relationship or not. We found that perceiving the freedom to start and end relationships is profoundly associated with well-being by affecting relationship quality, suggesting that the maintenance of old relationships only in this environment, those freely chosen rather than those forced to be kept, might contribute to greater well-being. Investigating the causal mechanisms and applying these findings to clinical and additional social settings may uncover avenues both for appreciating what close others have to offer in the case of interpersonal relationships and for increasing societal levels of well-being.

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