AGE DIFFERENCES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF REGRET IN JAPAN: COMMISSION VERSUS OMISSION IN THE INTERPERSONAL AND SELF-DOMAINS

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Regret is a painful experience. In order to manage regret, previous studies showed that older people were more likely to change their cognitions than change the situations, compared to younger people. This age difference in the management of regret may affect what exactly people regret, though the nature of situations may constrain the age effect. In this study, Japanese adults (N = 815, age range: 20–85 years) reported the greatest regret of their lives via an internet survey. As the results, older people were more likely to regret their acts of commissions than younger people in the domain of self, whereas no age effect emerged in the interpersonal domain. Moreover, content analyses showed (i) higher proportions of regret related to interpersonal relationships than found by previous studies, and (ii) main effects of age and educational level on regret. We discussed the experience of regret during each stage of life.

Key words: regret, age differences, commission and omission, culture

Humans experience regret during each developmental stage. During school, regret can center on not studying enough to get good grades; during marriage, regret can focus on choosing an inappropriate partner; and during illnesses, regret can revolve around not spending enough time with family. Although research on individual (e.g., Pierro et al., 2008; Roese et al., 2006) and cultural (Chen, Chiu, Roese, Tam, & Lau, 2006; Komiya, Miyamoto, Watabe, & Kusumi, 2011) differences with regard to regret has been conducted, little is known about age differences. This study discusses the effects of aging on regret in terms of the type and content of regret.

Age Differences in the Management of Regret

Regret is a negative emotion experienced when we imagine that our present situation would have been better if we had made different decisions (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2006). Although the past cannot be changed, regret can cause people to suffer over decisions they have made previously. Previous research has reported that regret decreases feelings of well-being and health (e.g., Jokisaari, 2003, 2004; Lecci, Okun, & Karoly, 1994; Wrosch, Bauer, & Scheier, 2005), suggesting the importance of investigating when people feel regret and how they cope with it.

Accordingly, psychologists have identified two prominent strategies for coping with
regret (e.g., Gilovich & Medvec, 1995; Wrosch & Heckhausen, 2002; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2006). People can overcome regret by changing regrettable into non-regrettable situations (i.e., *changing-situation strategy*). For example, if Tom regrets not completing his academic education, he may overcome this regret by attending university after retirement. Previous studies have shown that individuals can be motivated to provide a fairer suggestion to a partner in a bargaining game after failing in the first deal and thus feeling regret (Zeelenberg & Beattie, 1997). Moreover, Zeelenberg and Pieters (1999) reported that people were more likely to switch to another supplier of services or products in daily life after feeling regret than after feeling no regret. These findings suggest that individuals try to improve the regretted situations after feeling regret. However, people may also try to change their cognition to cope with regret (i.e., *changing-cognition strategy*). Because the controllability and importance of the event are associated with regret, denial of these cognitive features reduces the extent of regret (e.g., Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002; Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002). For example, Tom may eliminate his regret by believing that he was too poor to attend university (i.e., lack of controllability) or that academic education is useless for his job (i.e., lack of importance). Gilovich and Medvec (1995) discussed the possible “psychological immune system,” such as the reduction of cognitive dissonance (e.g., Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Festinger, 1957; Gilovich, Medvec, & Chen, 1995), which can reduce the intensity of regret.

Although researchers have pointed out the existence of these strategies for coping with regret (e.g., Gilovich & Medvec, 1995; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2006), few have questioned when people use each strategy and how they work. Based on this point, Wrosch and Heckhausen (2002) discussed age differences in the strategies people use to cope with regret. Specifically, because older people have less lifetime remaining and fewer resources for improving their situations, they may have more difficulty engaging in the changing-situation strategy than in the changing-cognition strategy. Thus, older people may be more likely to try to reduce the perceived controllability of the events and give up regretting them than to attempt to improve the situations. As a consequence, low controllability might be associated with deactivation of regret among older people. In contrast, younger people have the opportunity to change and improve the regretted situations because they have sufficient time and resources. In this case, the controllability of the events could be connected with successfully changing situations and eliminating the foundation of regrets rather than blaming oneself, which leads to repeated rumination about the past choice. As a result, high controllability of the event could be associated with low intensity of regret among younger adults. Supporting this idea, Wrosch and Heckhausen (2002) found an age effect for the association between intensity of regret and controllability of the event: perceived high controllability of the regretted events was positively correlated with intensity of regret among older people, whereas it was negatively associated with intensity of regret among younger people.

This age difference in the management of regret would influence what people recall as their most important regret. Given that reducing perceived controllability is the only way to manage regret in old age, older people may be more likely to succeed in eliminating a regret whose controllability is changeable than a regret whose controllability
is unchangeable. Because of this, compared with younger people, older people may more easily recall regrets about the events whose controllability is unchangeable than regrets about the events whose controllability is changeable.

If so, in what situations would people feel regret? That is, what situational factors predict the changeability of perceived controllability and age differences in the contents of regret? Regret researchers have traditionally focused on two dimensions: acts of commission versus acts of omission (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1982) and interpersonal versus self-domains (e.g., Zeelenberg, van der Pligt, & Manstead, 1998). These distinctions may be related to the changeability of perceived controllability. In the following section, we will discuss how these cognitive and situational factors influence age differences in regret.

**Differences in the Changeability of Controllability: Types of Regret and Domains**


Regret related to an *act of commission* refers to what people have actually done but wish that they had not done (e.g., George trades stock in company A for stock in company B), and regret related to an *act of omission* refers to what people have not actually done but wish that they had done (e.g., Paul considers buying stock in company B but keeps his stock in company A). Researchers have investigated which type of behavior is more regrettable (e.g., Gilovich & Medvec, 1995; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982) and found that when looking back on their lives, participants were more likely to indicate regret about acts of omission than about acts of commission (e.g., Gilovich & Medvec, 1994, 1995; Hattiangadi, Medvec, & Gilovich, 1995).

As one of the reasons for prevalence of regret related to omissions, Gilovich and Medvec (1995) argued that because causal factors for regret related to commissions are often more obvious than those for regret related to omissions, people are more likely to feel a sense of responsibility and strong regret and initially try to reduce the pain. Such obvious responsibility for the events could be associated with the unchangeability of controllability, with the result that, compared with younger people, older people have more difficulty managing regrets about commissions than regrets about omissions.

In fact, Wrosch and Heckhausen (2002) investigated only regret related to acts of omission because they predicted that no age difference would emerge with respect to perceived control over acts of commission (although they did not investigate this). However, considering the changeability of controllability, this prediction could not be the case. Regret related to commissions may be more difficult to manage for older people than for younger people, whereas regret related to omissions may be equally manageable (albeit using a different strategy) for both groups. In this sense, it is possible that the proportion of regret related to acts of commission increases as people age.

*Interpersonal versus self-domains*

However, at the same time, this tendency may be qualified by the particular situations for which people feel regret. Given that events related to interpersonal relationships (e.g.,
familial, friendly, and romantic relationships) are usually less subject to control than are events related to self (e.g., work and education, money, and health), people may be more likely to adopt the changing-cognition than the changing-situation strategy for regret related to interpersonal relationships, irrespective of the type of regret or age. Studies on helplessness (e.g., Baum, Aiello, & Calesnick, 1978; Rodin, 1976) provide indirect evidence to support this perspective in that undergraduates and children in densely populated areas, which are characterized by many interpersonal problems, are more likely than those in less densely populated settings to perceive their environment as uncontrollable and themselves as helpless. Consequently, they were more likely to withdraw and to give up more easily with respect to efforts to change situations. Studies suggest that whereas older people may be more likely than younger people to experience greater regret over acts of commission relative to those of omission in the self-domain, no effect of aging on regret would be evident in interpersonal relationships because the changing-cognition strategy would be dominant in this domain, irrespective of type of regret or age.

The first purpose of this study was to examine age difference in lifetime regrets, focusing on types of regret (i.e., acts of commission vs. acts of omission) and domains (i.e., interpersonal domain vs. self-domain). We developed two hypotheses based on studies on managing regret. First, we hypothesized that older people would be more likely than younger people to report regret for acts of commission than omission because acts of commission would be difficult for older people to manage psychologically (i.e., age affects type of regret). However, at the same time, this tendency would be qualified by the particular situations that people regret. Because interpersonal events, whether involving acts of commission or omission, are less controllable than events involving only the self, strategies for coping with interpersonal regret would depend on changing cognitions among both older and younger populations. As a consequence, the ratio of regrets about acts of commission in the domain of the self would decrease as a function of age, whereas no age differences in the ratio of acts of commission to those of omission would emerge in the interpersonal domain (i.e., the interaction effects between situation and age on type of regret).

Cultural Effects on the Content of Regret

The second purpose of this study was to explore the effects of age on cultural differences with regard to the content of regret. Recent studies have suggested that models of agency differ across cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 2004, 2010). In Western cultural contexts (e.g., the United States and Europe), actions are considered to originate from an autonomous self. According to this “disjoint” model of agency, the individual’s own preferences and goals, independent of social influences, are the primary sources of action. In such cultural contexts, people are assumed to feel a sense of agency and are more committed to their actions when these do not involve others. For example, European-American children display greater intrinsic motivation for an activity that they choose themselves than for one that was chosen for them by others (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). In contrast, actions in East Asian cultural contexts (e.g., Japan and China) are driven by the motivation to maintain one’s position in relation to others. According to this “conjoint” model of agency, agency arises from acting to meet interpersonal expectations
In these cultural contexts, people are assumed to feel a sense of agency and to be more committed to their actions when they involve others and their expectations in a meaningful way. In fact, Asian children display more intrinsic motivation for an activity that their mothers choose for them than for one that they choose for themselves (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999).

Given that a sense of responsibility and agency is a core feature of regret (e.g., Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002; Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002), these factors should also have implications for the contexts in which strong regret is experienced. Supporting this proposition, recent cultural comparisons (e.g., Chen et al., 2006; Komiya et al., 2011; Zou et al., 2009) have shown cultural differences with regard to regret between East Asia (e.g., Japan and China) and the United States. For example, Komiya et al. (2011) found that Japanese students felt stronger regret than Americans in interpersonal situations, whereas no differences emerged with respect to the intensity of regrets experienced in situations involving only the self. Moreover, Chen et al. (2006) discussed the possibility that Chinese individuals were more likely than Americans to feel regret over acts of commission in school and family settings, reflecting their motivation to meet familial obligations (e.g., Heine & Lehman, 1997; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999).

However, the samples for these studies included only undergraduates. Thus, the generalizability of findings showing the high proportion of East Asian individuals versus Western individuals reporting strong regret regarding interpersonal relationships remains unknown. Thus far, several studies have provided descriptive data about lifetime regrets in various age groups (Jokisaari, 2004; Lecci et al., 1994; Wrosch & Heckhausen, 2002). Interestingly, the proportions of regret related to interpersonal relationships (e.g., familial, intimate, and friendly relationships) were negatively correlated with the degree of individualism in each country (Hofstede, 1991), which is related to the disjoint model of agency. Regret regarding interpersonal relationships constituted 16% of the lifetime regrets reported in the US (Lecci et al., 1994), whereas regrets in this domain constituted 34% of the regret reported in Germany (Wrosch & Heckhausen, 2002). Additionally, Jokisaari’s study (2004) in Finland reported that 31% of respondents reported regret related to interpersonal relationships. These findings suggest the possibility that the proportion of interpersonal regret may be highest in Japan, which ranks lowest in terms of individualism in Hofstede (1991).

**The Present Study**

We conducted an internet survey in Japan to investigate regret in various age groups.

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1 Using meta-analyses, some studies have reported little or no support for the low level of individualism and high level of collectivism in Japan compared with levels in the United States (e.g., Matsumoto, 1999; Matsumoto, Grissom, & Dinnel, 2001; Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Takano & Osaka, 1999). Thus, cultural psychologists contend with the usual problems inherent in self-report measures, such as the reference-group effect (e.g., Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002) and cultural differences in response styles (e.g., Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995). Instead, they have emphasized comparisons based on behavioral measures (e.g., Vandello & Cohen, 1999; Levine & Norenzayan, 1999) or cultural products (such as advertising, news reports, and popular text; e.g., Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008) and found cultural differences in collectivism-individualism in the expected direction.
Consistent with previous studies, Japanese respondents were asked to recall their greatest regret in life and to develop counterfactual narratives (e.g., Chen et al., 2006; Komiya et al., 2011). They then categorized their regret into one of seven categories related to interpersonal relationships or the self. To investigate type of regret, trained coders then categorized responses in terms of acts of omission versus those of commission.

Because few empirical studies have focused on aging and regret, we first present descriptive results that enabled us to compare the descriptive data obtained in Japan with those obtained in other cultural contexts. Additionally, other studies have provided mixed results on the effects of aging on regret (Jokisaari, 2004; Wrosch & Heckhausen, 2002) or did not conduct statistical analyses (Lecci et al., 1994). Thus, we simply reported the descriptive data as basic information about the nature of regret found in this study and conducted logistic regressions on the frequency of regret in each category. We then moved to the main analysis: age differences in the proportions of regretted acts of commission and regretted acts of omission in the interpersonal and self-domains.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

The sample consisted of 1,500 Japanese adults (750 females and 750 males) selected from members of a research panel of an online research company. Each age group (five groups: 20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60 and over) included 150 females and 150 males. The average age was 44.6 years (SD = 14.0) with a range from 20 to 85. Most respondents (67.5%) were married and had at least one child (58.3%); 31.4% had graduated from junior high or high school only; 22.7% had graduated from vocational or junior college; and 45.5% had graduated from university. Seven occupational categories were identified: managers and administrators (percentage of responses = 11%), clerical workers (12%), laborers (16%), self-employed workers (7%), part-time workers (14%), homemakers (21%), students (10%), and unemployed individuals (8%).

**Procedure**

Data were gathered via a web-based questionnaire as part of an omnibus study conducted in February 2009. Respondents were asked to review their lives and record the event they most regretted by completing the following sentence: “If only ..., then ...” When they could not provide an answer, they were allowed to skip the question by indicating “nothing”. They next chose which one of seven domains best fit the event: friendship (e.g., “If I had better understood the feelings of my friend, we could be close friends now.”); family (e.g., “If I left work earlier, then I could have been with my parents when they passed away.”); romance and marriage (e.g., “If I had contacted her at that time, then I could have married her.”); work and schoolwork (e.g., “If I had studied more in high school, I could have acquired more knowledge.”); health (e.g., “If I had gone to the hospital sooner, then I would not have gotten sick.”); money and buying (e.g., “If I had bought Japanese yen, I could have made a large profit.”); and miscellaneous (e.g., “If I had acted with more care, I would not have caused an accident.”). These categories were established by reference to those developed by Wrosch and Heckhausen (2002).

**Coding**

A total of 815 events were described in this research. As a manipulation check, two trained coders initially examined whether the responses qualified as regret. Forty-one respondents listed uncontrollable events that were not considered to be regrets, such as feelings about one’s entire life (e.g., “If only I had not
been born."), about the lives of others (e.g., “If my brother were alive, my brother’s wife and her sons would think differently.”), and the blaming of others (e.g., “If only my father-in-law had not been in debt, I could have had more money.”). Because we considered responsibility to be the most important feature of regret (e.g., Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002; Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002), we excluded these events from the analyses. Consequently, 774 regrets were used in the following analyses.

To examine the frequency of acts of commission and omission, coders also classified responses into three groups: commissions, omissions, and unclassified regrets. Unclassified regrets (n = 21) included regrets that included both aspects of the events (e.g., “If only I had not taken a nap on the desk but had lain down, I could have studied more.”). Inter-coder reliability was acceptable (Cohen’s Kappa = 0.93), and discrepancies were resolved by discussion.

**RESULTS**

**Descriptive Analyses: The Content of Regrets**

Table 1 displays the distribution of regrets across six life domains. The entire sample mentioned regrets related to work/education most frequently (43.0%). Other frequently mentioned regrets concerned romance (22.6%) and family (9.7%). These results were consistent with those of other studies on differences with regard to regret according to age (Jokisaari, 2004; Lecci et al., 1994; Wrosch & Heckhausen, 2002). Whereas this study revealed no systematic differences in the proportions of regret in the domain of the self (work, health, and money), 40.3% of our sample mentioned interpersonal regrets.
(relationships in general, romantic relationships, and familial relationships), which emerged as the most prevalent category of regrets in previous research on aging and regret. Although statistical analyses could not be conducted, the findings were consistent with our prediction that Japanese respondents were more likely than Western respondents, such as Americans and Germans, to report regret related to interpersonal relationships.

To explore the effects of aging on reports of regrets in different life domains, we conducted logistic regression analyses. The proportion of regrets in each domain and age group are shown in Fig. 1. We regressed the frequency of regrets in each category on participants’ age, sex (dummy variable; male = 0, female = 1), and educational level (from “1: junior high school” to “5: graduate school”). The effects of sex and age were significant with respect to regrets about family and health, though regret regarding health was associated with age at only a marginally significant level. The results indicated that older people and women were more likely than younger people and men to report regrets about family and health. Moreover, age and educational level had significant effects on regrets pertaining to the work domain and these effects showed a converse relationship with those in the money domain, though educational level predict the frequency of regret regarding money at only a marginally significant level: that is, young and high-educated people were more concerned with work but less concerned with money than were older and low-educated people. No significant effects of age, sex, or educational level emerged in other domains (i.e., romance/marriage and relationships in general).

### Age Differences With Regard to Regret About Acts of Commission and Omission

To examine the interaction effects of age and domain on acts of commission versus those of omission, multiple log-linear regressions were performed on the frequency of acts of commission\(^3\). The proportion of regret of commission to regret of omission in each domain and age group are presented in Fig. 2. First, age and domain (dummy variable; Table 2. Log-Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Frequencies of Regret in Each Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>(R^2)</th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work/Education</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.03**</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02†</td>
<td>.77*</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.04**</td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Relatives</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02*</td>
<td>1.06**</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance/Marriage</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships/Relationships</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** \(p < .01\), * \(p < .05\), † \(p < .10\)

\(^3\) Regrets categorized as “miscellaneous” (\(n = 30\)) in terms of domains and regrets coded as “unclassified” (\(n = 21\)) in terms of commission-omission were excluded from this log-linear analysis.
interpersonal domain = 0, self domain = 1) were entered into a regression equation. The results showed that the main effect of domain predicted the frequency of regrets about acts of commission, $\beta = -0.56, p < .001, R^2 = .03$, which indicates that acts of commission were more frequently mentioned in the interpersonal than in the self domain, which replicates the previous findings (Komiya et al., 2011; Zeelenberg et al., 1998). Moreover, the main effect of age was also marginally significant, $\beta = 0.10, p = .08, R^2 = .03$, showing that older people were more likely to report regret about acts of commission than about those of omission. These findings were consistent with our predictions.

Moreover, to examine the interaction effect between age and domain, the interaction term between age and domain were further entered into the regression equation. As predicted, the interaction effect between age and domain was marginally significant: $\beta = 0.22, p = .06, R^2 = .04$. Thus, we regressed age on the proportion of regretted acts of commission in each domain. The results showed that older adults reported more regrets than did younger adults related to acts of commission in the self domain, $\beta = 0.20, p < .05, R^2 = .02$, whereas no age differences in the ratio of regretted acts of commission to those of omission emerged in the interpersonal domain, $\beta = -.002, p = .83, R^2 = .004$. These results supported our prediction that older people cope more effectively with regrets related to acts of omissions than acts of commissions compared to younger people in the self domain, but not with those in interpersonal situations.
This study examined age differences in the type and content of regret. As expected, consistent with previous studies, we showed that the highest percentage of regret was related to interpersonal relationships. Moreover, descriptive data showed the effects of age on four of the six domains. Specifically, older people were more likely than younger people to report regrets about family, health, and money, whereas younger people were more likely than older people to mention regrets about education and work. Most importantly, we showed the interaction effect between domain and age on type of regret. Older adults were more likely than younger adults to recall regretted acts of commission in the self domain, whereas they were as likely as younger adults to report regretted acts of commission in the interpersonal domain. These findings were consistent with our predictions.

The descriptive data suggest the possibility of cultural differences in the content of regret according to age. Previous studies using samples of only undergraduates (e.g., Chen et al., 2006; Komiya et al., 2011; Zou et al., 2009) have noted that people in East Asian cultural contexts were more likely than Americans to regret actions involving interpersonal relationships or familial obligations. In contrast, this study examined the content of regret in various samples, including undergraduates, office workers, housewives, and pensioners and showed that almost half the Japanese respondents reported regret related to interpersonal relationships; this figure was higher than those in countries that place greater value on individualism, such as Germany, Finland, and the US. Although studies using direct cultural comparisons are needed, the present findings support the socio-cultural foundation of regret.
Moreover, this study showed the effects of age on type of regret. Older people were generally more likely than younger adults to report regret about acts of commission relative to acts of omission. However, this tendency was qualified by domain in that the aging effect was significant only in the self domain. In the interpersonal domain, young people were as likely as older people to report regrets about acts of commission, reflecting their equally frequent use of the changing-cognition strategy. Indeed, previous studies have suggested the main effects of situation on type of regret (Komiya et al., 2011; Zeelenberg et al., 1998), but did not consider differences in the management styles used in these situations. In this sense, this study provides valuable information by showing the importance of the distinction between interpersonal and self situations not only in terms of the type of regret but also in terms of age differences with regard to regret.

Finally, this study was the first to use a variety of samples to examine age differences in the content of regret. Previous studies with limited samples (Jokisaari, 2004; Lecci et al., 1994; Wrosch & Heckhausen, 2002) provided mixed results about the effects of aging on the content of regret. In contrast, using the largest sample to date, we showed the effects of aging on most categories of regret. Older people were more likely than younger people to report regrets about family, health, and money, whereas younger people were more likely than older people to mention regrets about education and work. These age differences may reflect differences in the most significant goals during each life stage. Carstensen, Isaacowitz, and Charles (1999) noted that the perception of limited time motivates older people to regulate emotions, whereas the perception of open-ended time allows young people to focus on the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, older adults may harbor concerns about direct sources of happiness such as health, money, and social support, whereas younger adults may be primarily concerned with sources of self-development such as education and work. Additionally, this theory can explain data showing the effects of educational level on reports of regret in that more highly educated people were more concerned with work as opposed to money, whereas less educated people were more likely to mention regrets about money but not about work. Highly educated people have a more future-oriented perspective than do less educated people, who are more present-oriented (Lamm, Schmidt, & Trommsdorff, 1976; Guthrie, Butler, & Ward 2009). Thus, highly educated people may feel regret about the acquisition of knowledge, which is related to long-term educational and work-related goals, whereas less educated people may focus on regret related to direct, materialistic issues, such as money. However, these notions represent only speculations. Future studies should examine the association between perspectives on time and content related to regret.

Although this study provides important basic information about the effects of aging on regret, several limitations should be noted. First, because this study was conducted via an internet survey, the respondents were not a representative sample of the Japanese population. Future studies are needed to examine whether the present findings can be replicated in other samples. Moreover, we compared the proportions of those expressing interpersonal regret across cultures, but different questionnaires and samples were used in different studies. Although the present study suggests the possibility of a cultural grounding of regret, direct comparisons are needed. Cross-cultural comparisons using
identical methods and corresponding samples would provide more accurate data on cultural similarities and differences regarding the effects of aging on regret.

This study examined differences in regret according to age, focusing on the type and content of regret. Using the largest sample in the extant literature, we showed types of regret and how it is managed in a Japanese cultural context during different stages of life. Examination of the factors contributing to the effective management of regret would facilitate the development of happiness and improve the quality of our lives.

REFERENCES


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