

LIDLAW RESEARCH REPORT

IKIGAI PURPOSE ASSESSMENT FOR LEADERS AND BUSINESSES

Analysis of quantitative data

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Abstract

This study investigates how individuals and organisations differ in their experience of *Ikigai*, a sense of purpose integrating what one loves, is good at, can be paid for, and what the world needs. Using a cleaned dataset of 2,195 valid responses across 40 individual and 40 organisational subdimensions, quantitative analyses compared *Ikigai* scores across demographics, cultures, leadership levels, and professional sectors. Results show that individual *Ikigai* scores ($M = 0.60$) significantly exceed organisational ones ($M = 0.45$), revealing a persistent gap between personal and institutional purpose. Among the four dimensions, *'Good'* was most emphasized by individuals, while *'World'* scored lowest for organizations.

Five main findings emerged. (1) *Ikigai* strengthens with age, consistent with developmental theories of meaning that emphasise growth, reflection, and integrity in later life. (2) Leadership responsibility enhances *Ikigai*, supporting the idea that purpose increases with autonomy and task significance. (3) Cultural orientation shapes personal meaning modestly; individualist contexts emphasise performance and autonomy, while collectivist ones prioritise loyalty and moral integrity, yet organisational purpose converges across cultures. (4) Sectoral context influences the balance of values: individuals across all sectors prioritise ethical and relational dimensions, while organisations, even in public and social sectors, focus on performance, customer orientation, and success. (5) Across all industries, organisational *Ikigai* exhibits global convergence toward market-oriented definitions of purpose, consistent with theories of institutional isomorphism.

Together, these findings suggest that while individuals derive purpose from moral and relational meaning, contemporary organisations increasingly express purpose through economic and managerial rationality. This widening gap between human and institutional meaning underscores the need to reconcile ethical authenticity with organisational performance in the pursuit of purposeful work.

Introduction

The concept of *Ikigai*, originating in Japanese philosophy as “a reason for being,” has gained increasing attention in organisational and leadership research as a holistic measure of purpose. Whereas traditional psychological approaches treat purpose as an individual trait, recent scholarship suggests that meaning is also shaped by organisational culture, economic context, and collective identity. Understanding how *Ikigai* manifests at both the individual and organisational levels is therefore essential to bridging human motivation with institutional design.

This study introduces the *Ikigai Purpose Assessment for Leaders and Businesses*, a quantitative tool designed to capture the multidimensional structure of *Ikigai* across four pillars: *Love*, *Good*, *World*, and *Market*. Using a large international sample (N = 3,000 before cleaning; N = 2,195 final), the research addresses three overarching questions:

1. How do individuals and organisations differ in their overall *Ikigai* profiles?
2. How do demographic, cultural, and sectoral contexts influence the distribution of *Ikigai* values?
3. To what extent is modern organisational purpose converging toward market-oriented logics?

To answer these questions, the study proceeds in three parts. Part 1 details the data cleaning and preparation process; Part 2 presents graphical analyses of the *Ikigai* dimensions; and Part 3 tests five theoretically grounded hypotheses that explain the determinants of purpose. These hypotheses draw on classic frameworks of psychological and organisational theory: Erikson’s (1980) and Frankl’s (1963) accounts of meaning development across the lifespan; Hackman and Oldham’s (1976) model of task significance and work motivation; Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism; and DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) theory of institutional isomorphism.

By integrating demographic, cultural, and sectoral perspectives, this study provides a comprehensive quantitative analysis of how *Ikigai* operates in contemporary organisations. It offers empirical evidence for both the diversity of human purpose and the growing convergence of institutional meaning around performance, efficiency, and market-oriented logics.

Part 1: Data Cleaning

The initial dataset consisted of 3,000 responses across 92 variables. To prepare the material for statistical analysis, a multi-stage cleaning process was undertaken. This ensured that only valid, non-duplicated, and interpretable cases were retained. Through nine systematic steps (df1-df9), the raw dataset of 3,000 responses was refined into df9 with 2,195 high-quality observations. This dataset constitutes the basis for all subsequent descriptive and inferential analyses, presented in Part 2.

All statistical procedures were conducted in RStudio, using the `ggplot2` package for visualisation and base R functions for data transformation. Descriptive and inferential analyses included two-sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and 95% confidence intervals to test for significant differences across demographic, cultural, and sectoral groups.

Part 2: Analysis

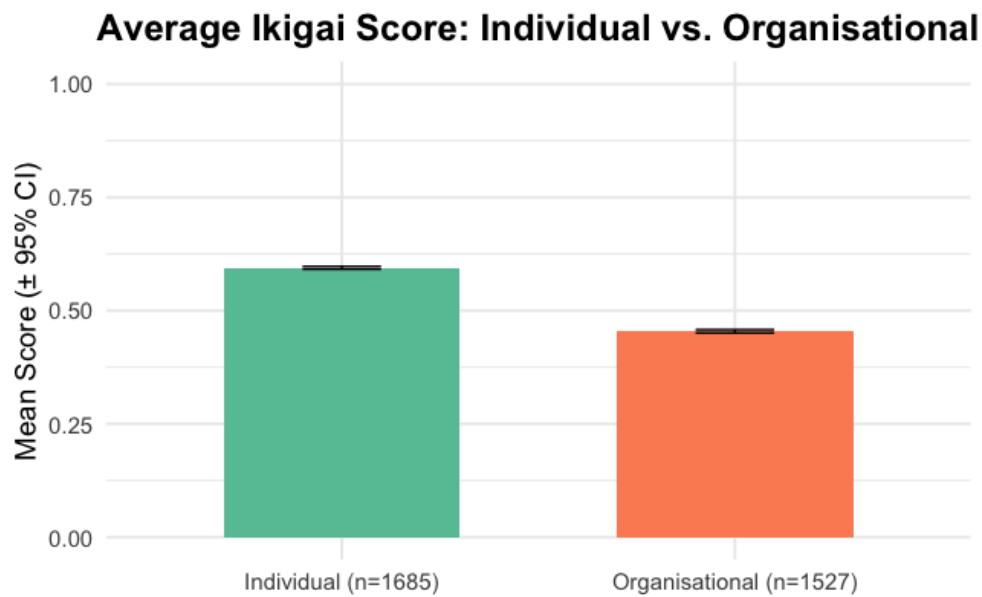


Figure 1 - Ikigai Scores by Perspective: Individual and Organisational

Figure 1 shows that Individual scores (0.60) were substantially higher than organisational scores (0.45). A two-sample t-test confirmed this difference to be highly significant ($t = 58.55$, $df = 121,321$, $p < 2.2e-16$), indicating that individuals report markedly stronger Ikigai alignment than organisations.

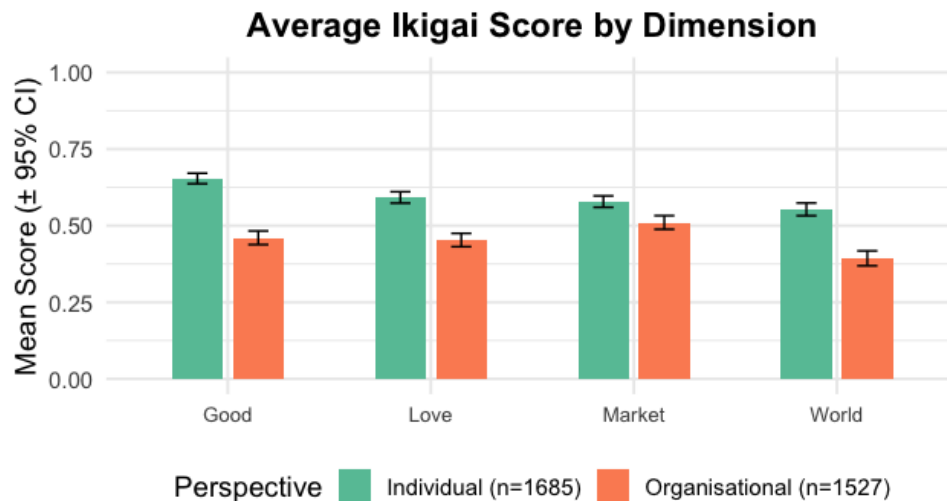


Figure 2 - Ikigai Scores by Dimension

Figure 2 shows Ikigai scores by dimension for individual and organisational perspectives. Individual scores were consistently higher across all dimensions, with the largest gap in “Good” (0.65 vs. 0.45) and the smallest in “Market” (0.57 vs. 0.50). Pairwise tests confirmed significant differences between most dimensions, indicating that individuals emphasise “Good” most strongly, while organisations score lowest on “World.”

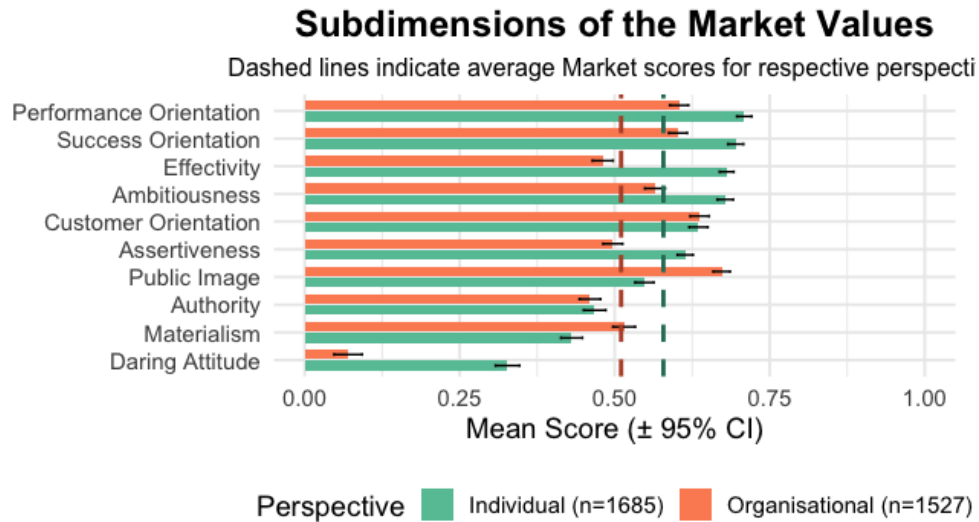


Figure 3 - Subdimensions of the Market Values

Figure 3 shows that among Market subdimensions, *Performance Orientation* scored highest and *Daring Attitude* scored lowest for both individuals and organisations.

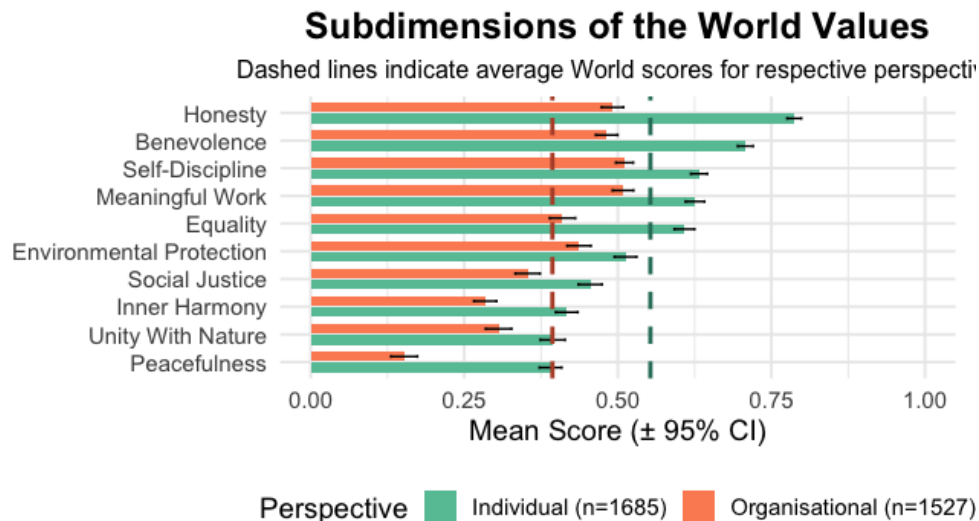


Figure 4 - Subdimensions of the World Values

Figure 4 shows that among World subdimensions, *Honesty* scored highest and *Peacefulness* lowest for individuals, while *Self-Discipline* scored highest and *Peacefulness* lowest for organisations.

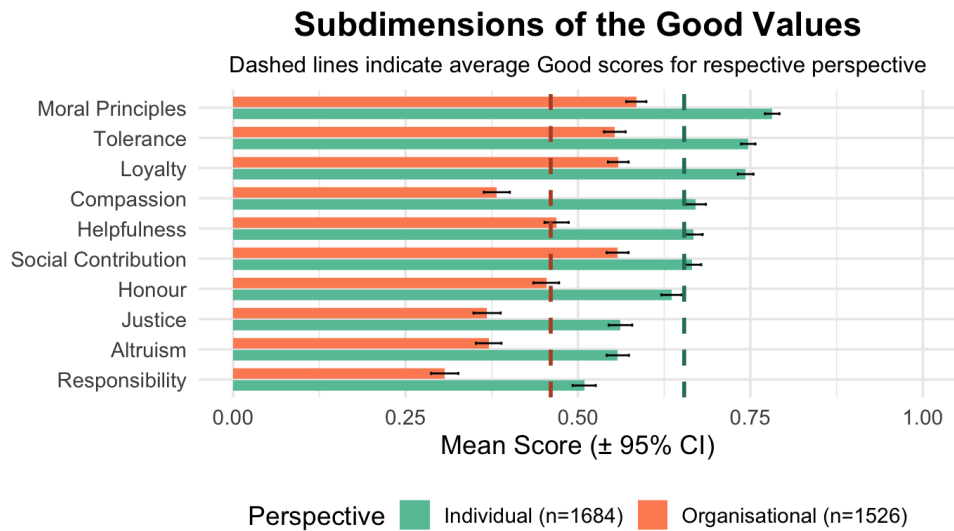


Figure 5 - Subdimensions of the Good Values

Figure 5 shows that among Good subdimensions, *Moral Principles* scored highest and *Responsibility* scored lowest for both individuals and organisations.

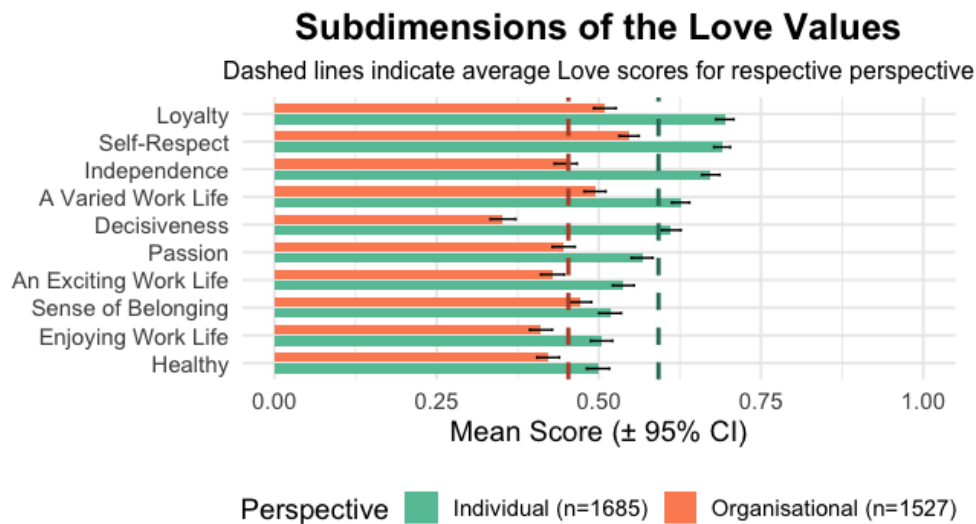


Figure 6 - Subdimensions of the Love Values

Figure 6 shows that among Love subdimensions, individuals scored highest on *Loyalty* and lowest on *Healthy*, while organisations scored highest on *Self-Respect* and lowest on *Decisiveness*.

Overall, the breakdown into subdimensions shows that in two cases (Market and Good) individuals and organisations shared the same highest and lowest values. In the differing cases, the contrast between individual and organisational Ikigai becomes visible. For example, in Love, individuals scored highest on *Loyalty*, reflecting a more relational emphasis, whereas organisations scored lowest on *Decisiveness*, highlighting structural limitations in collective settings.

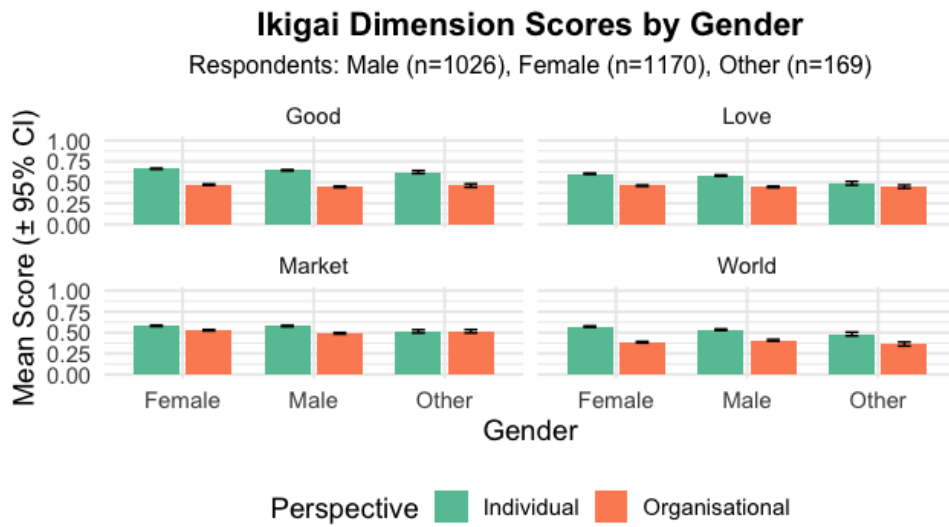


Figure 7 - Ikigai Dimension Scores by Gender

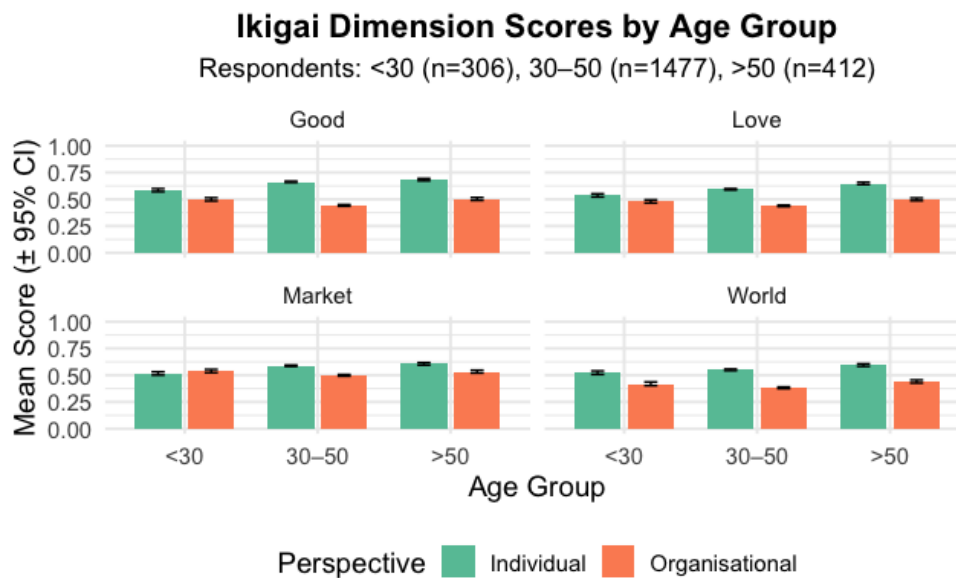


Figure 8 - Ikigai Dimension Scores by Age

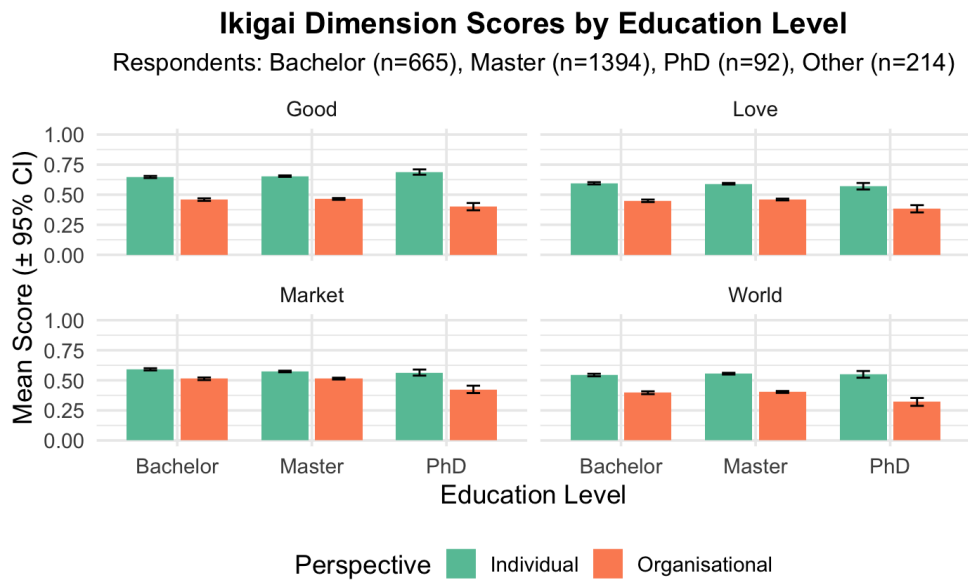


Figure 9 - Ikigai Dimension Scores by Education Level

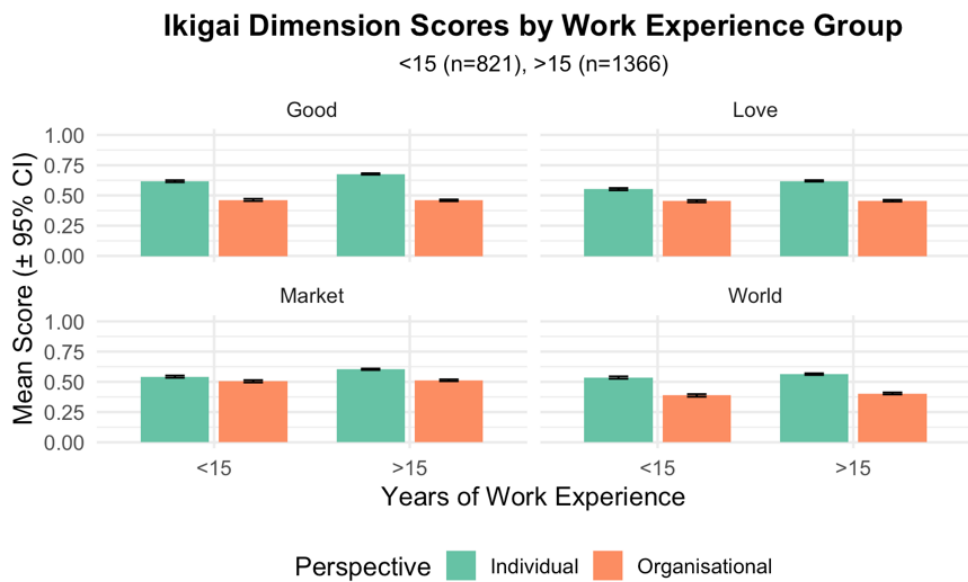


Figure 10 - Ikigai Dimension Scores by Work Experience Group

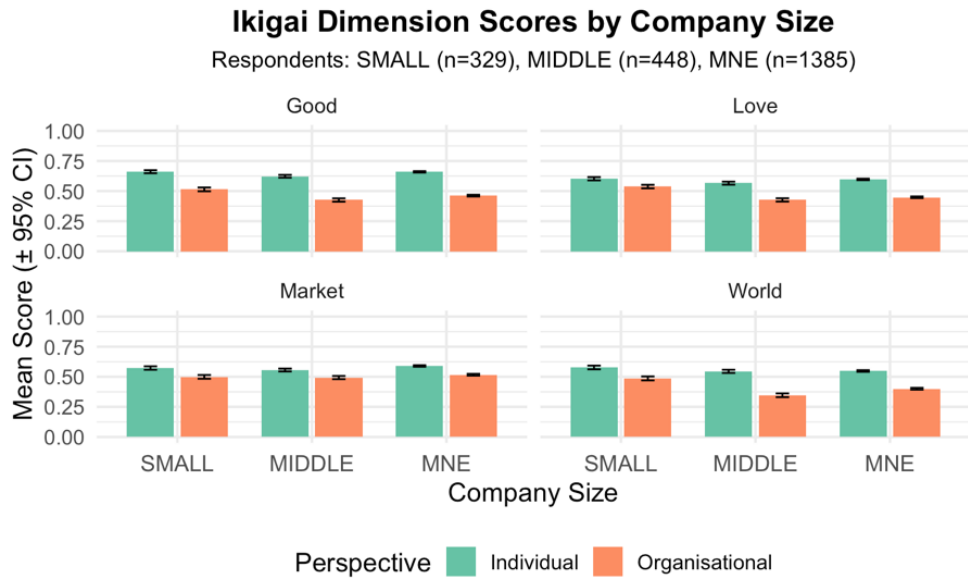


Figure 11 - Ikigai Dimension Scores by Company Size

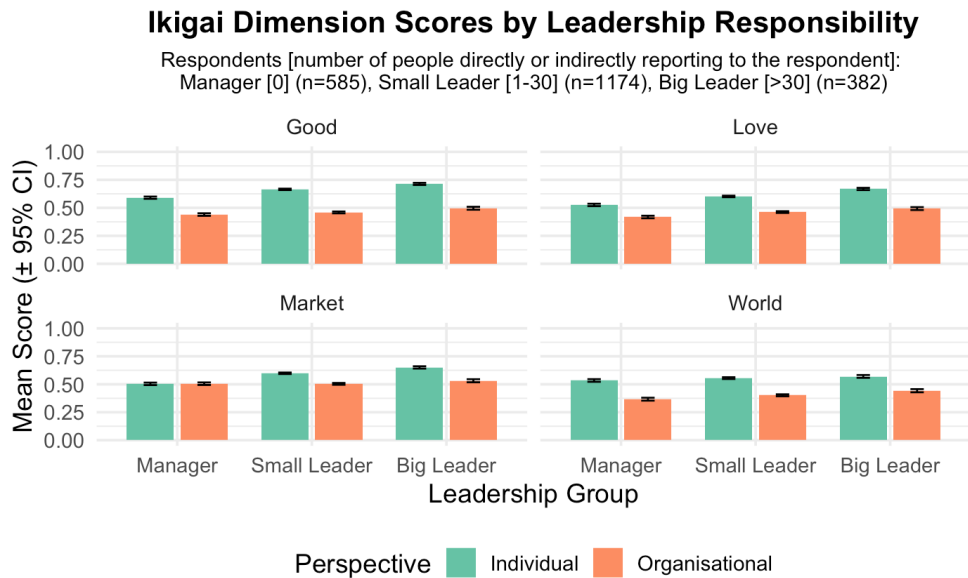


Figure 12 - Ikigai Dimension Scores by Leadership Responsibility

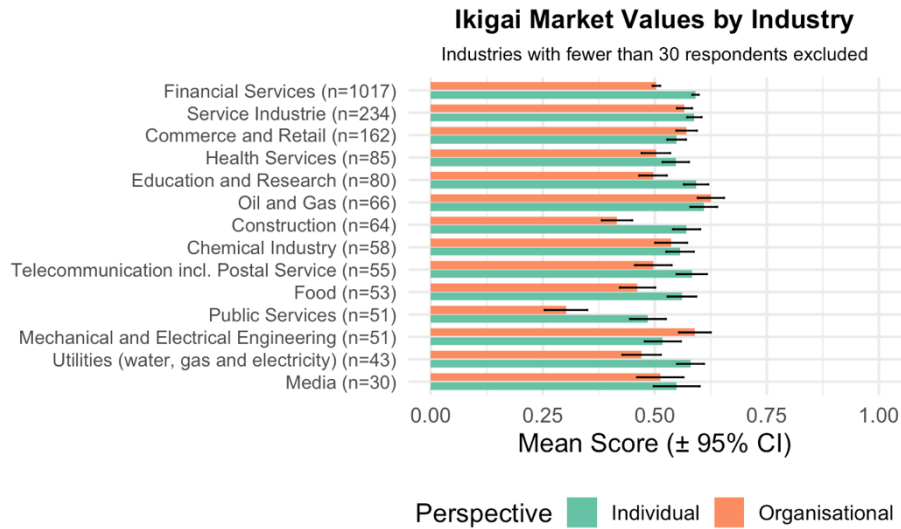


Figure 13 - Ikigai Market Values by Industry

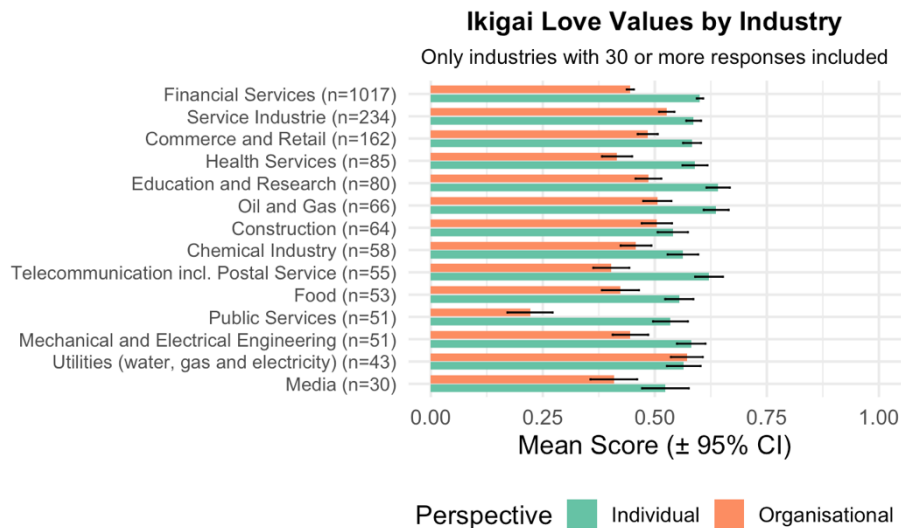


Figure 14 - Ikigai Love Values by Industry

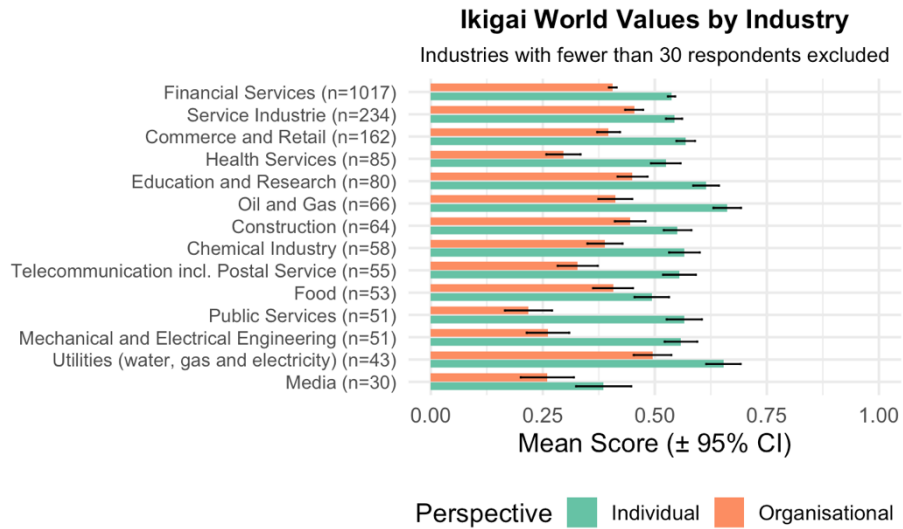


Figure 15 - Ikigai World Values by Industry

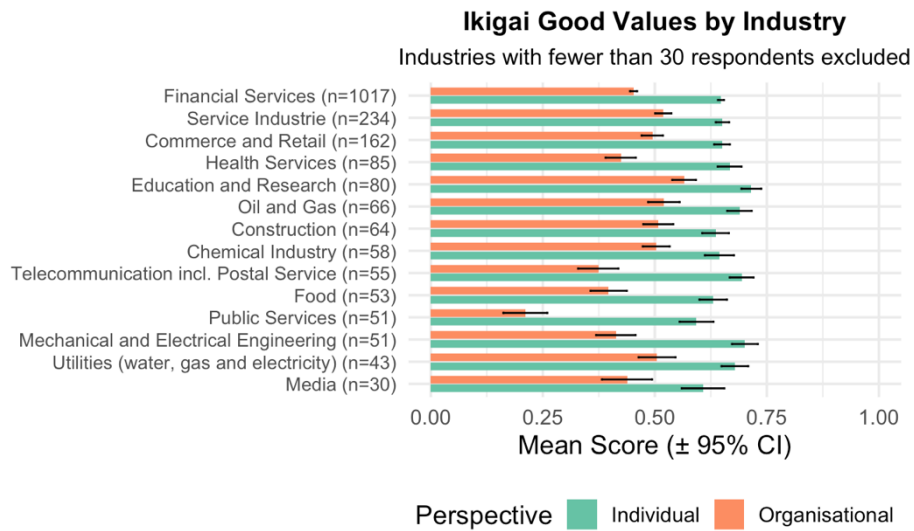


Figure 16 - Ikigai Good Values by Industry

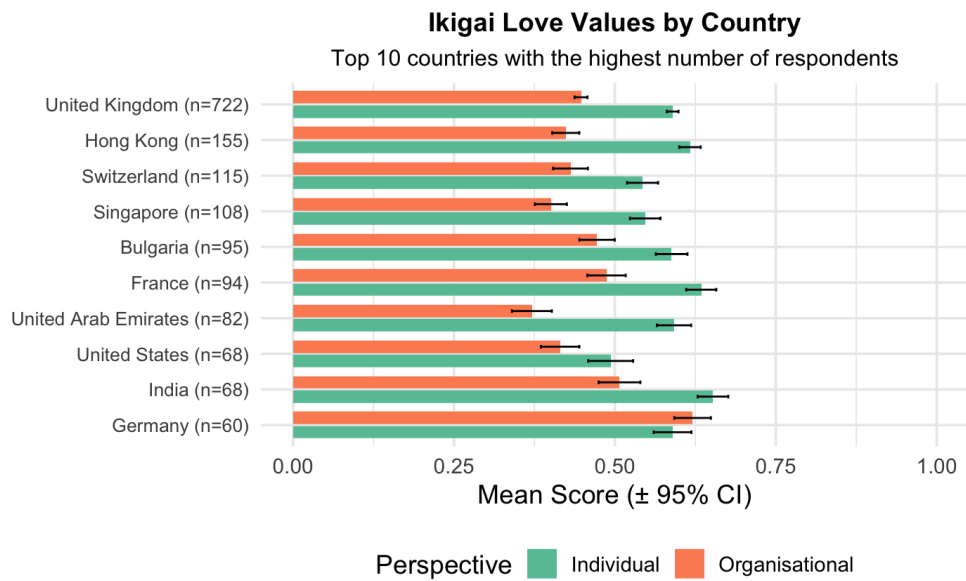


Figure 17 - Ikigai Love Values by Country

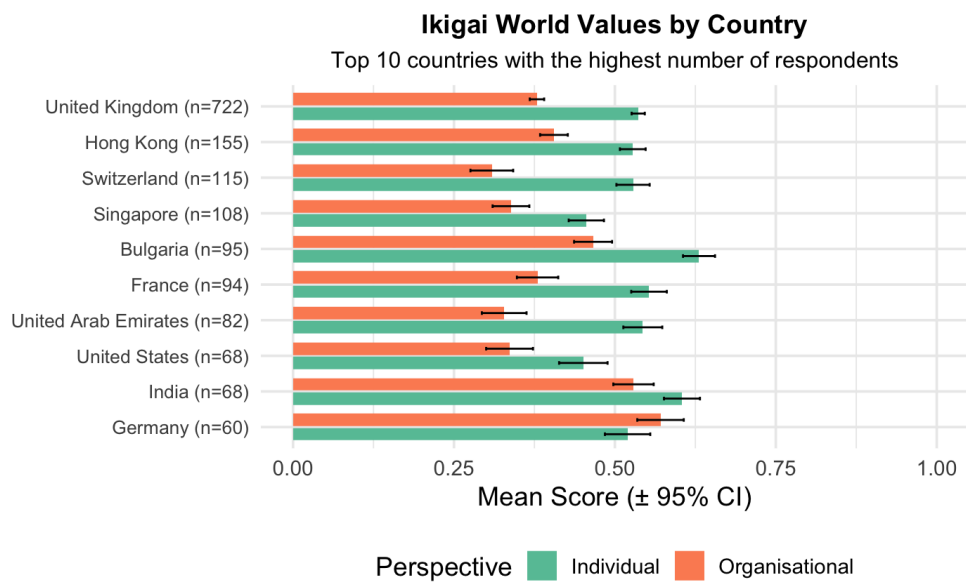


Figure 18 - Ikigai World Values by Country

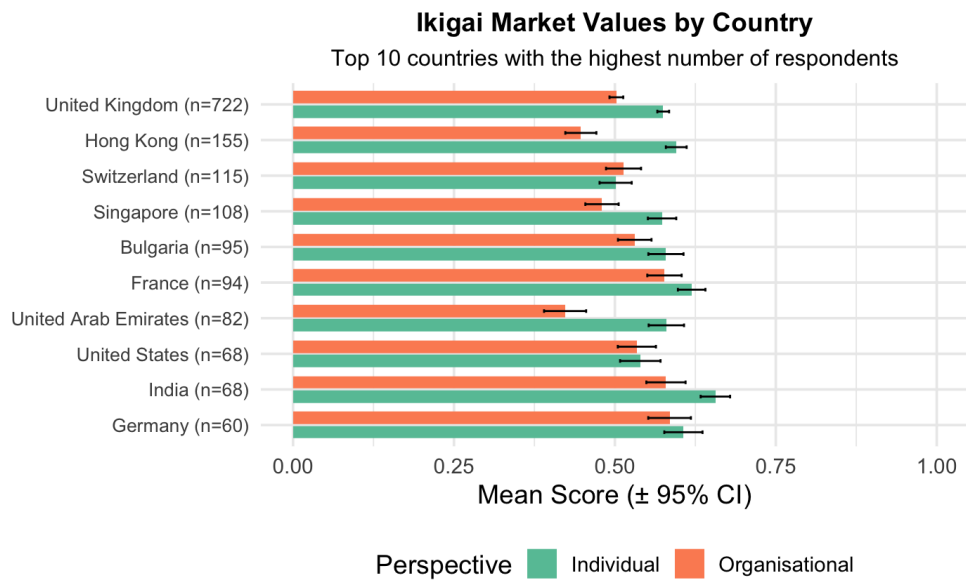


Figure 19 - Ikigai Market Values by Country

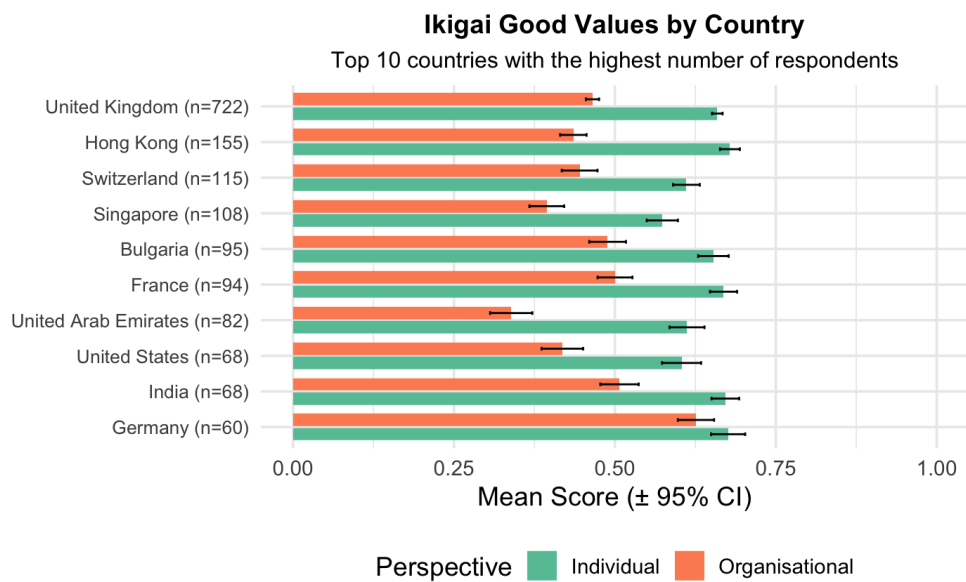


Figure 20 - Ikigai Good Values by Country

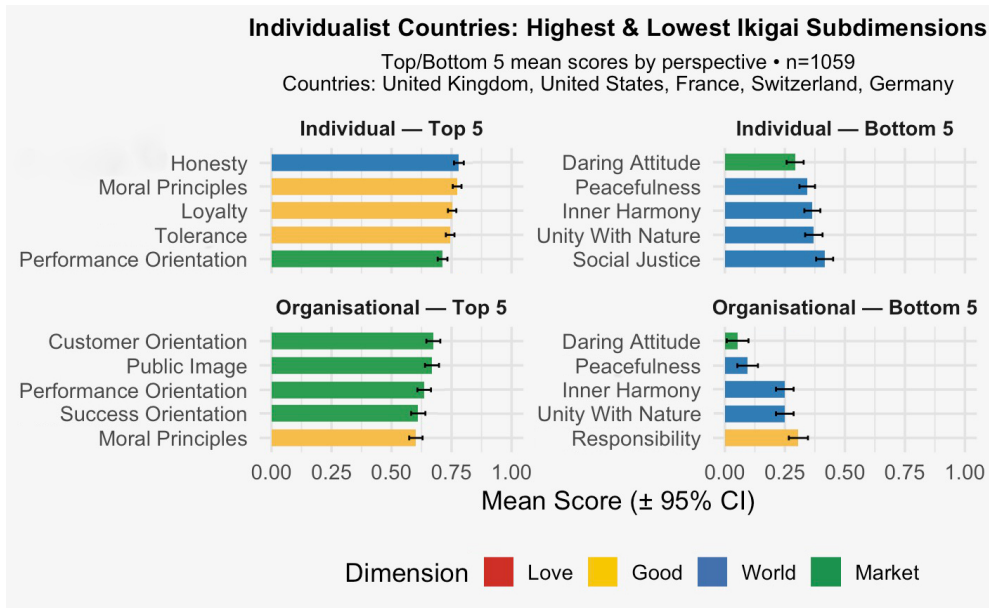


Figure 21 - Highest and Lowest Ikigai Subdimension Scores in Individualist Countries

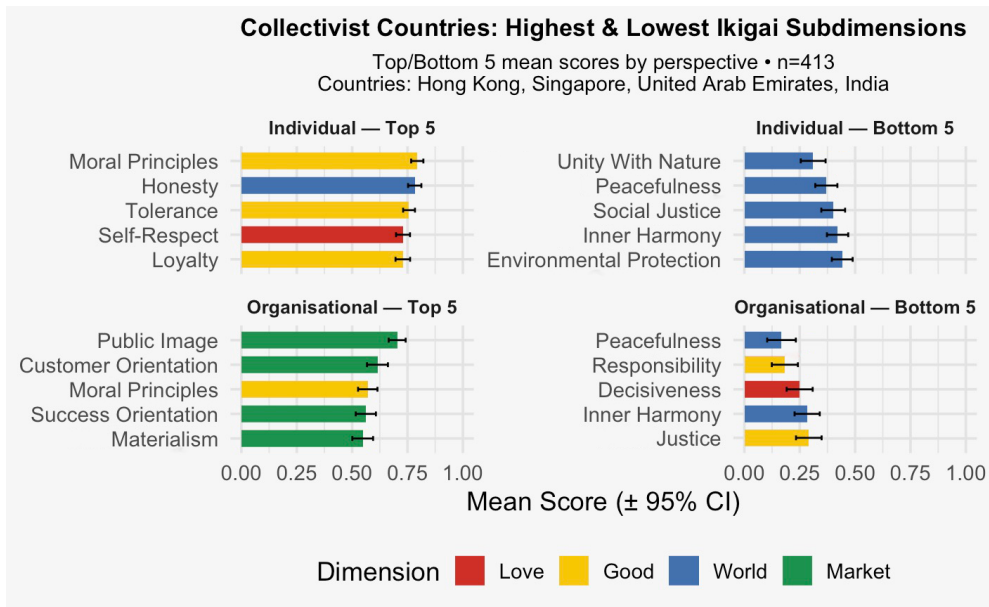


Figure 22 - Highest and Lowest Ikigai Subdimension Scores in Collectivist Countries

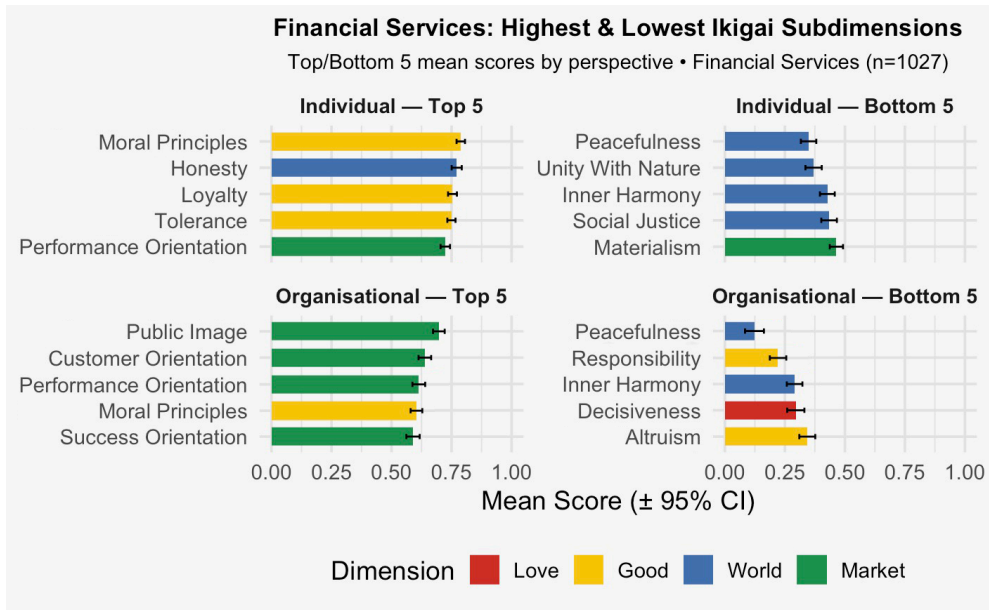


Figure 23 - Highest and Lowest Ikigai Subdimension Scores in Financial Services

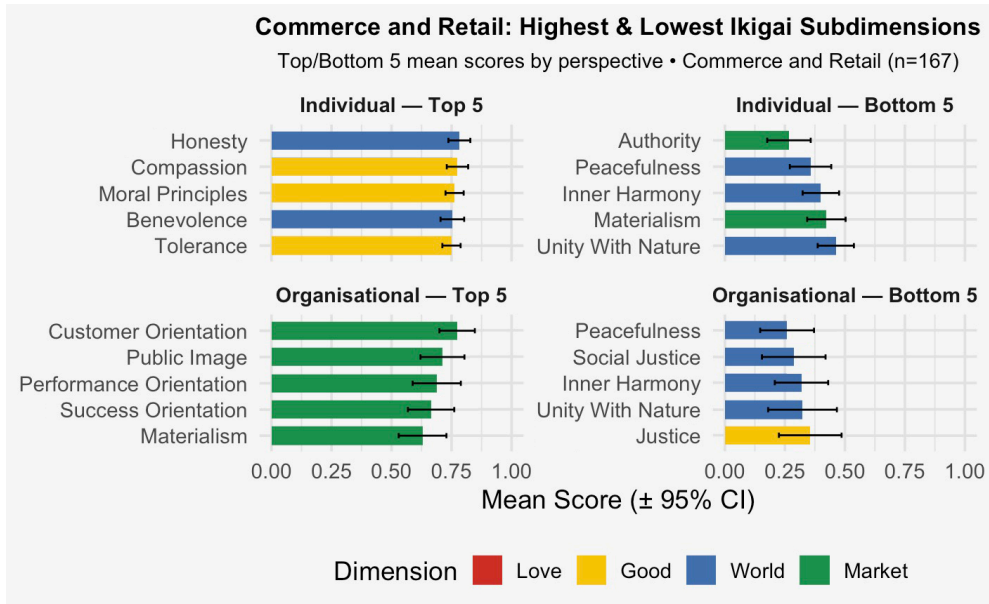


Figure 24 - Highest and Lowest Ikigai Subdimension Scores in Commerce and Retail

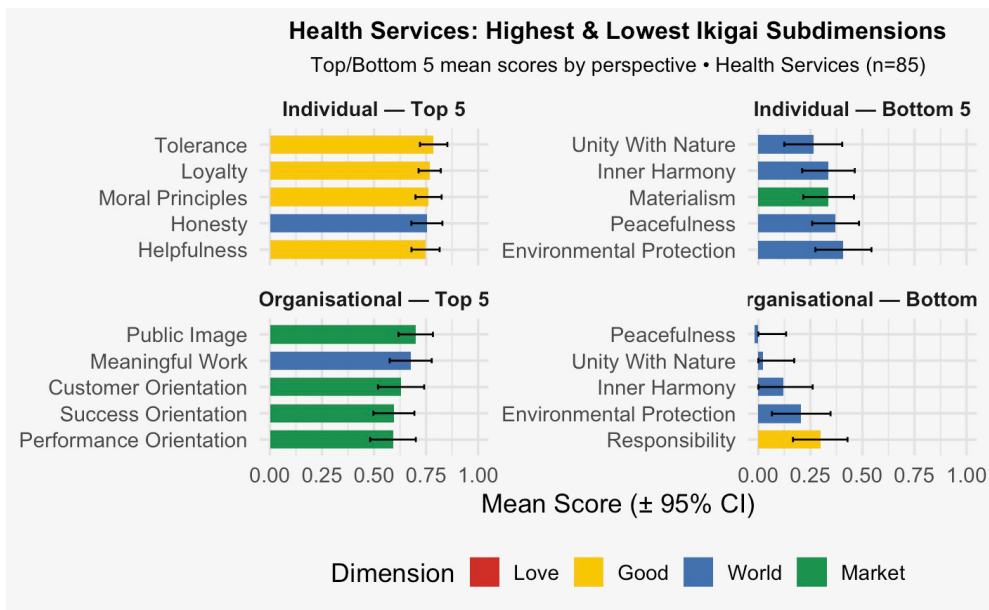


Figure 25 - Highest and Lowest Ikigai Subdimension Scores in Health Services

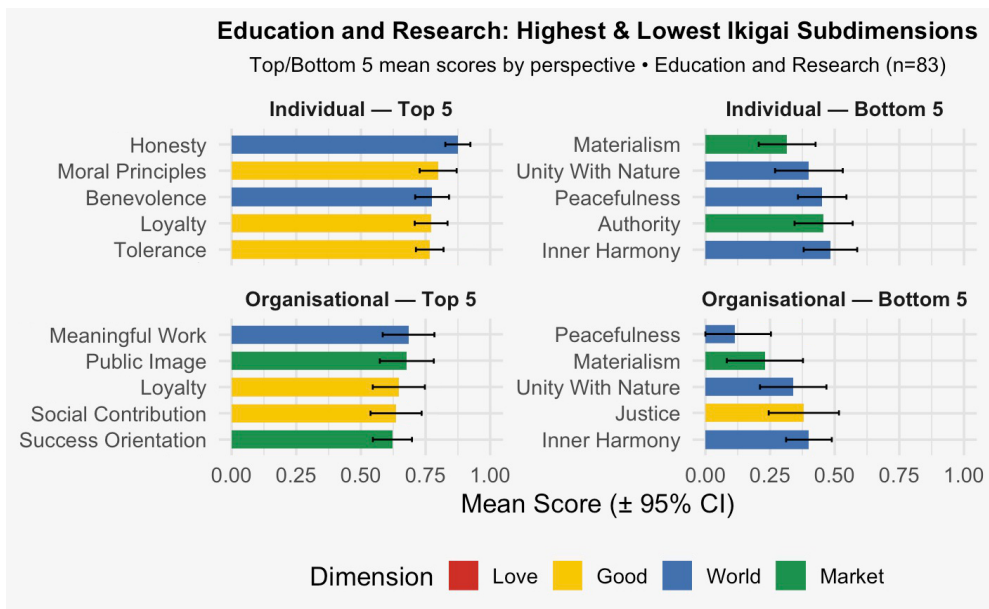


Figure 26 - Highest and Lowest Ikigai Subdimension Scores in Education and Research

Part 3: Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Age Increases Ikigai Scores (Figure 8)

Hypothesis

Older individuals report higher Ikigai scores than younger individuals.

Rationale

Life experience, stability, and accumulated meaning are often assumed to increase with age, potentially leading to a stronger *Ikigai*. Classic theories of adult development propose that purpose matures as individuals progress through life's stages. Erikson (1980) argued that middle and later adulthood are defined by *generativity* and *integrity*, periods in which people reflect on their contributions and find coherence in their life story. Similarly, Frankl (1963) viewed the search for meaning as a lifelong process that deepens through reflection and responsibility. Together, these perspectives suggest that older adults, having integrated more experiences and developed a clearer sense of identity, are likely to report higher *Ikigai* than younger individuals.

Method

Survey data were divided into three age groups: <30 (n=306), 30–50 (n=1477), and >50 (n=412). Ikigai was measured across four dimensions (Good, Love, Market, World) and from both individual and organisational perspectives. Independent-sample t-tests compared age groups (full results in appendix).

Results

Individual Ikigai:

- Scores increase significantly from <30 to 30–50 ($p < .001$) and from <30 to >50 ($p < .001$).
- 30–50 vs >50 differences are weaker, suggesting a plateau after midlife.

Organisational Ikigai:

Scores are consistently lower than individual ones across nearly all dimensions and age groups (all $p < .001$). Exception: Market (<30). Organisational scores are slightly higher than individual scores. This suggests that younger respondents may view external structures such as the labour market as providing more purpose than they personally feel at this stage in life.

Conclusion

The hypothesis holds for individual *Ikigai*, which increases with age, particularly between the age groups of <30 and older. This aligns with classical developmental theories indicating that purpose and meaning strengthen as individuals mature psychologically (**Erikson, 1980; Frankl, 1963**). By contrast, organisational *Ikigai* remains lower and relatively flat, showing little change with age. The one exception is the Market dimension for those under 30, where organisational scores exceed individual scores, possibly reflecting optimism about external opportunities early in life before the gap between personal meaning and organisational reality widens.

Hypothesis 2: Leadership Responsibility Boosts Ikigai (Figure 12)

Hypothesis

Individuals with greater leadership responsibilities report higher Ikigai scores than those with few or no direct reports.

Rationale

Leadership roles often provide individuals with increased autonomy, influence, and accountability, which can strengthen their sense of purpose and fulfillment. According to the job characteristics model by Hackman and Oldham (1976), meaningfulness in work increases when people experience greater task significance and responsibility: two features that expand naturally with leadership scope. As leaders oversee others and shape organisational outcomes, their roles become more consequential, potentially elevating both individual and organisational *Ikigai*.

Method

Respondents were divided into three leadership groups based on the number of people directly or indirectly reporting to them:

- **Manager** [0] (n = 585)
- **Small Leader** [1–30] (n = 1,174)
- **Big Leader** [>30] (n = 382)

Each respondent rated *Ikigai* across four dimensions, Good, Love, Market, and World, from both Individual and Organisational perspectives. Mean scores ($\pm 95\%$ CI) were computed for each group, and one-way ANOVA tests were used to assess differences across leadership levels.

Results

As shown in Figure 12, *Ikigai* scores increased consistently with leadership responsibility across all dimensions.

- **Individual Ikigai:** Scores rose from Managers to Big Leaders, particularly within the *Good* and *Market* dimensions. The largest gap appeared in *Market*, where Big Leaders reported the highest sense of purpose.
- **Organisational Ikigai:** A similar but less pronounced upward trend was observed. Leaders with larger teams exhibited higher organisational *Ikigai* than those without direct reports.

Across all leadership groups, individual scores exceeded organisational scores, confirming a persistent personal–institutional gap. These results suggest that assuming greater leadership responsibility enhances both personal and perceived organisational purpose.

Conclusion

The findings support the hypothesis that leadership responsibility positively influences *Ikigai*. Individuals leading larger teams report higher purpose across most dimensions, especially in *Good* and *Market*. This aligns with Hackman and Oldham's (1976) theory that greater responsibility and task significance enhance meaningfulness in work.

Hypothesis 3: Cultural Differences Shape Ikigai (Figure 21 and 22)

Hypothesis

Collectivist countries prioritise organisational values more strongly than individual ones, while individualist countries emphasise individual perspectives.

Rationale

Cultural orientation shapes where individuals locate purpose. In collectivist cultures, *Ikigai* tends to be embedded in shared, role-based, and community goals, reflecting the interdependent self. In individualist cultures, purpose derives more from personal values and achievement, consistent with the independent self-construal described by Hofstede (1980). Comparing individual and organisational perspectives across these contexts allows us to test whether purpose is primarily “we-oriented” or “me-oriented.”

Method

Countries were grouped by Hofstede’s individualism (IDV) scores:

- **Individualist:** United Kingdom, United States, France, Switzerland, Germany ($n = 1,059$)
- **Collectivist:** Hong Kong, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, India ($n = 413$)

Participants rated *Ikigai* across four dimensions: Love, Good, World, and Market, for both individual and organisational perspectives. Mean scores ($\pm 95\%$ CI) and top/bottom five subdimensions were compared to identify dominant cultural patterns.

Results

Individualist countries (Figure 21), the top individual subdimensions: Honesty, Moral Principles, Loyalty, Tolerance, and Performance Orientation, reflect a combination of ethical and achievement-based values.

Collectivist countries (Figure 22), the individual top subdimensions: Moral Principles, Honesty, Tolerance, Self-Respect, and Loyalty, show a similar moral foundation with slightly greater emphasis on relational and self-reflective values.

At the organisational level, both cultural groups exhibit a near-identical pattern dominated by Market-oriented values: Customer Orientation, Performance, Success, Public Image, and occasionally Materialism. Harmony-based subdimensions (e.g., *Peacefulness*, *Inner Harmony*, *Unity with Nature*) consistently ranked lowest across all contexts.

Conclusion

The results offer partial support for Hofstede’s (1980) theory of cultural differences. While individual-level *Ikigai* reflects modest variations consistent with individualism-collectivism, performance and autonomy versus loyalty and moral duty, these differences are subtle rather than structural.

At the organisational level, however, both contexts converge on a shared Market-oriented logic of purpose, suggesting that global institutions increasingly define meaning through efficiency, success, and reputation rather than cultural distinctiveness. This pattern suggests that culture continues to influence personal purpose, but organisational purpose is becoming increasingly standardised globally.

Hypothesis 4: Sectoral Purpose Orientation (Figures 23-26)

Hypothesis

Public and social sectors prioritise moral and relational *Ikigai* dimensions, whereas commercial sectors emphasise market-driven values.

Rationale

Distinct professional environments cultivate purpose through different motivational structures. In public and social sectors such as education and healthcare, meaning often arises from moral integrity, benevolence, and social contribution, values reflected in the Good and Love dimensions of *Ikigai*. In contrast, commercial sectors such as finance and retail are shaped by competitive, performance-based incentives, aligning more closely with the Market dimension.

This pattern aligns with the Job Characteristics Model proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1976), which argues that meaningful work stems from task significance, the degree to which one's job impacts others. Roles in helping sectors typically score higher on task significance, enhancing intrinsic motivation and perceived purpose, while commercial roles emphasise achievement and extrinsic performance outcomes.

Method

Respondents were grouped into four professional sectors:

- **Financial Services** (Figure 23), n = 1,027
- **Commerce and Retail** (Figure 24), n = 167
- **Health Services** (Figure 25), n = 85
- **Education and Research** (Figure 26), n = 83

Participants rated *Ikigai* across four dimensions: Love, Good, World, and Market, for both Individual and Organisational perspectives. Mean subdimension scores ($\pm 95\%$ CI) were compared, identifying the top and bottom five for each sector to assess dominant value orientations.

Results

Across all sectors, **individual *Ikigai*** was dominated by ethical and relational values such as *Honesty*, *Moral Principles*, *Loyalty*, *Tolerance*, and *Benevolence*. This pattern held consistently across both public (Education, Health) and commercial (Finance, Retail) sectors, suggesting that moral orientation is a shared foundation of individual purpose rather than sector-specific.

At the **organisational level**, Market-oriented subdimensions: *Customer Orientation*, *Performance Orientation*, *Success Orientation*, and *Public Image*, were predominant in every field. While Education and Health included *Meaningful Work* and *Social Contribution* among their top values, these appeared alongside market metrics rather than replacing them.

Across all industries, World subdimensions (*Peacefulness*, *Unity with Nature*, *Environmental Protection*, *Justice*) consistently ranked among the lowest, indicating that ecological or societal ideals play a limited role in workplace purpose formation.

Conclusion

The findings provide partial support for the hypothesis. While sectoral context influences how moral and market values coexist, the distinction between public and commercial domains is less pronounced than expected. Individuals across all sectors derive *Ikigai* primarily from ethical and relational principles, consistent with Hackman and Oldham's (1976) emphasis on task significance and intrinsic meaning.

Organisations, however, exhibit strong convergence toward market-oriented values, even in traditionally prosocial sectors like education and health. This suggests that while individuals seek purpose through integrity and connection, institutions increasingly articulate purpose through performance, success, and reputation.

Ikigai is therefore context-dependent but institutionally constrained, its moral roots persist at the individual level, yet organisational environments translate purpose into measurable, outcome-based terms

Hypothesis 5: Organisational Convergence on Market Values (Figure 23-26)

Hypothesis

Across all sectors, organisational *Ikigai* is more strongly associated with market-oriented subdimensions than individual *Ikigai*, reflecting convergence toward performance, success, and efficiency values.

Rationale

While individuals often locate purpose in moral and relational meaning, organisations tend to express purpose through performance metrics and institutional expectations. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), organisations within a field become increasingly similar over time through institutional isomorphism: coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures that drive convergence in practices and values. As a result, diverse institutions may adopt a common market-oriented logic, prioritising efficiency, reputation, and measurable outcomes over ethical or interpersonal meaning.

Method

Data from four sectors: Education and Research (n = 83), Health Services (n = 85), Commerce and Retail (n = 167), and Financial Services (n = 1,027), were aggregated. For both individual and organisational perspectives, the top and bottom five *Ikigai* subdimensions (mean \pm 95% CI) were compared to assess the dominance of *Market* values at the organisational level.

Results

Across all sectors, organisational *Ikigai* displayed a consistent dominance of Market-oriented subdimensions: *Customer Orientation*, *Performance Orientation*, *Success Orientation*, and *Public Image*, indicating a shared institutional focus on efficiency and measurable outcomes. Even in traditionally prosocial fields such as Education and Health, these market values appeared alongside *Meaningful Work* or *Social Contribution*, showing partial moral integration but not displacement of performance priorities.

In contrast, individual Ikigai remained anchored in ethical and relational values across all sectors: *Honesty, Moral Principles, Loyalty, Tolerance, and Benevolence*, demonstrating a stable moral foundation irrespective of industry context.

Conclusion

The findings strongly support DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) theory of institutional isomorphism, which posits that organisations across diverse fields tend to adopt similar structures and values under shared economic and professional pressures. Regardless of sector, organisational Ikigai converges around market performance, success, and reputation, reflecting a common managerial logic.

By contrast, individual Ikigai preserves a broader moral and interpersonal orientation, suggesting that personal purpose remains pluralistic even as institutional purpose becomes standardised. Together, these results reveal a widening values gap: individuals pursue meaning through ethics and connection, while organisations increasingly define purpose through market-driven rationality.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that Ikigai, as both an individual and organisational construct, is deeply contextual yet marked by a consistent divide between personal and institutional meaning. Across the dataset, individuals report higher levels of purpose than organisations, highlighting a persistent gap between moral motivation and managerial rationality. Ikigai strengthens with age and leadership responsibility, while culture and the professional sector shape its qualitative expression.

Cultural analysis reveals that individualist countries place greater emphasis on autonomy and performance, whereas collectivist contexts highlight loyalty and moral integrity. However, these differences are modest: across all settings, individuals share a common ethical foundation centred on honesty, tolerance, and benevolence. Sectoral analyses show a similar pattern, while individuals in every field prioritise moral and relational values, organisational purpose converges on performance, customer orientation, and success, even within public and social sectors such as education and health.

This convergence supports institutional theory's view that modern organisations increasingly express purpose through efficiency and reputation metrics, narrowing the space for moral and humanistic meaning. The tension between individual and organisational Ikigai thus reflects a wider transformation in contemporary work, where economic rationality dominates how purpose is defined and pursued.

By quantifying and comparing Ikigai across individuals, organisations, cultures, and sectors, this study offers a comprehensive framework for understanding purpose in modern institutions. Future research should explore how organisations can bridge the meaning gap by embedding ethical and relational values into their operational models, aligning measurable success with the deeper motivations that sustain human fulfilment.

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