2021 International Wisdom Summit Survey

Analytical results

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# Sample Characteristics

## Country

Table

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## Academic level

Chart, bar chart, funnel chart

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A nice distribution by rank, with 62 professors vs. 73 junior researchers (postdoctoral/doctoral, and college students).

## Fields

Among fields of studies, most scholars indicated that they focused on social (41%) and moral psychology (30%), followed by personality science (25%), developmental psychology (23%), education (21%), cognitive science (19%), and cognitive psychology (17%). Some scholars further indicated focus on clinical (10%), evolutionary (8%), and quantitative psychology (6%).

Numerous scholars explicitly indicated that wisdom is their field of expertise (32%), as well as moral philosophy (21%, if looking separately – 16% explicitly stated virtues/virtue ethics).

# Wisdom and morality

Forced choice responses (n = 135). Researchers were asked if morality is sufficient, precursor, necessary, relevant for wisdom and vice versa. If they did not agree with any of these statements, they could advance to the next screen (scored as “unrelated”).

Chart, scatter chart

Description automatically generated

**Almost half a sample indicated that morality is necessary for wisdom (and more than half of the professors), but not vice versa. A quarter of the sample viewed morality as a precursor to wisdom, whereas some participants indicated these constructs are unrelated.**

Chart

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X^2 df P(> X^2)

Likelihood Ratio 43.111 4 9.8112e-09

Pearson 36.396 4 2.3983e-07

Contingency Coeff.: 0.291

Cramer's V : 0.304

### Generalized mixed model estimates and analyses

### responses nested in participants

Chart, box and whisker chart

Description automatically generated

**Category = Necessary:**

**contrast estimate SE df z.ratio p.value**

**Morality to Wisdom - Wisdom to Morality 0.2273 0.0591 Inf 3.847 0.0001**

**Category = Precursor:**

**contrast estimate SE df z.ratio p.value**

**Morality to Wisdom - Wisdom to Morality 0.1121 0.0503 Inf 2.228 0.0259**

**Category = Relevant:**

**contrast estimate SE df z.ratio p.value**

**Morality to Wisdom - Wisdom to Morality -0.0528 0.0531 Inf -0.994 0.3204**

**Category = Sufficient:**

**contrast estimate SE df z.ratio p.value**

**Morality to Wisdom - Wisdom to Morality -0.1580 0.0332 Inf -4.761 <.0001**

**Group.F = Morality to Wisdom:**

**contrast estimate SE df z.ratio p.value**

**Necessary - Precursor 2.12e-01 0.0596 Inf 3.558 0.0034**

**Necessary - Relevant -2.35e-01 0.0596 Inf -3.950 0.0007**

**Necessary - Sufficient 4.82e-01 0.0465 Inf 10.378 <.0001**

**Necessary - Unrelated 4.63e-01 0.0476 Inf 9.719 <.0001**

**Precursor - Relevant -4.47e-01 0.0564 Inf -7.939 <.0001**

**Precursor - Sufficient 2.70e-01 0.0409 Inf 6.601 <.0001**

**Precursor - Unrelated 2.51e-01 0.0421 Inf 5.951 <.0001**

**Relevant - Sufficient 7.18e-01 0.0411 Inf 17.469 <.0001**

**Relevant - Unrelated 6.98e-01 0.0426 Inf 16.398 <.0001**

**Sufficient - Unrelated -1.95e-02 0.0144 Inf -1.353 0.6578**

**Group.F = Wisdom to Morality:**

**contrast estimate SE df z.ratio p.value**

**Necessary - Precursor 9.68e-02 0.0497 Inf 1.949 0.2912**

**Necessary - Relevant -5.15e-01 0.0538 Inf -9.580 <.0001**

**Necessary - Sufficient 9.68e-02 0.0497 Inf 1.949 0.2915**

**Precursor - Relevant -6.12e-01 0.0493 Inf -12.415 <.0001**

**Precursor - Sufficient -2.19e-05 0.0446 Inf 0.000 1.0000**

**Relevant - Sufficient 6.12e-01 0.0493 Inf 12.414 <.0001**

### By prior research on wisdom

Chisq Df Pr(>Chisq)

(Intercept) 0.0310 1 0.8602

Group.F 1.2958 1 0.2550

Category 36.9433 4 1.85e-07 \*\*\*

prior\_research 0.0013 1 0.9712

Group.F:Category 1.1194 3 0.7724

**Group.F:prior\_research 1.8101 1 0.1785**

**Category:prior\_research 1.2966 4 0.8620**

**Group.F:Category:prior\_research 1.3213 3 0.7241**

### By prior research on morality

Response: Proportion

Chisq Df Pr(>Chisq)

(Intercept) 0.0310 1 0.8602

Group.F 1.2958 1 0.2550

Category 36.9433 4 1.85e-07 \*\*\*

prior\_research 0.0013 1 0.9712

Group.F:Category 1.1194 3 0.7724

**Group.F:prior\_research 1.8101 1 0.1785**

**Category:prior\_research 1.2966 4 0.8620**

**Group.F:Category:prior\_research 1.3213 3 0.7241**

### By prior research on culture

Response: Proportion

Chisq Df Pr(>Chisq)

(Intercept) 0.0538 1 0.81654

Group.F 5.4251 1 0.01985 \*

Category 51.1698 4 2.057e-10 \*\*\*

research\_culturalpsy 0.4200 1 0.51692

Group.F:Category 6.1299 3 0.10546

**Group.F:research\_culturalpsy 0.9313 1 0.33454**

**Category:research\_culturalpsy 0.8854 4 0.92665**

**Group.F:Category:research\_culturalpsy 0.6759 3 0.87885**

### By academic rank

Chart, line chart

Description automatically generated

No significant effect of position (based on glmer models)

Chisq Df Pr(>Chisq)

(Intercept) 1.1231 1 0.28926

Group.F 3.7714 1 0.05214 .

Category 74.3790 4 2.696e-15 \*\*\*

Position 1.6625 1 0.19726

Group.F:Category 11.2357 3 0.01052 \*

**Group.F:Position 1.4068 1 0.23558**

**Category:Position 3.9442 4 0.41361**

**Group.F:Category:Position 2.4938 3 0.47641**

### By country

Chart

Description automatically generated

No significant effect of country (based on glmer models)

Chisq Df Pr(>Chisq)

(Intercept) 0.0791 1 0.77851

Group.F 5.4148 1 0.01997 \*

Category 36.4904 4 2.294e-07 \*\*\*

CountryCode 0.0199 1 0.88785

Group.F:Category 10.3103 3 0.01610 \*

**Group.F:CountryCode 0.0840 1 0.77201**

**Category:CountryCode 0.1790 4 0.99623**

**Group.F:Category:CountryCode 0.4303 3 0.93392**

## By area of research

Chart, box and whisker chart

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**Some evidence of “skin in the game”!**

Scholars more likely to agree that morality is necessary for wisdom than vice versa. Scholars studying wisdom and moral philosophers more likely to think that morality is necessary for wisdom compared to moral psychologists, and social/personality/cogsci scholars. Similarly, moral philosophers and wisdom scholars are more likely to think wisdom is sufficient for morality compared to other groups.

## Open-ended responses (subset: n = 77)

Researchers were asked to provide an open-ended reflection on the relationship of wisdom and morality.

Dimensions

* (FRMW) Functional relationship: morals=> wisdom. Morals is in service of wisdom. Morals is the driver that leads to outcome (Wisdom).
* (FRWM) Functional relationship: wisdom=> morality. Wisdom is in service of morality. Wisdom is the driver that leads to outcome (Morality).
* (FRJF) Functional relationship where both morality and wisdom serve a joint function: they can be independent from each other, but they both contribute towards a specific life goal (e.g., common good).
* (TRMW) Taxonomic relationship: morality is part of wisdom.
* (TRWM) Taxonomic relationship: wisdom is part of morality.
* (TRHOC) Taxonomic relationship: wisdom and morality are branches of a higher order category (e.g., breaststroke and butterfly are both swimming styles). This code applies even if the person initially says that there is no (functional) relationship between wisdom and morality.
* (PR) Probabilistic relationship: X can guide / often guides Y (with X and Y being either morality or wisdom). In other words: if you have X, you will have higher chance of having Y because X can guide/often guides Y. But it’s not a given. For example, if the person states that X fosters or motivates Y, there may be a higher chance that Y will occur, even though it is not an absolute certainty.
* (DR) Deterministic relationship: X requires/ought to promote Y (with X and Y being either morality or wisdom) or X is sufficient for Y and when X is present, Y will (always) follow.
* (FM) (1) Fixed/ Universal versus (2) malleable/ context-dependent relationship/association (0 = not applicable). This also applies to individual features. If both morality and wisdom are viewed as universal/fixed, their relationship by default will also be fixed (i.e., coded as 1). If one of the two features is context-dependent, it will be by definition a malleable/context-dependent relationship as well (i.e., coded as 2). If participants refer to malleability/evolution of relationship of morality and wisdom, it would be a 2. If participants state that morality and wisdom are unrelated, it will be coded as 0. Check forced-choice responses to see if participants mention them not to be related (in which case participants will not select any forced choice response son the prior question).
* PROCESS-MECH Theme: Wisdom as a process allowing moral action/outcome (even if not always). In other words, wisdom is a tool or a mechanism that allows us to achieve moral outcome/action. It is not about lifelong journey of life experiences leading to later-life development of moral character.
* PROCESS-LIFE Theme: Wisdom as a life-long/experiential process (of accumulating life experiences), which consequently contribute to cultivation of moral character (e.g., compassion, humility). It is not about situation-specific decisions concerning moral action.
* CONSTRUCT Theme: Constructivism – morals as a set of culturally-bounded rules/norms and wisdom as discerning how/when to apply them and/or to implement these rules/norms.

Chart, scatter chart

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**View of the relationship of morality and wisdom as malleable and context-dependent dominates. Further, scholars are more likely to view wisdom to be in the service of morality, rather than vice versa (though explicit mentioning of wisdom as a mechanism was rare). At the same time, almost the same number of people characterized the relationship taxonomically, with morality being part of wisdom. People were rather equally split in their probabilistic or deterministic view of the relationship.**

### Developmental

Chart

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### Social

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## Arguments of people who view morality as necessary for wisdom

We can examine open-ended responses among participants who indicated that morality is necessary for wisdom vs. not.

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One big difference concerns endorsement of probabilistic vs. deterministic claims. Folks who view morality as necessary for wisdom are more likely to be *deterministic* rather than *probabilistic*, whereas the reversal is true for those who don’t see morality as necessary for wisdom. Further folks who view morality as necessary for wisdom are more likely to consider the relationship in terms of a taxonomy, whereas people who don’t endorse the claim that morality is necessary for wisdom are more likely to view the relationship in functional terms (wisdom🡺morality).

## Arguments of people who view wisdom as necessary for morality

What about the reversal?

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Again, greater focus on deterministic vs. probabilistic relationship if one viewed wisdom as necessary for morality. Further, greater view of a functional relationship (wisdom🡺morality), and lower likelihood of endorsing a taxonomic relationship (morals being part of wisdom).

## Arguments of people who view morality as relevant for wisdom

Let’s look broader toward people who generally believe that morality is relevant for wisdom (vs. not).

Chart, scatter chart

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Folks who viewed morality as relevant to wisdom were less likely to think about the relationship in taxonomic terms and more likely to think about it in functional terms (specifically: wisdom 🡺 morality rather than other way around).

## Wisdom, moral intentions and moral actions (n = 92)

To what extent do psychological characteristics of wisdom depend on either moral intentions or actions? By intentions we mean desires and beliefs that behavior will lead to moral outcomes. By actions we mean behaviors undertaken to effect/achieve/obtain outcomes.

We will code responses on three dimensions:

* Intention: wisdom depends on moral intentions
* Action: wisdom depends on moral action
* MDW: morality depends on wisdom (reverse path)

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**More than half of the sample indicates that wisdom depends on moral intentions, with a somewhat smaller percentage (< 50%) indicating that wisdom depends on actions. Notably, a substantial group of people also spontaneously mentioned that morality depends on wisdom rather than vice versa! This observation is noteworthy, as we did not ask about this direction. This pattern mirrors the forced choice responses above, clarifying that there is more agreement about the dependency of wisdom on moral intentions rather than actions.**

# What characteristics do academics select as central to their working definition of wisdom?

Forced choice responses (n = 107)

Researchers were invited to select from a list of psychological characteristics previously identified as frequently mentioned in relation to wisdom (Grossmann et al., 2010). They were also asked to sort them in terms of different degree of psychological universality (Norenzayan & Heine, 2005). We can therefore look at characteristics selected in general, for different degree of universality (accessibility, existential, functional, non-universal), as well as weighted scores (based on position in each group.

First, we look at overall most frequently selected categories researchers viewed as relevant to their empirical model/view of wisdom.

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In total, **most frequently selected** characteristics of wisdom academics selected were open-mindedness/consideration of diverse perspectives, pursuit of truth and epistemic humility, followed by experiential knowledge, sympathy/compassion, seeing insight and meaning, as well as context-sensitivity. **Least frequently** selected features were declarative knowledge and humor.

# Wisdom and culture (n = 107)

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Declarative knowledge was chiefly selected as a **non-universal**. In contrast, seeking insight& meaning and uncertainty management, followed by balance of diverse interests) were most frequently selected **existential universals**. Open-mindedness/consideration of diverse perspectives and context-sensitivity, along with pursuit of truth were most frequently chosen **functional universals**, whereas experiential knowledge and sympathy/compassion were considered to be **accessibility universals**.

## Weighted ranking

Lower score = higher position within each group

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## Open-ended responses (subset: n = 98)

* Absolute relativism – definition of what is wisdom as culture-dependent, can only be understood through the eyes/experiences of the insider (emic).
* Universalism - Same set of mental processes, just the expression/manifestation varies (e.g., due to different emphasis in socialization), outsider viewpoint on the relationship of culture and wisdom. Culture is a moderator of expression (etic).
* Morally bounded relativism: Wisdom has both universal and culture-specific components. In particular, moral features of wisdom are culture-bound. Only give it a 1 *if* there are instances of relativism with respect to morality **BUT ALSO** the person is mentioning other (non-moral) features of wisdom being universal.
* Wisdom as a cultural competence.

Chart, scatter chart

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**Most scholars see wisdom in (culture-) relativist terms. At least one third views wisdom as a form of cultural competence.**

# Common wisdom model

# Familiar with the model (*n* = 43 out of 152; 28%)

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