

# The Effect of Sense of *Ibasho* and Sense of Authenticity on Mental Health: Comparison of Workplace, SNS and Third Places

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## Abstract

This study examined self-usefulness and authenticity in three different situations: the workplace and school, third places such as hobby groups and groups of friends from school days, and anonymous Social Networking Services (SNS). Furthermore, it investigated the relationship between the sense of *Ibasho* and mental health. Participants were recruited through a crowdsourcing website, with approximately 300 participants initially enrolled. Data from 290 participants (148 males, 142 females;  $M = 42.17$ ,  $SD = 8.79$ ) were analyzed. Self-usefulness and authenticity in each situation were assessed using the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* (Ishimoto, 2010) and statistical significance was examined. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each situation, confirming values of  $\alpha = .89$  or higher. Therefore, the analysis was conducted using the same subscale structures as in previous studies. A one-way ANOVA (within-subjects design) was performed to examine whether there were significant differences in self-usefulness and authenticity across the three situations. The results indicated that self-usefulness was significantly higher in third places than in the workplace and school, and higher in the workplace and school than in SNS. Additionally, authenticity was significantly higher in third places than in the workplace and school, and higher in SNS than in the workplace and school. These findings align with previous research, demonstrating significant differences in the self-usefulness and authenticity depending on the situation. In addition, the result was shown that lower levels of self-usefulness and authenticity were associated with a tendency for decreased mental health.

*Keywords:* *ibasho* (existential place), sense of *ibasho*, authenticity, mental health

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## Introduction

### Background

In modern Japanese society, where computers and smartphones are widespread, people are increasingly communicating with friends and others online, in addition to communicating in real life at places like work, school, and home, and in third places such as hobby groups and meeting places of friends with similar interests.

Furthermore, the spread of computers and smartphones has led to an increase in users of X (Twitter) and Instagram accounts using account names of their own choosing rather than their real names, and using these accounts anonymously. As a result, it is suggested that anonymous Social Networking Services (hereafter, SNS) such as X (Twitter), Instagram, and internet bulletin boards have become part of people's daily lives and a place to be.

### Translation of “*Ibasho*”

When translating the Japanese word *Ibasho* into English, it is rendered as *Ibasho* or *Ibasyo*. The difficulty of translating the Japanese word *Ibasho*, which includes psychological aspects, has been noted due to the different interpretations and definitions of *Ibasho* (Nakafuji, 2015).

In English, the most frequently used translations of the word *Ibasho* are Existential Place (Sugimoto & Shoji, 2006), “Psychological space we do not have rootless feeling” (Ishimoto, 2009), and Existential Place (Ishimoto, 2010).

This study uses the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* developed by Ishimoto (2010) to examine the sense of *Ibasho*, and will refer to it as *Ibasho* hereafter.

### Previous Research on Authenticity

The *Sense of Authenticity Scale* was developed, and it has been suggested that a sense of authenticity has a positive impact on psychological well-being (Ito & Kodama, 2005a). In addition, a negative correlation was observed between authenticity and depressive-anxious feelings and physical responses, and the relationship between authenticity and stress responses was clarified (Ito & Kodama, 2005b). Furthermore, a positive correlation was observed between authenticity and interpersonal relationships, and a negative correlation was also observed between avoiding people and being overly concerned about what other people think (Ito & Kodama, 2006).

Ishimoto (2010) developed the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* to measure the sense of *Ibasho* based on sense of authenticity and sense of self-usefulness. The *Sense of Ibasho Scale* consists of 13 items, including six items from the *Sense of Authenticity Scale* (Ito & Kodama, 2005a) to measure the sense of authenticity, and seven items to measure the sense of self-usefulness. In addition, the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* has been reported to measure the sense of *Ibasho* in situations (e.g., friendships, family relationships) that align with the research purpose (Ishimoto, 2010).

Fujino (2017) used the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* to measure the sense of *Ibasho* on SNS and compared it with the sense of *Ibasho* in real life. Additionally, the study examined the

relationship between interpersonal relationships and well-being among friends who interact only on SNS and those in real life.

The *Sense of Ibasho Scale*, as demonstrated in previous studies, can measure the sense of *Ibasho* in various situations and will be used to measure the sense of *Ibasho* in this study.

### **Definition of Third Places**

This study defines third places as locations where individuals interact with others in their real lives outside of work, school and home (e.g., hobby groups, groups of friends from school days, lessons and volunteer activities). Given that many individuals may have multiple third places, this study utilizes the term “third places” in the plural form.

### **Purpose of This Study**

This study uses the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* to examine self-usefulness and authenticity in three situations: the workplace, anonymous SNS, and third places. Furthermore, this study aims to examine the relationship between the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* and mental health.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants were required to meet the following eligibility criteria: (a) be between 20 and 59 years old, (b) be a native Japanese speaker and able to participate in the survey with a high level of concentration, (c) regularly use an anonymous SNS, actively posting content and interacting with others, excluding those who only browsed the accounts of actors, actresses, or companies, or who registered and used their real names, (d) perceive themselves as having third places in real life outside of their home, workplace or school, and SNS communities, and (e) have read and agreed to the survey purpose on the CrowdWorks, Inc. (hereafter, CrowdWorks) recruitment page or Google Form.

In the CrowdWorks recruitment page and the Google Form, participants were explicitly informed that a third places refers to hobby groups, groups of friends from school days, or similar social settings.

The survey was completed by 298 participants who met the eligibility criteria. As a data quality check, eight participants who provided responses other than the designated answer to the satisficing screening item “Please do not select this item” were excluded from the analysis. Consequently, the final sample comprised 290 participants (148 males, 142 females), with a mean age of 42.17 years ( $M = 42.17$ ,  $SD = 8.79$ ). After confirming that the response form had been completed, participants were compensated with 60 yen (JPY) through CrowdWorks.

## **Measures**

### ***Measurement of the Sense of “Ibasha” at Workplace and School***

For the 13 items of the *Sense of Ibasha Scale*, developed by Ishimoto (2010), participants were asked to respond to each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “does not apply (1)” to “applies (5)”, with the following instruction:

The item assessing the sense of *Ibasha* at work and school read: “Please think about yourself when you were interacting with others at work or school. To what extent did the following statements apply to you?”

### ***Measurement of the Sense of “Ibasha” in Third Places***

For the 13 items of the *Sense of Ibasha Scale*, developed by Ishimoto (2010), participants were asked to respond to each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “does not apply (1)” to “applies (5)”, with the following instruction:

The item assessing the sense of *Ibasha* in third places read: “Please think about yourself when you were spending time interacting with other people in your third places. To what extent did the following statements apply to you?”

### ***Measurement of the Sense of “Ibasha” on SNS***

For the 13 items of the *Sense of Ibasha Scale*, developed by Ishimoto (2010), participants were asked to respond to each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “does not apply (1)” to “applies (5)”, with the following instruction:

The item assessing the sense of *Ibasha* on SNS read: “Please think about yourself when you were spending time interacting with others on anonymous SNS. To what extent did the following statements apply to you?”

### ***Measurement of Mental Health***

For the 10 items of the *Japanese version of the Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale (K10)*, developed by Furukawa et al. (2003), participants were asked to respond to each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “never (1)” to “always (5)”, with the following instruction:

The items assessing psychological distress read: “Please select the number that best applied to you for each item.”

## **Procedure**

In November 2024, a recruitment webpage was posted on the website operated by CrowdWorks to recruit survey participants, and approximately 300 participants were recruited. Participants accessed the survey form, which was created using Google Forms, from their personal computers or smartphones at their convenience and completed the questionnaire.

## Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 (Windows 64-bit).

## Ethical Considerations

This study, participants were recruited from the CrowdWorks survey recruitment page, and those who provided informed consent by agreeing to the consent section on the Google Form were considered to be survey participants. In addition, the survey recruitment page and response form explicitly stated that participation in the survey was voluntary and that there would be no adverse consequences for choosing not to respond or discontinuing participation.

Furthermore, this study was conducted after thorough deliberation by psychological researchers and medical professionals to ensure that ethical considerations were adequately addressed in the survey items and content and the process of obtaining informed consent.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient Calculation

The mean and standard deviation of the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* and the *K10*, as well as Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , were calculated (Table 1). The self-usefulness subscale of the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* demonstrated high internal consistency across Workplace and School, Third places, and SNS ( $\alpha = .90 - .93$ ). The authenticity subscale also demonstrated high internal consistency in all situations ( $\alpha = .89 - .92$ ). Additionally, the *K10* demonstrated high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .95$ ). Therefore, the subscale structures established in previous studies were retained for subsequent analyses.

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach's Alpha*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$
<b>Workplace, School</b>				<b>Third Places</b>			
Self-usefulness	3.25	0.79	.90	Self-usefulness	3.36	0.85	.92
Authenticity	3.34	0.96	.92	Authenticity	3.91	0.79	.92
<b>SNS</b>				<b>Mental Health</b>			
Self-usefulness	2.52	0.88	.93	K10	22.11	10.16	.95
Authenticity	3.49	0.82	.89				

### Inter-Subscale Correlation

Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships among the subscales of each scale (Table 2).

#### *Self-Usefulness*

A correlational analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed significant positive relationships between workplace and school and third places ( $r = .60, p < .001$ ), workplace and school and SNS ( $r = .47, p < .001$ ), and third places and SNS ( $r = .53, p < .001$ ).

### *Authenticity*

A correlational analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed significant positive relationships between workplace and school and third places ( $r = .46, p < .001$ ), workplace and school and SNS ( $r = .34, p < .001$ ), and third places and SNS ( $r = .49, p < .001$ ).

### *Sense of "Ibasho" and Mental Health*

Self-usefulness was weakly to moderately negatively correlated with workplace and school and *K10* ( $r = -.42, p < .001$ ), third places and *K10* ( $r = -.32, p < .001$ ), and SNS and *K10* ( $r = -.17, p = .003$ ).

Authenticity was weakly to moderately negatively correlated with workplace and school and *K10* ( $r = -.39, p < .001$ ), third places and *K10* ( $r = -.32, p < .001$ ), and SNS and *K10* ( $r = -.21, p < .001$ ).

**Table 2**  
*Inter-subscale Correlations*

		II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Workplace, School	I : Self-usefulness	.69 **	.60 **	.45 **	.47 **	.35 **	-.42 **
	II : Authenticity	—	.43 **	.46 **	.33 **	.34 **	-.39 **
Third Places	III : Self-usefulness		—	.63	.53 **	.33 **	-.32 **
	IV : Authenticity			—	.30 **	.49 **	-.32 **
SNS	V : Self-usefulness				—	.44 **	-.17 **
	VI : Authenticity					—	-.21 **
Mental Health	VII : K10						—

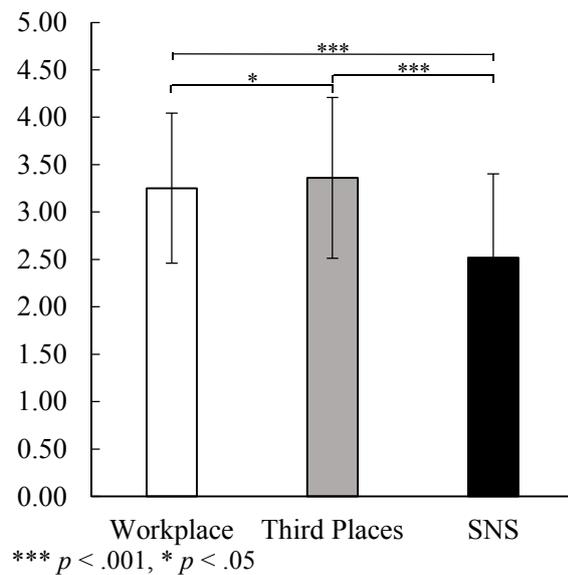
\*\*  $p < .01$

### **Comparison of Three Situations: One-Way ANOVA (Within-Subjects Design)**

#### *Self-Usefulness*

To examine whether there were significant differences in self-usefulness scores in the three situations, a one-way ANOVA (within-subjects design) was conducted. Mauchly's sphericity test was significant ( $p = .006$ ), and the sphericity assumption was rejected. Consequently, when the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied, a significant main effect was found ( $F(1.93, 558.45) = 182.62, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .39$ ). The results of Bonferroni's multiple comparisons test are shown in Figure 1. As depicted in Figure 1, self-usefulness scores were significantly higher for workplace and school than SNS, for third places than workplace and school, and for third places than SNS. Significant differences were found between workplace and school and third places ( $p = .038$ ), workplace and school and SNS ( $p < .001$ ), and third places and SNS ( $p < .001$ ).

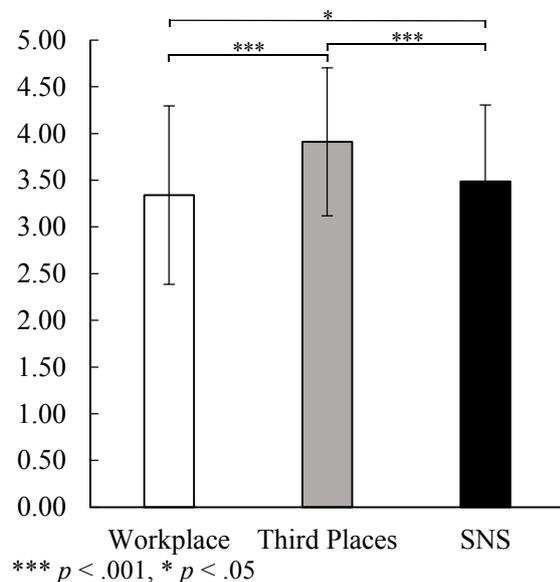
**Figure 1**  
*Self-Usefulness*



**Authenticity**

To examine whether there were significant differences in Authenticity scores in the three situations, a one-way ANOVA (within-subjects design) was conducted. Mauchly's sphericity test was significant ( $p < .001$ ), and the sphericity assumption was rejected. Consequently, when the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied, a significant main effect was found ( $F(1.88, 542.53) = 59.56, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .17$ ). The results of Bonferroni's multiple comparisons test are shown in Figure 2. As depicted in Figure 2, authenticity scores were significantly higher for SNS than workplace and school, for third places than workplace and school, and for third places than SNS. Significant differences were found between workplace and school and third places ( $p < .001$ ), workplace and school and SNS ( $p = .045$ ), and third places and SNS ( $p < .001$ ).

**Figure 2**  
*Authenticity*



## Discussion

### Summary of Findings

This study used the *Sense of Ibasho Scale* to examine self-usefulness and authenticity in three situations: the workplace and school, anonymous SNS, and third places. Furthermore, this study examined the relationship between the sense of *Ibasho* and mental health.

First, the internal consistency of the subscales of the *Sense of Ibasho Scale*, self-usefulness and authenticity, was examined. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were high across three situations ( $\alpha \geq .89$ ). Additionally, the internal consistency of the *K10* was similarly high. Therefore, the subscale structures established in previous studies (Furukawa et al., 2003; Ishimoto, 2010) were retained for analysis.

The results of the one-way ANOVA (within-subjects design) indicated that self-usefulness was significantly higher in third places than in the workplace and school, higher in the workplace and school than in SNS, and higher in third places than in SNS. Additionally, authenticity was significantly higher in third places than in the workplace and school, higher in SNS than in the workplace and school, and higher in third places than in SNS.

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a negative correlation between self-usefulness (workplace and school, third places, SNS) and mental health. In addition, a negative correlation was observed between authenticity (workplace and school, third places, SNS) and mental health.

### Interpretation and Comparison With Previous Studies

In this study, negative correlations were observed between self-usefulness and mental health across all situations. Similarly, a negative correlation was also found between authenticity and mental health. These results are consistent with those of Sugiura & Ashihara (2025), whose study also used a similar scale. Additionally, as a relationship has been identified between the Sense of Authenticity Scale and stress responses (Ito & Kodama, 2005b), it is suggested that lower levels of self-usefulness and authenticity may contribute to poorer mental health.

Self-usefulness was significantly higher in third places than in the workplace and school, and this may be attributed to the fact that individuals experience a stronger sense of authenticity and perceive themselves as having a social role in third places.

Previous studies have indicated that people feel more like themselves when they are fulfilling a social role (Turner, 1976). This suggests that individuals may feel a stronger sense of authenticity in third places because they perceive themselves as having a role to play there, which in turn contributes to higher self-usefulness in third places compared to the workplace and school. Furthermore, Fujino (2017) also found that the score for real-life was significantly higher than that for SNS, suggesting the strength of the relationship.

### Implications and Future Directions

In this study, participants were recruited from a crowdsourcing website. As a result, it was difficult to control variables such as employment status and working hours. It is suggested

that future studies examine this limitation by controlling for employment status, including full-time, part-time, and freelance work.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial for future studies to explore the relationship between the use of anonymous SNS and the sense of *Ibasho* by examining whether users primarily interact with specific individuals or engage with a broader, unspecified audience on these SNS.

Additionally, on SNS, it has been shown that there is a link between excessive vanity and SNS addiction, as people present a version of themselves that differs from their real-life persona (Ninomiya, 2017). It has also been suggested that expressing one's true self can lead to others becoming disillusioned or fearing social rejection (Masaki, 2020). Therefore, it is considered important to examine how to enhance mental health from the perspective of SNS addiction and authenticity on SNS.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, a comparative analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between mental health, self-usefulness and authenticity in the workplace and school, anonymous SNS, and third places. The results of the analysis showed that the scores for third places were the highest in all situations, suggesting that the sense of *Ibasho* tends to be highest when individuals engage in activities within hobby groups or friend groups. In addition, the results showed that self-usefulness and authenticity were negatively correlated with mental health in all situations. These findings suggest that the sense of *Ibasho* in third places may contribute to better mental health.

### **Conflict of Interest Disclosure**

The authors have no conflicts of interest directly relevant to the content of this study.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) and DeepL Translator (DeepL SE) for translation from Japanese into English to improve readability and language accuracy. After using these tools, the author carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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