

# Exploration of subjective well-beings: does people's life assessment matter?

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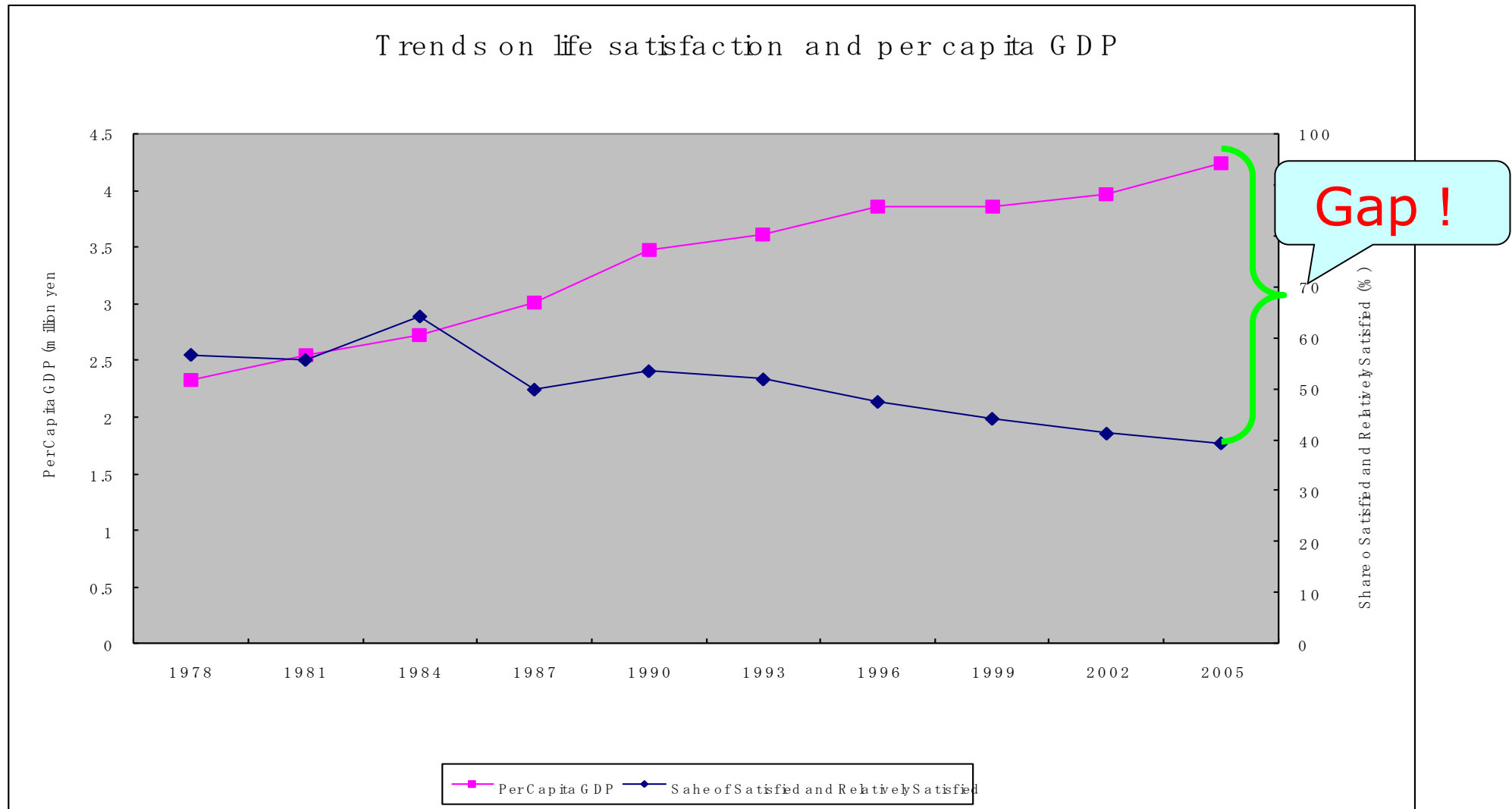
Panel 3: Happiness Research and Implications: Global  
Perspectives

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# Background

- Development: people's well-beings as its ultimate goal
  - MDGs summit in September 2010: Bhutan's PM (Jigme Thinley) proposed 'Happiness' as the ninth goal.
  - Growing consensus to respect one's happiness rather than mere pursuit of GDP
  - Sen–Stiglitz–Foutossi (2009) influence felt in Japan, too.

# Happiness Paradox in Japan



# Japanese Government conducted a Happiness Survey

- In 2010, the Japanese government conducted a survey on SWBs (happiness/life satisfaction) to start some work on measures of well-beings.
  - On average, the Japanese happiness is 6.47 (n=2895)
  - Women > Men
  - Older less happy...

# Why not GDP?

- Important to test if indeed GDP is not really effective to reflect social reality.
  - ➔ To examine if alternative objective measures could be effective enough to capture people's well-beings

# GDP–SWB vs. HDI–SWB in Japan

- Correlation tests reveal that:
  - GDP–SWB is much weaker than HDI–SWB.
  - Changes in HDI and those in social and economic indicators such as unemployment, social misery (suicide rates), and TFR (population growth) are correlated (but not for GDP)
  - HDI can be regarded as an indirect measures for assessing societal conditions and may reflect livelihood condition better than GDP.
  - Suggest to use alternative measures to assess social progress.

# People's life assessment and life satisfaction

- Another practical issue is how one can incorporate SWBs (happiness/life satisfaction) component into local development plan, policy-choice and action.
  - ➔ To examine how people's life assessment helps to understand life satisfaction.
  - ➔ Let us look into this by focusing on a project in the Hyogo prefecture in Japan.

# People's life assessment and life satisfaction

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  - ➔ Let us look into this by focusing on a project in the Hyogo prefecture in Japan.



# Hyogo Prefecture

Population: 5.59million

Area: 8,395km<sup>2</sup>



# The Hyogo Prefecture's Vision 21 Project

- Development of the Hyogo Vision project (started 2001):
  - Hyogo's vision formed by the prefectural government through the vision committee members (focus group, etc.)
  - 2030 as the target year
  - 4 key domains: creative civil society, vital work, diversified interactions, environmental priority were identified by the government in 2001.

# The Hyogo Prefecture's Vision 21 Project

- Need for indicators to monitor the vision's implementation
  - ➔ Survey on people's life in order to realize "Beautiful Hyogo" (since 2002)
- Can we develop a tool?
  - ➔ Essential to learn how people's life assessment and life satisfaction are related and in what way.

# Questionnaire-based sample survey

- People's Life Feeling and Satisfaction Survey data (2002–2010 annually) in the Hyogo prefecture
- Type of questions (in 2008: 71 questions) included are:
  - (1) questions asking one's own behavior, practice and knowledge,
  - (2) questions asking one's perspectives on own community, and
  - (3) questions asking own perception over the society in large.

# Creating “Life Assessment Domains”

- Using the data collected by this survey, calculation of scores for the three different groups by factor analysis (varimax rotation, eigenvalue more than 1):
  - **Personal** Life Assessment Domains:
    - 9 domains are identified
  - **Community** Life Assessment Domains:
    - 4 domains are identified
  - **Societal** Life Assessment Domains:
    - 2 domains are identified

# 15 principal components

- **PLAD**: Community Action, Environmental consciousness, Modern Culture, Community Pride, Work, Safe Livelihood, Natural Environment, Health, Secure Livelihood
- **CLAD**: Convenience, Social Inclusion, Safe Clean community, Economic Vitality
- **SLAD**: Hope and Challenging, Justice and Safe

# Life Satisfaction and Life Assessment: Ordinal Logit

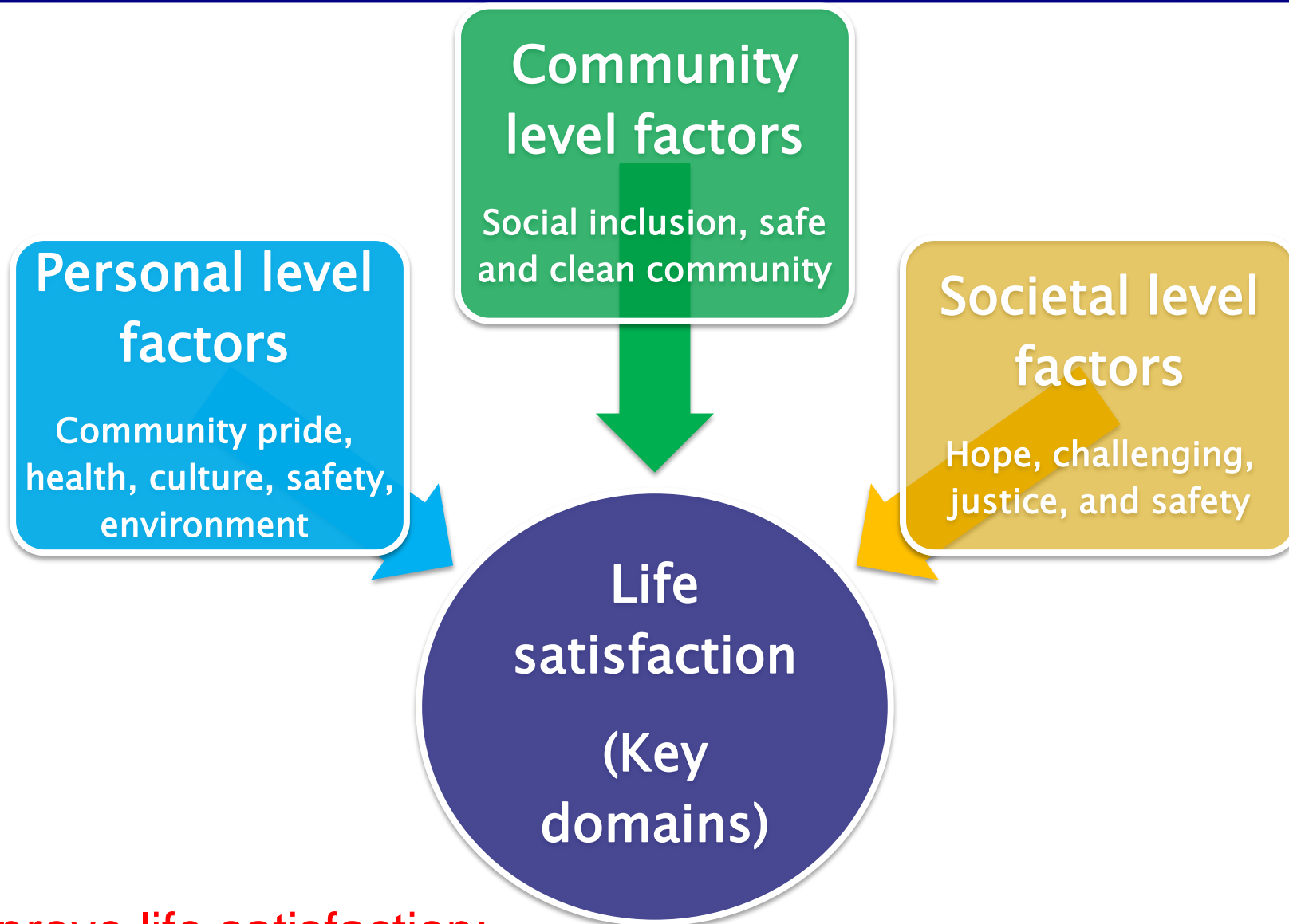
- Significant factors for life satisfaction (ordinal logit):
  - Controlled individual attributes (age, gender, year of residence, job types, household structure, marital status)
  - Domains affecting life satisfaction include personal, community and society.

# 15 principal components: significant factors

- **PLAD**: Community Action, Environmental consciousness, **Modern Culture, Community Pride, Work, Safe Livelihood**, Natural Environment, Health, Secure Livelihood
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# Different levels of life assessment matter to one's life satisfaction



To improve life satisfaction:  
individual-based improvement is not enough! → more research required.

## Well-being

Objective

Subjective

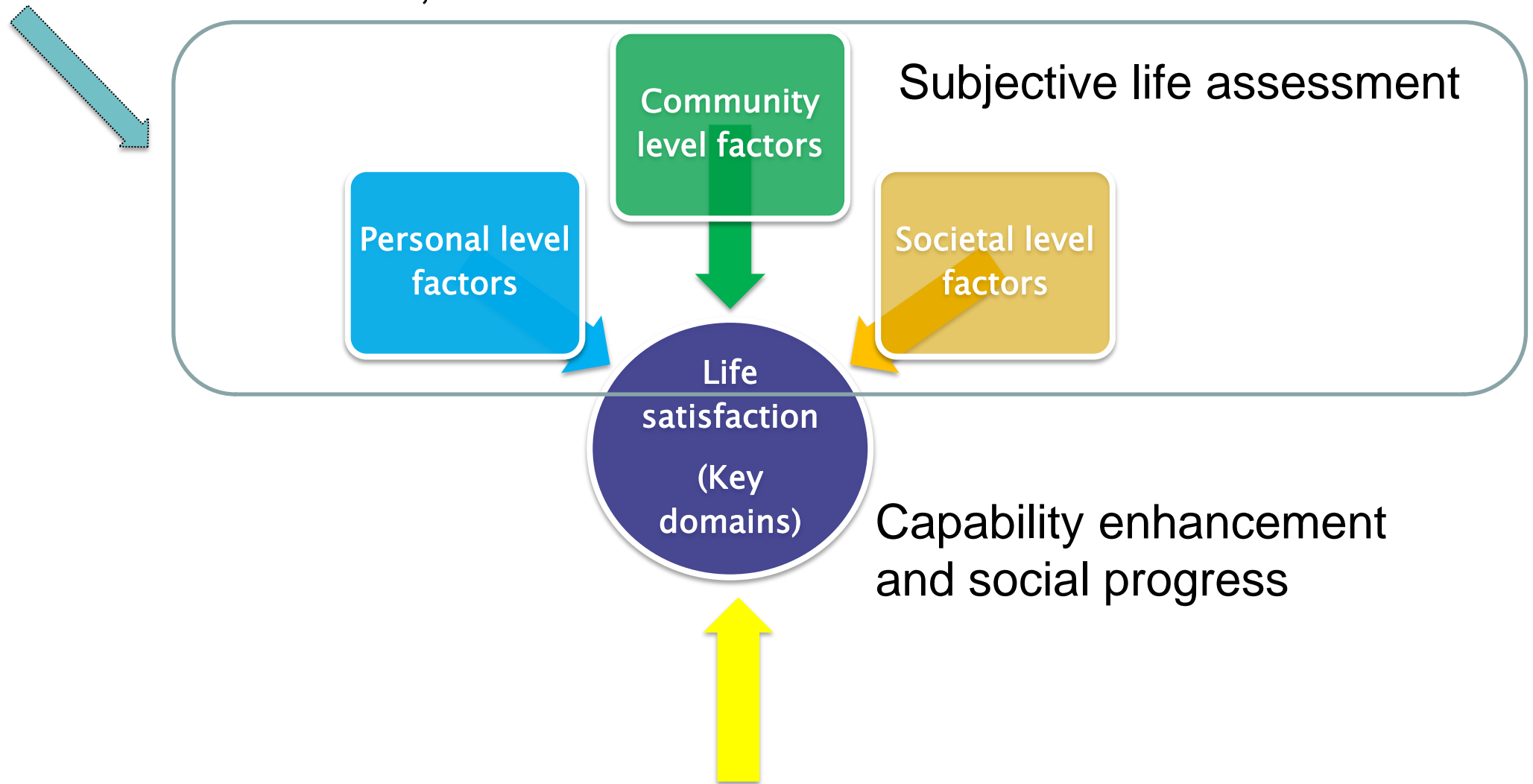
Various Indicators

Perceptions by  
domains

Open-ended Views

# Life satisfaction and human development (capability concern)

Individual attributes, etc.



Objective community/societal measures (HDI or Well-being Index, etc.)

# Life Assessment and SWBs

- Use of subjective survey regularly would help us to understand how people assess their life.
- Especially, it would be better to cover different levels (personal, community, and societal) and tracing changes in livelihood, which are influenced by the type of lifestyle.
- Needs to have both objective data and subjective assessment data to carefully examine people's well-beings (not enough without each other)
- Local well-being data/index? For whom and for what?
  - Local-based feedback system to people and government, which assist “development process.”
- Asking questions own happiness or life satisfaction gives an opportunity to reflect own life)

ขอบคุณ ครับ

Thank you very much  
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