

Abstracts

Current Status of Happiness Research: Prescription for Uncertainty about the Future

Kunio Urakawa (Kyushu University)

The purpose of this paper is to focus on previous researchers' analyses of various factors affecting human well-being and to describe the implications of their research. Particularly, this paper focuses on the relationship between family, neighbors, and happiness; the relationship between labor and happiness by considering the diversity of family lifestyles and the change in regional environments; and the current status of polarization of employment. According to previous research, there are great impacts by human interactions, such as with family and neighbors, on happiness level. This has significant implications in Japan because of the continuing increase in the single-person households, late marriages, no marriages, and the deterioration of regional communities. In addition, it can be said that regional disparity, mainly expressed in the employment environment and inequality of income distribution, may greatly affect the average well-being level along with the high correlation of job status and happiness. Modern people tend to focus on the demand of conspicuous goods and services. However, we need to make a society where people allocate their time schedules more efficiently in order to achieve truly continuous happiness by reconsidering labor conditions and the content of leisure activities. In order to achieve their goals, we need to make an objective happiness index based on certain standards as well as asking people about their subjective well-being and looking into the cause and the transition of that index. More well-refined research on the well-being index could provide us with necessary components for reconstructing a better society.

Uncertain Future: The Anxiety of Japanese Youth

Shingo Kukimoto (The Institute for Research on Household Economics)

This article analyzes the anxiety about the future of Japanese youth. Research conducted on young men and women aged from 25 to 39 shows that more than half of the respondents are anxious about their uncertain career outlook and take a pessimistic view of the future. Their answers to the free-answer question about their future career plans show both the uneasiness of staying as they are and the intention to move on to a new stage, i. e., changing jobs, getting married, or becoming a regular employee. Under the current stagnant economic conditions in Japan, however, the respondents do not feel that their future careers are sufficiently assured, and some of them are careful about moving on and remain in the same position. This indicates that it takes a long time to settle their careers and that youth are forced to face the anxiety for a fairly long time. The anxiety of youth is no longer associated just with adolescence but continues to be a task for them until their 30s.

The Role of Social Security Systems for Modern Workers

Eri Kasagi (Kyusyu University)

Social security plays two possible roles for workers. First, it offers a safety net, which would guard workers from poverty and secure the minimum standard of living when they are indeed in poverty. Secondly, it provides a pension scheme, and only the fact that such a system exists can work as a kind of relief for workers who are even not actually qualified as recipients. In these two aspects, the Japanese system does not work perfectly when facing modern workers as well as modern society. For the first role, it is necessary to change the traditional idea of a safety net by the job or social security and to strengthen or diversify social benefits like a housing allowance or a family allowance, which can be accessible without leaving work. For the second role, stronger control of the legislature's discretion is needed to assure the stability and continuity of the system.