

Empirical Study of Multidimensional Poverty and Well-being: Evidence from Japan

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論 文 内 容 の 要 旨

A decreasing trend of extreme poverty has prevailed worldwide because of worldwide economic growth and international efforts at poverty reduction such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) advocated by the United Nations. Nevertheless, as many researchers have pointed out, the benefits of growth have not been equally distributed. Consequently, globalization has been raising inequality and poverty in economically developed countries. According to recent OECD statistics, the relative poverty ratios of most OECD countries have increased from the mid-1980s to the mid-2010s.

Economists and policymakers have long been interested in income distribution, partially because changes in income disparity and poverty are expected to affect numerous social outcomes such as national health, educational achievement, social mobility, trust, and crime. Reducing excessive income disparity and poverty is the consensus choice of policy for building a harmonious society.

Nevertheless, as Amartya Sen pointed out with his capability approach, inequality and poverty include multidimensional aspects. In reality, shortages of nonmonetary factors such as leisure time spent with family members and social relations in society sometimes play a more important role in human well-being than monetary factors such as income. Therefore, for poverty analysis, nonmonetary dimensions such as time and social relations should be regarded as important dimensions.

Based on the problem consciousness explained above, this dissertation presents an investigation of multidimensional poverty and well-being in Japan. Specifically, it presents the following assessments: (1) what multiple poverty situations people are facing, along with socioeconomic factors, influence people's well-being and daily activities; (2) what socioeconomic factors affect multidimensional poverty including the time dimension; and (3) whether higher education can truly reduce the risk of multidimensional poverty.

This dissertation comprises six main chapters. Chapter 1 describes recent trends of inequality and poverty around the world and, after reviewing earlier reports of the relevant literature, presents research objectives and the potential contributions of this dissertation. Additionally, it provides a theoretical framework for the analysis of multidimensional poverty and well-being in Japan.

Chapter 2 measures the multidimensional poverty index based on the method used by Alkire and Foster (2011) using individual data from the Japanese Study of Stratification, Health, Income, and Neighborhood (J-SHINE; 2010, 2012). After setting three dimensions of poverty (income, living time, and social inclusion), the index presents multidimensional poverty effects on key health indicators of self-rated health (SRH) and psychological distress (K6), while controlling other important variables. Results obtained from the analysis confirm the practical relevance of multidimensional poverty for predicting health indicators.

Chapter 3 describes an examination of the relations between income and time poverty, and physical activities, using the household micro-dataset in Japan. The estimation results obtained from econometric models reveal that time poverty is closely associated with low frequency of reading and short duration of sleeping. Indeed, analysis results show differences between women and men. For men, individuals who are deprived in two dimensions of poverty tend not to participate in sports. In addition, lack of leisure time might prevent them from actively reading, while getting less sleep. For women, time poverty is an important determinant of visiting interesting places and reading actively.

Chapter 4 presents estimation of the socioeconomic causes of interdependent multidimensional (IMD) poverty by considering two interdependent dimensions: income and leisure time. Using panel data from a Japan Household Panel Survey (JHPS2011-JHPS2014), this chapter presents specific quantification of the degree of substitution between income and leisure time via the estimation of CES-utility function, following the methodology provided by Merz and Rathjen (2014). After the quantification, we examine socioeconomic factors that influence each IMD poverty regime. Results suggest that not a few single-parent households confront interdependent multidimensional poverty. In addition, full-time employed couples with preschool children particularly confront IMD poverty, using their incomes to compensate for their time deficit.

Chapter 5 investigates the effects of university enrollment and graduation on interdependent multidimensional poverty. Using the analytical method called propensity score matching, we examine the true effects of college entrance and graduation on the risks of income poverty and IMD poverty. Estimation results suggest a poverty reduction effect of a college degree for men for both income poverty and IMD poverty. However, for women, the effect of a college degree on IMD poverty reduction is much weaker than in the case of men. It can be considered that the difficulty of work–life balance and low wage levels of female workers affect the results for Japan.

Chapter 6 presents a summary and conclusions of this dissertation. The conclusions support the view that multiple dimensions of poverty are more closely associated with people's well-being such as self-rated health and physical activities. Particularly, the time dimension plays an extremely important role in Japan because not a few groups are regarded as time poor. Policy implications are suggested based on empirical evidence.