

Empirical Analysis of Prosocial Behaviors, Social Capital and Subjective Well-being

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<https://hdl.handle.net/2324/5068162>

出版情報 : Kyushu University, 2022, 博士 (経済学), 課程博士
バージョン :

権利関係 : Public access to the fulltext file is restricted for unavoidable reason (3)

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論 文 名 : Empirical Analysis of Prosocial Behaviors, Social Capital and Subjective Well-being
(向社会的行動とソーシャル・キャピタルが主観的厚生に与える影響)

区 分 : 甲

論 文 内 容 の 要 旨

Abstract

This dissertation includes five chapters. Chapter 1 presents theoretical knowledge and existing research related to social capital, pro-social behavior, and subjective well-being. It also summarizes discussions of their relation by economists, sociologists, and psychologists in their respective fields, with elucidation of patterns of people's social behaviors and their associated influences. Earlier studies have revealed that social capital affects economic development, technological innovation, job hunting, status through social relation networks, improvement of human capital, good governance in politics, and the flow of migrant workers. Researchers have applied the theories of their respective disciplines to explore effects of pro-social behavior on subjective well-being. From different perspectives, they have confirmed positive effects. This chapter has mainly emphasized the role of prosocial behaviors in considering the relations of social capital and subjective well-being. Based on the theoretical framework including the three variables presented above, the author examines details of the mechanism in Chapters 2–4.

Chapter 2 uses the Resource Generator to ascertain an individual's accumulated social capital. Moreover, this study explores how social capital influences donation behaviors of two types from different motivations (charitable donations and the Hometown Tax donation (HTD)) after controlling for other socioeconomic factors. Results indicate that connecting with friends who help when needed positively affects donation behavior. The presence of professional acquaintances can positively affect charitable donation. The existence of human networks that support daily life and career has positive effects on the use of the HTD system. Nevertheless, these human networks have little effect on pure donations without financial rewards such as tax credits. Along with increasing socioeconomic globalization, the roles of voluntary redistribution and social capital can be expected to continue their increase.

Chapter 3 uses China Family Panel Study (CFPS) data to assess money-helping behavior effects on helpers' subjective well-being. After categorizing recipients based on different interpersonal relations, the author analyzes how a helper's helping behavior affects their subjective well-being when facing recipients from dissimilar social relation groups. Additionally, the author introduces a set of control variables related to social capital and personality traits in the econometric model to avoid endogeneity problems caused by individual characteristics. After the author also compares regression results of happiness and life satisfaction as a robustness check, socioeconomic factors such as individual income, age, and education are evaluated. Results demonstrate that Chinese people feel less happy when providing financial support to strangers, friends, colleagues, and even parents, which differs from results reported from other helping

behavior studies. However, giving money to children markedly improves parents' subjective well-being in all socioeconomic categories. Furthermore, women report slightly higher scores of both happiness and life satisfaction from helping their children than men do.

Chapter 4, using an internet survey conducted in 2021, presents examination of how various pro-social behaviors and social capital affect feelings of poverty. The survey included examination of demographic variables such as gender, age, marital status, and residence, as well as socioeconomic variables that include income, education level, and job status. According to the estimation results, variables related to social capital and social trust were significantly negatively correlated with subjective poverty for both men and women. Concretely, regarding prosocial behaviors, the risk of subjective poverty is lower if people participate in community-based activities, religion-related activities, and non-charitable donations such as political donation compared to those who did not. However, some prosocial behaviors such as voluntary activities and charitable donations seem to exacerbate the subjective poverty of some specific populations.

Chapter 5 summarizes the preceding chapters. After controlling for socioeconomic factors such as income, age, geography, marital status, fertility, and personality, social capital was shown to have a significant positive effect on pro-social behaviors of different types. Among them, professional acquaintances and connecting with friends who help when needed positively affect donation behavior. In addition, social capital on social trust and human networks and various prosocial behaviors generally increase people's subjective well-being, reduce subjective poverty, and contribute to improving people's welfare. Effects of social capital and prosocial behavior on subjective well-being can be explained partly by conventional theories. However, the estimation results reveal a gap separating the theory and empirical results. Future research must advance discussion of its mechanisms and analytical methods.