

Title	デジタル社会にける高齢者の社会参加と社会的孤立の関連性について —高齢者間の「お金中心」から「心豊か中心」の社会構築に向けて—
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Abstract

As the COVID-19 pandemic prolongs and the severity of large-scale natural disasters and international instability increases, the societal values are greatly unsettled. People have come to prioritize maintaining a state of "happiness", "well-being" and overall physical and mental health more than ever before. The aging population and the issue of lonely deaths in Japan have a negative impact on the happiness of elderly individuals. These social problems are also related to the low internet usage rate and ownership of digital devices among the elderly. Elderly individuals who can use computers and smartphones to access the internet have more opportunities for social participation and tend to have more friends compared to those who cannot use such technology. They can also enrich their cultural experiences through video sites and e-books. Generally, there are long-lasting and fleeting forms of happiness, and the satisfaction derived from relative goods, such as money, status, or possessions that can be compared with others, differs from the satisfaction derived from non-relative goods, such as health, autonomy, or freedom, which cannot be easily compared with others. In other words, it seems that achieving a well-balanced state where each of these elements is interconnected is crucial for experiencing happiness, and having social connections and interactions plays a significant role in that regard.

When elderly individuals distance themselves from the digital society, there is a risk of social isolation progressing. Social isolation not only diminishes the happiness of the elderly themselves but may also lead to various problems such as mutual dependence between older and younger generations, the erosion of values regarding the sanctity of life, stagnation in consumption among younger generations, and the acceleration of declining birth rates. The information gap can become a matter of life and death when the health condition of the elderly deteriorates. Factors that deeply contribute to the happiness felt by the elderly are strongly correlated with "warm interactions with close people" and "frequency of being thanked." When they are recognized and appreciated by those around them, they no longer feel inadequate and become more conscious of their own self-worth.

This research places emphasis on the happiness of elderly individuals and investigates practical issues through social surveys to explore solutions for serious social problems from the following perspectives. Firstly, it is believed that there is a tendency to prioritize spiritual fulfillment and sustainability over material wealth. Secondly, many elderly individuals may face challenging circumstances such as decreased income and social isolation, or a lack of support from others. Conversely, some may use the internet to develop new hobbies, establish close connections with distant neighbors, become aware of issues in their immediate surroundings, actively participate in society, and encounter diverse opinions. This can lead to a moderation of their thinking, improvement in maintaining their health, and enhancement of their autonomy. Consequently, people may shift their focus towards self-transcendence and pay more attention to social issues and their resolutions, guided by a foundation of altruism. This could potentially lead to the realization of a sustainable and happy elderly life.