

Social Capital and Mental Health among Displaced Residents from Futaba Town, Fukushima

Keiko Iwasaki[†] and Yasuyuki Sawada[‡]

January 2014

Abstract

While social capital has been gaining great attention as a key factor in facilitating recovery of the disaster affected areas, to best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted in the case of the displaced towns in Fukushima due to the nuclear power plant fallout. To bridge this gap in the literature, we measure and analyze social capital and mental health of displaced residents from Futaba town of Fukushima. There are three important empirical findings of our analysis. First, our results show that, among the displaced residents, social capital has been seriously deteriorated and the average level of mental stress has been unusually high if we compare it with that of all prefectures. Second, we also found that having less health damage, having more income, and having high social capital captured by “general trust” play important roles in keeping good mental health. Also, we found that having less health damage and having more neighbors from Futaba town act as significant determinants of social capital. Finally, the significant deterioration of mental health due to loss of homes provides us with a direct test of the reference dependent utility.

Keywords: Mental Health; K6; Social Capital; Disaster; Fukushima Nuclear Accident; Reference Dependent Utility

JEL classification: Q54; I14; C13

[†] Graduate school of Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo, 3-8-1 Komaba, Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-8902, Japan. Email address: keikoiwasaki0218@gmail.com

[‡] Faculty of Economics, University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0033, Japan. Email address: sawada@e.u-tokyo.ac.jp