

2. Comprehensive Research on Lifelong Health Education Aimed at Improving Basic Physical Stamina

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(1) Purpose and Aim of Study

The purpose of this study is to collect basic materials and information on developing and providing learning systems on health education to all age groups, including children, adults, and the elderly, with the aim of developing policies for supporting health education from the perspective of promoting voluntary learning activities for leading healthy and happy lives and understanding the importance of human life and its preservation. Toward this end, this study considers learning systems that (a) provide parents with knowledge and skills for promoting the health of children, (b) provide workers with knowledge for creating a safe work environment and for maintaining their health, and (c) provide information on how the elderly can lead healthy lives in a super-aged society.

(2) Outline of Research Results

Some of the research results of this study are as follows.

- At the elementary school level, awareness of health issues and health habits is very high and a certain level of healthy living is maintained. However, as children move up through lower and upper secondary school, healthy habits begin to be lost and health awareness diminishes.
- At the elementary school level, 13% say that they are “not healthy.” This ratio rises to 17% in upper secondary school. On the other hand, 42% of elementary school children say that they are “healthy,” compared to 46% of upper secondary school students. Thus, both indicators rise slightly between elementary and upper secondary school. Among upper secondary school students, there is a notable polarity between those who believe they are healthy and those who don't.

- School-age children were asked whether they practiced the habit of “early to bed and early to rise.” Even at the elementary school level, only about 40% responded positively. This ratio fell to about 20% among upper secondary school students. Results of university student surveys confirm this tendency and point to even greater irregularity in sleeping habits.
- At the upper secondary school level, about 40% do not find schoolwork interesting. About one-fourth say that they are unable to properly understand the subject matter.
- Children with good health habits tend to enjoy school life more and tend to have a better understanding of the subject matter.
- At the elementary school level, children are commonly taught about health by their parents. However, as they move up through lower and upper secondary school, the main sources of information on health become classroom instruction, television, radio and other mass media, and friends.
- Compared to the elementary school level, there is a tendency for health habits to be lost and for health awareness to gradually decline as children move up through lower and upper secondary school and university.
- Surveys of adults indicate that men have lower health awareness. Women are generally more aware of health and tend to pay greater attention to their health.
- The ratio of persons suffering from illness or injury increases with age. At the same time, health awareness rises with age.