

Abstract

Feeling and expressing emotions appropriately in the right context is an essential component of social behavior. It has been suggested that emotional functioning has been weakened among contemporary Japanese youth, who exhibit acute social withdrawal, a “cultural pathology” known as *hikikomori* (Hattori, 2005; Zielenziger, 2006). Assuming that *hikikomori* is at least partially caused by socio-economic uncertainties faced by younger generations, we predicted that the syndrome is not confined to a clinical subpopulation but should be manifested by even undiagnosed youth, though in moderated form, as a negative function of their family socio-economic status (SES). Results from an emotion-sampling study – in which participants’ reported their momentary emotional states 12 times per day for one-week during the course of their daily lives – and a laboratory experiment – which measured psycho-physiological responses to emotional stimuli – both supported this prediction. Implications of these findings for the well-being of youth in well-developed, post-industrial societies are discussed.