

# Report on the 69<sup>th</sup> JSSSW Fall Conference

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Chairperson of Executive Committee (Fall Conference)

The 69<sup>th</sup> Fall Conference of the Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare (JSSSW) was held from 11 to 12 September 2021, and for the first time it was completely online including the oral presentations. The Executive Committee faced frequent interruptions during the three years of preparations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Conference was successfully convened with nearly 700 participants thanks to the encouragement and advice provided by all the stakeholders including the board members and the secretariat of the JSSSW. On behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to thank you all.

The online system for the Conference was operated mainly by the JSSSW Secretariat for the sessions on 11 September and the symposium on 12 September, and by Tohoku Fukushi University for the oral presentations and the specific agenda sessions on 12 September. The poster presentations were presented as e-posters, which was the same as last year.

Prior to the Conference, the Committee for Research Support held an on-demand startup symposium with the theme of “How to Develop the Research Themes”. The presentations were made by the JSSSW members, such as new graduate students, graduate students cum field workers, and new teaching staff at university, on ways to conduct research in different environments. Using this opportunity, I would like to thank all the panelists, commentators and MCs.

The Conference started in the afternoon of the first day with the ceremony of the JSSSW Academic Award. I would like to send my heartfelt congratulations to Prof. Midori Nishizaki and Prof. Takayuki Hirano, on receiving the Academic Award, and Prof. Tomoko Tanaka, the recipient of the Encouragement Award.

The host university-led symposium titled “Welfare – Understanding Lives from the Perspective of Death” followed subsequently, having the keynote speech “Questioning the Meaning of Life – Refuting ‘Everything is Over when You Die’” delivered by Prof. Teruo Utsunomiya, Professor Emeritus of Hokkaido University. The symposium had a presentation from the social welfare field, a practice report on community suicide prevention initiatives, and an activity report from the field of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The symposium provided an opportunity for discussions around Social Work development with comments from the commentators. My sincere appreciation goes to the presenters, commentators and Prof. Utsunomiya.

On the second day, we had oral presentations, specific agenda sessions, the workshop for foreign students and international comparative studies, and the JSSSW-led session. The on-demand workshop for foreign students and international comparative studies held by the Committee for International Academic Exchange Facilitations that was titled “International Social Welfare Research and Educational Activities under the COVID-19 Pandemic”, brought together case studies of social work research under the pandemic, social work education, and international comparative studies. In the specific agenda sessions, there were rigorous discussions in the four presentations in the gender session and five in the disaster welfare session. The host university-led session in the afternoon was convened with the theme of “Considering Research Methodologies in Social Welfare Studies – the Background of Quantitative and Qualitative Research” sharing basic ideas behind the quantitative and qualitative research in Social Welfare Studies. The intended outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative studies as well as their limitations were well discussed. I would like to thank all the coordinators for their contributions.

Amongst the 83 oral presentations planned, including the ones to be done by the participants from China and South Korea, 82 presentations were delivered, thanks to the organization of the managers and MCs. In addition to that, we had 39 poster presentations.

This Conference held under the cloud of a global pandemic taught us many things. First, we had fewer oral and poster presentations compared to previous years. As the social welfare research is based on the field practices, the research activities have been greatly affected by the impact of the pandemic, which has a cascading effect on the other presentations at the Conference. Second, we were not able to have opportunities for collaboration among the members of the JSSSW. Usually, we see people enjoying chatting in every corner of the Conference site, however it was a pity that we could not have this kind of face-to-face interaction this time around. Thirdly, the methods used to prepare and communicate during the conference were completely different. Having no experience of running an online conference meant we had to refer to other recent online conferences and apply their methods with some adjustments to fit our conference, while still having close consultations with the Conference Management Committee. However, the physical burden usually placed on the host university has been considerably reduced. Lastly, the online conference contributed to a reduction in participation fees. As the participants did not need to pay transportation costs, the economic burden placed on participants was considerably reduced. This was especially applicable to participants such as young researchers, graduate students, and those that needed to travel a long way.

It is regretful that we could not have the opportunity to collaborate and exchange ideas with each other at the Conference, however it was unavoidable. On the other hand, we have proven that an online conference hosted by a non-urban university could provide an important opportunity to present research outcomes and session discussions among the JSSSW members. The Conference provided many ideas for making future conferences more fruitful.

## **Comments from the Awardees – The Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare Award 2021**

The Review Committee for the 2021 JSSSW Award has decided to give the Academic Award (Sole Author category) to Prof. Midori Nishizaki and Prof. Takayuki Hirano, and the Encouragement Award (Sole Author category) to Prof. Tomoko Tanaka after a rigorous selection process. The award ceremony was held online on 11 September 2021, the first day of the JSSSW Fall Conference, following its opening ceremony. The messages have been delivered by the awardees.

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### **Academic Award (Sole Author category)**

Prof. Midori Nishizaki, Kumamoto Gakuen University

**The title of the book awarded:**

**How Has Social Work Defined Minorities – Institutional Racism and History of Social Welfare in the US**

**Keiso Shobo, 25 August 2020**

It is my great honor and pleasure to receive the Academic Award for my book “How Has Social Work Defined Minorities – Institutional Racism and History of Social Welfare in the US”. The study is the result of my long, persistent research with many detours, supported by a lot of colleagues and friends, in addition to the wonderful archivists in the US. I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to each one of them at this opportunity.

The intention of the study is to shed light on another dimension of Social Work through chronologically tracking back the relationship between Social Work and minorities, especially African American, who have been marginalized in American society. What became apparent is that Social Work’s thought and philosophy to realize

social justice was not universally applied beyond race, because of the WASP culture that expert groups and individual experts have had, as a backdrop.

Many human-made categories in society vary from race to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social strata and disabilities, and stereotyping these categories affect prejudices and biases that social workers possess. There is the possibility that social workers sometimes confound causes and results in their response to the clients. This is a lesson learned from bitter experiences in the American social welfare history, which we can learn from.

The National Association of Social Workers issued a public apology in June 2021, in recognition of their insufficient support to and fight for the situation of minorities including African Americans, indigenous populations and Japanese Americans, after the publication of my book awarded this time. The statement was too late but significant enough.

Given this, it is interesting to reflect on the implementations of social workers in Japan. Are we, as social workers, free from the prejudice against certain categories of people? I sincerely hope that social workers, living and working in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, can recognize their own sense of discrimination and try to overcome them in the process of the fight against social injustice.

Looking forward, I would like to further address the issues that the Review Committee pointed out in its review as my future research agenda: 1) clarifying the meaning or defining the realm of “social work field”, 2) the US social welfare history after the 1960s, 3) effort of social work studies and education for overcoming racism, and 4) relationship with the Christian movement. This award gave me an opportunity to rethink the areas the research was not able to discuss enough and/ or need further analysis, not limited to the points above. I am thankful that receiving this award has given me encouragement to do further research.

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## **Academic Award (Sole Author category)**

Prof. Takayuki Hirano, Nihon Fukushi University

**The title of the book awarded:**

**Community Welfare Management – Community Welfare and Comprehensive Support System**

**Yuhikaku Publishing, 25 March 2020**

The Academic Award for the Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare has been given to the book “Community Welfare Management – Community Welfare and Comprehensive Support System”, however, for me, this is recognition towards the series of research activities attempting to systemize Community Welfare.

One of my main motivations for this book was that my previous book on Community Welfare, which was shortlisted for the Academic Award received comments expecting further research. In other words, the book awarded this time is considered as a continuous effort for Community Welfare systemization. My reason for continuing to write articles and do research has never been to challenge for awards, however, I must admit that the award has been somewhat on my mind all the time. I asked whether my own books would be included as potential candidates for the award, when I was asked to serve on the review committee two years ago.

Another big reason is that it has been my aspiration to raise recognition towards Community Welfare studies in the social welfare academic societies, during my academic activities centered around the Japan Research Association for Community Development including serving as its vice chair and head of editorial board. It could sound as an awkward sense of competition, but Community Welfare studies had never been awarded the JSSSW award before. Therefore, I feel this award values Community Welfare studies, especially its systemization, and not merely to the book itself that squarely addressed the concept of Community Welfare and its management.

One last reason is my passion for Community Welfare studies. It is again my own interpretation of the award, but it seems to praise fieldwork as a research activity. As the review committee also commented, I was planning to put ‘field work’ in the subtitle of the book so that I could stress the importance of it. In Community Welfare studies, encountering previous practices and organizing its field is even more important than reviewing previous studies. Amongst others, in Community Welfare management studies, encounters with community welfare managers have supported the systemization of Community Welfare.

Community Welfare needs a variety of ‘track record’. There were many attempts to systemize Community Welfare’s track record, before this book was written. I would like to show my sincere appreciations that this award marked a milestone in the important research track record.

### **Encouragement Award (Sole Author category)**

Prof. Tomoko Tanaka, Bukkyo University

**The title of the book awarded:**

**The Poverty of Families with Intellectually Disabled Children – Care dependent on families**

**Houritsu Bunka Sha, 10 April 2020**

I am thankful for the Encouragement Award this year. I am so proud of myself, while reaffirming my determination towards further research activities.

The research for the book started from a simple question about why accidental matters such as caring for disabled children can significantly impact a woman’s life. This was due to my encounters with disabled children and their families when I was still at university. I also thought of the importance to visualize the reasons why caregiving, which is inevitable for everyone during their lifetime, increases the risk of poverty in modern society. In fact, families caring for intellectually disabled children who need lifetime care, especially mothers as the primary carer, are forced to make

caregiving their top priority in their life after the birth of the children. The mothers dedicate themselves to the role of mother, giving up things such as a job, and the chance to be a friend, a wife and a woman. I wanted these women to be heard. I am still not sure how precisely I was able to show their experiences to the readers, however receiving this award has encouraged me.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the carers of the disabled children and the experts who are supporting them. The family income survey used in the book was only possible thanks to the cooperation of the local committees that consisted of the families and experts, who shared a common goal with me. Not limited to the survey, but all the research is the product of collaborative relationships with the families and experts. I feel encouraged to become a better researcher when working with these women who cooperate with my surveys, disclosing their private lives and difficulties in their lives. I would like to pay them back through my research. I am so grateful for everything I learned from these families and experts.

The book is based on my Ph.D. thesis submitted to the School of Education, Hokkaido University. My heartfelt appreciations to Prof. Ichiro Matsumoto, who encouraged me, showing the direction of the research, Prof. Tsutomu Suzuki, who is my ex-colleague and co-examiner of my dissertation, and all the senior and peer researchers. Thank you very much once again.



## 監訳

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## 翻訳

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