

New Year's Greetings 2022 as a Turning Point in History

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2022 has arrived. Much like the preceding year, the pervasive influence of Covid-19 continues, making an unprecedented time where the world has been shaken. In the midst of the ongoing Covid-19 disaster, it is certain that universities, welfare institutions, and various other entities are still grappling with inconveniences and hardships. I extend my deepest sympathies to those affected within our community.

The Japanese Society of Social Welfare has not been exempt from these challenges; all aspects of our activities have faced restrictions. Board of Directors meetings, executive board sessions, and other committee meetings have primarily been conducted online. Thanks to the wisdom and efforts of everyone involved, we successfully held the Fall Conference online, hosted by Tohoku Fukushi University. I hope we can manage to hold this year's conference in person.

The world has transformed significantly before and after the advent of Covid-19. Particularly in the field of social welfare, issues that were not often discussed in mainstream media have come into focus due to the frequent coverage of pandemic-related matters. Problems such as layoffs, unemployment, financial hardship, issues with receiving welfare benefits, domestic violence within homes due to stay-at-home measures, increased child abuse, mass infections in care facilities, and a rise in suicide rates among young women have all been highlighted. On the other hand, the term 'social worker,' while not exclusively related to Covid-19, has been increasingly featured in news and newspapers, gradually gaining recognition among the general public. However, it is crucial, and otherwise meaningless, that this recognition extends to the true sense of the term as a profession supporting and contributing to society.

In 2022, we mark the 154th year since the beginning of the modern era in Japan, dating back to the first year of Meiji in 1868 (while there are, of course, differing opinions). This 154-year span neatly divides into two halves, signifying a transition from the modern to the contemporary era, 77 years each in these phases. In other words, the period from 1868 to 1945, encompassing 77 years until the end of World War II, is classified as the modern era, while the subsequent 77 years from 1945 to 2022 are designated as the contemporary era. The next 77

years after 2022 will bring us to the year 2099, the end of the 21st century, making 2022 a potential turning point toward a new branch of history.

Observing the current global situation, there are signs that 2022 might indeed be a pivotal moment. However, it is not necessarily something filled with hope; it seems to be quite the opposite. Especially in recent years, what stands out is the wavering of democracy, which has been built up as a 'consensus' in developed nations since the post-war era. On 6 January 2021, we witnessed a shocking event of the Capitol occupation over the Presidential election in the US. Europe is also grappling with challenges related to immigration, refugees, and economic conditions. The days of them leading the world seem to be a thing of the past, and each country is facing a situation far from peaceful and secure. Challenges persist in Middle East issues and in dialogue with Muslim societies. China is also celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, and the US-Sino confrontation is intensifying as China gains momentum in international politics, economies, and military affairs. Tensions over Hong Kong and Taiwan continue to cast a dark shadow. Crises in politics in Myanmar and Afghanistan as well as Russian affairs in Eastern Europe also demand attention. Democracy, once considered an 'immortal' value since World War II, is in dire straits. Does anyone else find Shunsuke Turumi's statement, 'after democracy comes fascism,' eerily realistic for the next era, or is it just me?

Today, not only democracy is on shaky ground; economic disparity, inequality, and environmental destruction are worsening alongside it. In light of this, as the up-and-coming Kohei Saito points out as if he were a 'prophet,' a fundamental reexamination of the capitalism that has developed from the modern era to the present day seems necessary. The capitalism of today has exposed its limits, and minor modifications for renaming it as the 'modern capitalism' are no longer sufficient. Saito suggests that the collapse crisis brought about by capitalism, such as global warming, destruction of nature, and environmental problems like extreme weather, can no longer be solved by a socioeconomic structure based on a 'growth economy' as it has been until now, and it is imperative to cease such structure and transition to the next stage, marked by a more 'abundant degrowth economy'. While this may sound radical, it is worth considering. In any case, it is undeniable that contemporary democracy, capitalism, and environmental issues are facing serious challenges.

Social welfare, whether we like it or not, cannot stand on its own without good understandings of these global environments and world affairs, macroscopic historical understanding, and their context with economic systems. Even though social work, as a specialty, focuses on the micro-level life issues of individuals, it is actually related to the global situations

and the 'earth' environment on a cosmic scale. If the year 2022 is the dawn of a revolutionary era of value transformation in sequence of the modern era, the contemporary era, and the next era, then social welfare studies must now proactively take the lead in steering the world toward that turning point, and our generation bears a great responsibility to do so.

Following last year, the future course of the Covid-19 situation is still uncertain, and it is too early to talk about the end of the situation or the post-Covid period. I believe that the Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare must live with suffering of the world's people amid the Covid-19 pandemic, and we must demonstrate what social welfare studies can do in terms of research even in a very small way. Despite the ongoing challenges, I hope that we can continue working together step by step in our research in social welfare studies in this new year.

Report on Academic Exchange among Japan, South Korea, and China

Dr. Junko Wake, Vice Chairperson/ Chairperson of the Committee for Promoting International Academic Exchange/ Tokyo Metropolitan University

The Japan Society for the Study of Social Welfare has entered into a 'Memorandum of Understanding on Promoting Research Exchange in South Korea, China, and Japan' with the Korean Society for Social Welfare and the Social Welfare Research Special Committee of the Chinese Sociological Association. The three societies have been engaged in academic exchanges, primarily involving reciprocal invitations to symposiums at each society's annual conferences and providing opportunities for individual research presentations by members.

However, as widely known, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has made it difficult to hold in-person research conferences since 2020. In light of this situation, an online trilateral meeting of presidents from Japan, China, and South Korea was convened on 4th August 2021. During this meeting, it was decided to postpone the face-to-face symposium originally scheduled to be hosted by South Korea, the organizing country, to the following year. Meanwhile, it was agreed that even if the research conferences in each country were to be held online, opportunities for individual research presentations by members would be maintained in accordance with the MoU.

Ultimately, all the countries successfully organized their autumn conference online and expanded exchange activities. In Japan, the 69th conference (Tohoku Fukushi University) took place online on 11th and 12th September, featuring five free research presentations from South Korea and two from China. In South Korea, the autumn conference (Seoul National University) was held from 22nd to 23rd October with one free research presentation from Japan. The autumn conference in China, originally scheduled for 9th and 10th October, was postponed to 12th December but was successfully held online, including one free research presentation from Japan.

Despite the continued disruptions caused by the spread of Covid-19, the adoption of online participation has facilitated the continuation of international academic exchanges among members. Additionally, a workshop for foreign students and international comparative researches organized by the Committee for Promoting International Academic Exchange allowed members teaching abroad to present their researches and engage in group discussions online. Although challenges such as time zone differences persist, the introduction of online formats has made international academic exchanges more accessible than before. While we hope for the

early return of in-person academic exchanges, considering time and economic constraints, utilizing online exchanges alongside in-person interactions may prove beneficial.

Furthermore, the Committee for Promoting International Academic Exchange aims at expanding opportunities for exchange and information sharing with not only South Korea and China but also with Western countries. In the future, there are plans to provide opportunities for members and researchers active worldwide to relay the latest research trends and information from local academic societies. As part of the Publicity Committee's efforts, the website will be further internationalized, with translations into Korean, Chinese, and English. In the era of living with Covid-19, where in-person exchanges remain challenging, we are committed to utilizing various media and means to continue and further develop international academic exchanges among the society and its members.

**Report on Presentation of Independent Research at 2021 Fall Joint
Academic Conference
Korean Academy of Social Welfare**

Tomoko Kawaike, Tsurumi Junior College
The Value of the Asian Fellowship

Last October, I had the privilege of delivering a presentation at the Korean Society of Social Welfare organized by Seoul National University. Regrettably, the presentation took place remotely. While my inaugural experience with an international remote presentation induced some initial apprehension, it ultimately proved to be a profoundly meaningful endeavor.

The theme of the presentation was "Focusing on the Fragility of Childcare Workers as 'Dependent Labor': Understanding the 'Voices' of Childcare Workers through the 'Ethics of Care.'" Due to space constraints, the presentation analyzed the free descriptions in the Tokyo Metropolitan Childcare Worker Survey Report, relying on Kitei (2010) as a basis. It highlighted the conflicts faced by childcare workers in the midst of caregiving labor for both children in the childcare and their own families, i.e. 'child care as a profession and raising their own children.' The presentation also touched on the 'conflict structure of three caregiving labors,' including parenting by the parents in the childcare. I received a comment stating, "Similar issues exist in South Korea. I look forward to the continued analysis (perhaps out of consideration for the guest)."

Other presentations by Korean researchers included "Reinterpreting Justice from the Perspective of Social Welfare Values in the Post-Covid Era" and "Directionality of E-Welfare Transmission Governance." The former involved keyword analysis of newspaper articles on the unfairness of employment and economy for young people, while the latter focused on the IT systems for social welfare service provision in South Korea.

What I gained from this presentation was the ability to leverage the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, while often mentioned. I opined that the 'online: invisible line' with overseas participants has the potential to gently dismantle not only geographical barriers but also established conceptual boundaries. I realized that South Korea is aiming at building a social welfare service provision system through online means and that research methods using text mining are being explored.

The Korean-style debates, which are rarely experienced at Japanese conferences, were also stimulating. The same was true of my previous presentation, which motivated me to attend this year's conference. Indeed, I tasted the unique flavor of international presentations. Lastly, I would like to express a few hopes, recognizing their difficulties.

First, I hope that the support for accepted research in adjacent areas, similar to neighboring conferences, would be considered. This could include translation, interpretation, and support for travel expenses, making it possible for people who cannot speak Korean or Chinese and those with financial constraints to participate. Economic difficulties are not exclusive to young graduate students; even retired researchers should have the chance to present their 'matured research.' Secondly, if presentations are conducted remotely, I hope there will be an increase in opportunities or slots for research presentations. Quantity sometimes surpasses quality. Thirdly, as has often been said, the time for learning only from the West has passed. Through the three presentations I have given at this conference, two at the Korean Association of Social Welfare, and the East Asia Social Welfare Forum (Chengdu), I have realized the value of learning from researchers in neighboring Asian countries. The relationship with Chengdu will soon come to fruition in the form of joint publication by Chinese and Japanese researchers, "Challenges and Responses to Declining Birthrate and Aging Population: Insights for Social Welfare Practice in China from the Realities of Care and Welfare in Japan" (Published by National Southwest Jiaotong University, International Academy of Gerontology) .

The Covid-19 pandemic was also a 'rediscovery' of the value of being in a foreign country, feeling with all five senses and learning from each other face-to-face. I look forward to the days when we can enjoy research discussions while savoring 'authentic chicken' and 'authentic hot pot.'

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**Report on Presentation of Independent Research at 2021 Annual
Meeting
Committee of Social Welfare Studies, China Sociological Association**

Nobuhiro Watanabe, International University of Health and Welfare
Sincere Gratitude to Those Who Study Social Welfare

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chinese Social Welfare Research Expert Committee's Annual Meeting in 2021 was postponed and, like the previous year, had to be held online. Initially scheduled for October 2021, it was postponed twice, first to November, and finally took place on Sunday, 12th December.

In my limited experience, I become extremely nervous when giving presentations at academic societies, even virtually. Moreover, despite the unavoidable circumstances, as the postponement and scheduling adjustments continued for nearly two months, each day was filled with the incessant anxiety of 'When will the academic conference be held? Will it really take place?'

As I immerse myself in feelings of uncertainty and fear, I, in turn, become aware of gratitude.

Individuals around the world are facing hardships due to the Covid-19 infection. Numerous people are at the stake of their lives or encounter difficulties of social participation due to infection. Many others have affected their daily lives in order to support, backstop, or do whatever they can do for people who have infected, including family members, friends and colleagues. The impacts come in various forms and are countless. Considering this, the mere 'postponement of a conference' is indeed minuscule. Rather, it is something to be grateful for to have the opportunity to participate and to give presentations – that, above all, is what matters.

The research title I presented was "Social Support Process between Different Religious Communities." It focused on community work based on fieldwork in the Philippines. During the fieldwork, the impact of a direct hit by a typhoon and an assassination of a local municipal staff member led to the incomplete achievement of the initially planned research goals. The fieldwork ended in a sort of 'unfinished study.'

However, researchers and staff in Shanghai exhibited an admirable approach. Rather than dwelling on the inadequacies of the research, they enthusiastically focused on confirming the research's objectives and significance. Instead of asking 'What could not be achieved?', they centered on 'What was accomplished? What was the research trying to achieve?', emphasizing the lessons and significance derived from these aspects. Their attitude was truly inspiring and uplifting. Moreover, the conference participants displayed eagerness, humility, and a deep sense of empathy. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone involved in the preparation of the event and to all those who gave presentations. Last but not least, a heartfelt thank you to Takamune-san from the Japanese Society for the Study of Social Welfare and the entire secretariat team for their contributions to various arrangements and coordination. Thank you very much.

Announcement for Launching the CS-NET for Young Researchers

Dr. Osamu Miyazaki, Research Support Committee Member/ Meiji Gakuin University

Dr. Maki Yasuda, Research Support Committee Member/ Hokusho College

The Research Support Committee is pleased to announce the launch of the 'CS-NET,' a network for young researchers within the society. Starting this March, the CS-NET will officially begin its operations.

The CS-NET aims to facilitate information exchange and mutual collaboration among young researchers. In this context, young researchers refer to those who have recently embarked on their research careers, including members with diverse ages and experiences. The interaction among peers with similar positions is crucial for young researchers, as it greatly influences the progress of their research. Particularly within our academic society, where career paths vary significantly compared to other societies, mutual support is even more essential for the continued success of research endeavors. Members range from those who directly progressed from undergraduate studies to graduate school to those who initiated their research based on rich experiences in social welfare practice.

However, the opportunities to establish peer relationships among researchers are hindered by the significant disparities in affiliations and residential locations. This reality not only poses challenges for individual young researchers but also has the potential to impede the development of social welfare studies. Addressing this issue is imperative.

Moreover, the field of social welfare studies has historically developed by incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives. Our academic society also consists of members who share social welfare studies as a common field but have diverse focuses within various academic disciplines. During the early stages of research careers, fostering connections among researchers with diverse backgrounds can provide intellectual stimulation for each individual.

In line with these considerations, the CS-NET will operate as part of research support initiatives. The CS-NET will utilize mailing lists to encourage regular interactions among young researchers. Additionally, our initial plans include organizing information exchange meetings and workshops to support research endeavors after the launch. We look forward to actively engaging with all participants to implement concrete initiatives.

To mark the launch of the CS-NET, the Research Support Committee will host an online event on 21st March (Monday, public holiday). During this event, the committee members will provide information about participating in and utilizing the CS-NET. Three young members will also share their insights. Following these presentations, an information exchange session will be conducted to discuss challenges faced by young researchers and the direction of network building.

This event is open not only to the existing members but also to those considering joining our academic society. As mentioned earlier, the definition of 'young researchers' allows for interpretation, and we welcome everyone to participate in this event. We look forward to your attendance.

翻訳

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