

2026 EAST ASIAN SOCIAL POLICY (EASP) ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Social Policy in Asia in an Era of Multiple Disruptions

The Hang Seng University
of Hong Kong

17-18
JULY



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Co-hosted by:



香港恒生大學
THE HANG SENG UNIVERSITY
OF HONG KONG



研究生院
GRADUATE SCHOOL



East Asian Social Policy

Co-organised by:



THE HONG KONG
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
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應用社會科學系
Department of Applied Social Sciences



香港恒生大學
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跨學科學院

School of Transdisciplinary Studies

公共政策研究中心

Centre for Public Policy Research



INTRODUCTION

In light of the complex challenges shaping our world today, the 2026 EASP Annual Conference – Social Policy in Asia in an Era of Multiple Disruptions seeks to bring together scholars and practitioners to exchange ideas, share research, and foster meaningful collaboration. The conference is co-hosted by the Graduate School of The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong and the East Asian Social Policy Research Network (EASP), and co-organised with the Department of Applied Social Sciences (APSS) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The event will be held on 17–18 July 2026 (Friday to Saturday) at The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (HSUHK) and will take place in person only.

We are living in an era defined not by a single crisis, but by a cascade of interconnected disruptions that are fundamentally challenging the sustainability of our societies, economies, and daily lives. The COVID-19 pandemic was not an isolated event but a stark reminder of our encroachment on the ecosystem. It has left a lasting impact on our social and economic systems, revealing new vulnerabilities and persistent instabilities that continue to shape our societies. In the same vein, the accelerating climate crisis—itsself a consequence of unsustainable human development—presents an existential threat, demanding a fundamental transformation of our production and lifestyles.

This ‘polycrisis’ is further complexified by deep structural shifts. The rapid advance of digitalization and Artificial Intelligence (AI) promises innovation but also signals a fundamental disruption of employment and social structures, raising new questions about inequality and human agency. Profound demographic changes, including persistent low fertility, rapid aging, and diversifying family structures, reveal that our existing social contracts are no longer sustainable.

Furthermore, these disruptions are unfolding within a volatile global context. Geopolitical instabilities, the resurgence of nationalism and xenophobia highlighted by migration crises, and cost-of-living pressures intensified by trade tensions all demonstrate that social policy can no longer be adequately conceived or implemented solely within national borders.

These ‘multiple disruptions’—environmental, technological, demographic, and geopolitical—are not parallel but deeply intertwined, creating new, multi-dimensional challenges for social policy. They demand a fundamental rethinking of our established analytical frameworks, governance models, and institutional arrangements. This new reality requires us, as a research community, to move beyond single-issue analysis and seek complex, multi-dimensional solutions that adequately address these intersecting crises.

The EASP 2026 Annual Conference aims to convene scholars to critically examine these complex challenges. We seek to foster a robust discussion on how social policy is responding to, and being reshaped by, this era of multiple disruptions. Reflecting the network’s commitment to broadening its scope, we particularly welcome research that includes the context of Southeast Asia alongside East Asia. We invite theoretical, comparative, and empirical papers that explore the intersections of these crises, assess the resilience and innovation of existing welfare systems, and propose new paradigms for a sustainable and just future.



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Hosted by

- Graduate School, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
- The East Asian Social Policy Research Network (EASP)

Co-organisers

- Department of Applied Social Sciences (APSS), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- School of Transdisciplinary Studies, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
- Centre for Public Policy Research, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

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Honorary Speakers

GUESTS OF HONOUR



**Dr the Honourable
KO Wing-man, GBS, JP**

*Chairman, Social Welfare
Advisory Committee
Labour and Welfare Bureau,
The HKSAR Government*



**Mr Edward
TO Wing-hang, JP**

*Director, Social Welfare
Department
The HKSAR Government*

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Professor M. RAMESH

*Professor & UNESCO Chair, Social
Policy Design in Asia
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
National University of Singapore*



Professor John HUDSON

*Dean, School for Business & Society
Professor, Social Policy
University of York*



Professor Young Jun CHOI

*Professor, Department of Public
Policy and Management
Director, Institute for Welfare State
Research
Yonsei University*

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION



**Professor Cecilia
CHAN Lai-wan, JP**

*Professor Emeritus
Department of Social Work and
Social Administration
Founding Director,
Centre on Behavioral Health
The University of Hong Kong*



**Professor Joshua
MOK Ka-ho**

*Provost and Vice President
(Academic and Research),
Dean, Graduate School
The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong*



Dr FAN Ning

*Founder,
Health in Action*



Dr QIAN Jiwei

*Senior Research Fellow,
National University of Singapore*



**Dr CHAN Chi-kit
(Moderator)**

*Associate Professor
School of Communication
The Hang Seng University
of Hong Kong*

Programme Rundown - Day 1

DAY 1		17 Jul 2026 (Fri)		S H Ho Academic Building, A Building, North Campus
Time	Session	Speaker / Theme	Venue	
08:45 – 09:15	Registration		4/F	
09:15 – 09:40	Opening Ceremony	Welcoming Address Professor Joshua Mok Ka-ho Provost and Vice President (Academic and Research) The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong	A401, 4/F (Main Venue)	
		Speech by Officiating Guest of Honour Dr the Honourable KO Wing-man, GBS, JP Chairman, Social Welfare Advisory Committee Labour and Welfare Bureau, The HKSAR Government	A314-A315, 3/F (Live Streaming Room)	
		Opening Remarks Professor Bo Yung KIM Chairman of East Asian Social Policy Research Network (EASP)		
09:40 – 10:00	Keynote Speech by Officiating Guest of Honour	Mr Edward TO Wing-hang, JP Director, Social Welfare Department The HKSAR Government	A401, 4/F (Main Venue)	
			A314-315, 3/F (Live Streaming Room)	
10:00 – 11:10	Roundtable Discussion I	Reimagining Care and Resilience: Policy Innovations for Ageing Societies in Hong Kong and East Asia	A401, 4/F (Main Venue)	
		• Professor Cecilia CHAN Lai-wan, JP, The University of Hong Kong • Professor Joshua MOK Ka-ho, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong • Dr FAN Ning, Health in Action • Dr QIAN Jiwei, National University of Singapore • Moderator: Dr CHAN Chi-kit, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong	A314-315, 3/F (Live Streaming Room)	
11:10 – 11:30	Refreshment Break		A403 & A404, 4/F	
11:30 – 12:30	Keynote Presentation I	When Coverage Is Not Enough: Governance and the Future of Health Systems in Asia	A401, 4/F (Main Venue)	
		Professor M. RAMESH Professor & UNESCO Chair, Social Policy Design in Asia Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy National University of Singapore	A314-315, 3/F (Live Streaming Room)	
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch @ A403-A404, 4/F or Learning Common, 2/F			

Time	Session	Speaker / Theme	Venue
14:00 – 15:00	Keynote Presentation II	Exploring the Jurisdiction of Social Policy across Jurisdictions: How Has the Subject Evolved in UK and East Asian Universities?	A401, 4/F (Main Venue)
		Professor John HUDSON Dean, School for Business & Society Professor, Social Policy, University of York	A314-315, 3/F (Live Streaming Room)
15:10 – 17:00	Concurrent Session A	Panel Discussion Ultra-Low Fertility in the Era of Triple Transition: Causes, Perceptions, and Policy Responses	A401, 4/F
		Panel Discussion Care Across Boundaries: Innovative Care Models in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area	A315, 3/F
		Individual Abstract Presentations	3/F
17:30 – 18:00	HSUHK Foundation Gallery Tour	Guided tour of two exhibitions: the University Collection, Objects of Interest (regular exhibition), and the feature exhibition, A World Alive with Feeling: The Equal Gaze in Ding Yanyong's Art.	
		▪ Meeting Point: G/F Lobby, S H Ho Academic Building (A Building) ▪ Meeting Time: 17:15	
18:30 – 20:30	Reception & Gala Dinner @ Club One		

Day 2 >>>

Programme Rundown - Day 2

DAY 218 Jul 2026 (Sat)		S H Ho Academic Building, A Building, North Campus	
Time	Session	Speaker / Theme	Venue
09:00 – 09:30	Registration		4/F
09:30 – 10:30	Keynote Presentation III	Toward a Post-Scarcity Welfare State: AI, Redistribution, and the Politics of Serenity	A401, 4/F (Main Venue)
		Professor Young Jun CHOI Professor, Department of Public Policy and Management Director, Institute for Welfare State Research Yonsei University	A314-315, 3/F (Live Streaming Room)
10:40 – 12:30	Concurrent Session B	Panel Discussion Managing Ageing and Wellbeing Issues in the Digital Era: Challenges and Opportunities	A401, 4/F
		Individual Abstract Presentations	3/F
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch @ A403-A404, 4/F or Learning Common, 2/F		
14:00 – 15:30	Concurrent Session C	Panel Discussion Long-term Care Reform in East Asia	A401, 4/F
		Individual Abstract Presentations	3/F
		Postgraduate Workshop	A314, 3/F
15:30 – 15:50	Refreshment Break		
15:50 – 17:40	Concurrent Session D	Panel Discussion Ageing, Family and Care Policies in China	A401, 4/F
		Individual Abstract Presentations	3/F
17:40 – 18:00	Closing Remark		A401, 4/F
Evening	Informal Postgraduate Mingling Session Organised by postgraduate participants; suggested to invite postgraduate students and young scholars from HSUHK and PolyU		

HSUHK Campus Map



For details about the bus route, please visit the webpage of Citybus/ Kowloon Motor Bus or contact the hotline. 查詢巴士路線詳情，請瀏覽城巴/九巴網頁或致電公司熱線。

Keynote Presentations

@ The Hang Seng Univesity
of Hong Kong



*Professor & UNESCO Chair,
Social Policy Design in Asia
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
National University of Singapore*

Biography

Ramesh is Professor and UNESCO Chair on Social Policy Design in Asia at the National University of Singapore. Previously, he was the Founding Head of the Department of Asian and Policy at the Hong Kong Institute of Education; Professor of Social Policy at the University of Hong Kong; and Chair of the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. Specialising in public policy and governance in Asia with a particular focus on social policy, Ramesh has authored and edited several dozen books and journal articles . He is the founder and editor of highly ranked journals Policy and Society and Policy Design and Practice as well as the acclaimed series Cambridge Elements in Public Policy. He is the outgoing President of the International Public Policy Association.

Professor M. RAMESH

*When Coverage Is Not Enough: Governance and the Future of
Health Systems in Asia*

Abstract

Most Asian healthcare systems have achieved or approached universal coverage, yet their ability to adapt to ageing populations, rising public expectations, and fiscal pressure varies sharply. This paper argues that the binding constraint is not resources or political will but governance architecture: the fit between what stewardship functions demand and what institutional arrangements can deliver.

Effective healthcare governance requires setting strategic direction, aligning structures with goals, deploying appropriate instruments, and sustaining accountability. Each function places asymmetric demands on the political, operational, and analytical dimensions of governance, and a system's critical vulnerability lies where its weakest dimension meets its most stressed function.

Thailand's Universal Coverage Scheme demonstrates strong political commitment and broad operational reach but cannot reorganize primary care delivery. Japan possesses formidable analytical infrastructure and decades of commitment to universal coverage yet cannot convert these strengths into structural reform, because its principal steering instrument, the fee schedule, cannot build new organizational forms. Across Asian systems the pattern recurs with different binding constraints in each case.



Professor John HUDSON

*Dean, School for Business & Society
Professor of Social Policy
University of York*

Biography

John is Professor of Social Policy and Dean of the School for Business and Society at the University of York, United Kingdom, where is a member of the University of York's Cost of Living Research Group and its Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU). John has worked at the University of York since 1998 and was previously Head of Social Policy Section (2009-14), Head of Department of Social Policy and Social Work (2017-22) and Academic Director of the University of York's policy engagement unit The York Policy Engine (2022-2025). He has served on the executive committees of the UK Social Policy Association (SPA), the East Asian Social Policy Research Network (EASP) and the UK Joint University Council for the Applied Social Sciences (JUC).

His work focuses on theories of the policy making process and comparative social policy analysis, with specialisms in a range of policy fields and topics including inequality, poverty, well-being and the impacts of public attitudes on social policy. Current research projects include: the Research England funded Yorkshire and Humber Policy Engagement and Research Network (Y-PERN) and Local Government and the Cost of Living Emergency (LOCALE); the Nuffield Foundation funded Devolution and Social Security in the UK project (Safety Nets); and Profiling Public Spending on Children by Age and Policy Area in the UK (for UNICEF UK).

Exploring the jurisdiction of Social Policy across jurisdictions: how has the subject evolved in UK and East Asian universities?

Abstract

In the 50th anniversary issue of the Journal of Social Policy, Hudson and Lunt (2022) utilised Abbott's work on professions and disciplines to trace the broad development of Social Policy in UK universities over the preceding 50 years. They noted that, as with all academic subjects, Social Policy is enmeshed in continuous boundary protection and, at the same time, may seek to extend jurisdiction by laying claim to areas and activities undertaken by other subjects.

In addition to tracing major watershed moments in the subject's intellectual development in the UK, as documented in UK Social Policy Association (SPA) and related archival material, they considered how major institutional changes in the university sector had shaped the subject's evolution, including the impact of governmental research quality assessment exercises, the marketisation of student recruitment, and the growth of non-university based research expertise in independent think tanks.

This paper revisits the findings of the 2022 paper and, drawing on a series of collaborative discussions with colleagues who have worked in Social Policy teaching and research in both the UK and East Asian universities, then reflects on how the evolution of the subject has unfolded across different jurisdictions, including the role of international networks and global historical legacies in shaping commonalities and differences in agendas. In so doing, it considers the role of the East Asian Social Policy Research Network (EASP) in shaping national and international research agendas.

Reference: Hudson, J., & Lunt, N. (2022). The contested jurisdiction of Social Policy in UK universities since 1972. *Journal of Social Policy*, 51(3), 487–503. doi:10.1017/S0047279422000320



Professor Young Jun CHOI

*Professor of Department of Public Policy
and Management
Director, Institute for Welfare State Research
Yonsei University*

Biography

Department Chair, Department of Public Policy and Management, Yonsei University

Chair, Academy of Critical Social Welfare (2024)

Chair, East Asian Social Policy Research Network (2021-2023)

Co-director, Research Committee, The Korean Association for Policy Studies (2022)

Director, Research Committee, Korean Academy of Social Welfare (2022)

Board Members: The Purme Foundation (2021-2025) and LAB2050 (2021-2024)

Toward a Post-Scarcity Welfare State: AI, Redistribution, and the Politics of Serenity

Abstract

Recent advances in artificial intelligence and automation are reshaping the relationship between productivity, labour, and social policy. While AI-driven innovation may substantially increase productivity and reduce marginal and transaction costs, it also risks weakening labour demand, intensifying insecurity, and deepening social inequality. This paper argues that technological abundance alone does not automatically produce social well-being. Instead, the future consequences of AI depend fundamentally on how productivity gains are socially distributed and institutionally governed. Building on this premise, the paper introduces the concept of the “post-scarcity welfare state,” a normative and institutional framework in which technological progress is combined with social protection, redistribution, and universal access to essential services. Unlike conventional post-scarcity narratives centred on unlimited consumption, the post-scarcity welfare state emphasises security, predictability, and low anxiety regarding basic needs. Serenity is conceptualised not as material excess, but as the capacity to adapt to economic and technological transformation, as well as to climate change, without fear of social collapse. The paper develops a fourfold typology of future societies based on the interaction between productivity growth and redistribution, ranging from “dualised abundance” to “scarcity conflict” societies. It argues that only a combination of high productivity and equitable redistribution can generate a socially sustainable post-scarcity order. In this context, policies such as universal basic services, flexicurity, participation income, and eco-social policies become essential institutional foundations for ensuring that AI-driven abundance translates into collective well-being rather than intensified inequality and insecurity.

Conference Overview

We are delighted by the outstanding level of engagement and the breadth of scholarship reflected in this year's submissions.

16 Thematic Conference Streams

01

Cybersecurity and Privacy

02

Artificial Intelligence and Automation

03

Sustainability and Climate

04

Health and Wellbeing

05

Education and Learning

06

Economics and Policy

07

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

08

Globalization and International Affairs

09

Technology and Digital Transformation

10

Governance and Public Policy

11

Entrepreneurship and Innovation

12

Communication and Media

13

Law and Human Rights

14

Psychology and Behavioral Science

15

Industry and Workplace

16

Other Emerging Themes

* 196

Individual Paper Abstracts Accepted

* 5

Panel Proposals Accepted

Concurrent Sessions & Individual Presentations

DAY 1

17 Jul 2026 (Fri)

S H Ho Academic Building,
A Building, North Campus

Time	Session	Speaker / Theme	Venue
15:10 – 17:00	Concurrent Session A	Panel Discussion Ultra-Low Fertility in the Era of Triple Transition: Causes, Perceptions, and Policy Responses	A401, 4/F
		Panel Discussion Care Across Boundaries: Innovative Care Models in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area	A315, 3/F
		Individual Abstract Presentations	3/F

DAY 2

18 Jul 2026 (Sat)

S H Ho Academic Building,
A Building, North Campus

Time	Session	Speaker / Theme	Venue
10:40 – 12:30	Concurrent Session B	Panel Discussion Managing Ageing and Wellbeing Issues in the Digital Era: Challenges and Opportunities	A401, 4/F
		Individual Abstract Presentations	3/F
14:00 – 15:30	Concurrent Session C	Panel Discussion Long-term Care Reform in East Asia	A401, 4/F
		Individual Abstract Presentations	3/F
15:50 – 17:40	Concurrent Session D	Panel Discussion Ageing, Family and Care Policies in China	A401, 4/F
		Individual Abstract Presentations	3/F



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Campus Map

Panel Presentation

Chair	Venue
Young Jun CHOI	A401
Cheng SHI	A315

Paper Presentations

Chair	Venue	Panel No.
Padmore Adusei AMOAH	A311	A1
Grace Seo	A314	A2
Mathew WONG	A301	A3
Ayomide Oluwaseyi OLADOSU	A302	A4
Eva Hung	A303	A5
Bo Yung Kim	A304	A6
Alfred Muluan WU	A310	A7
Kin-man WAN	A305	A8
Lin NIE	A306	A9
Aya Abe	A312	A10

Panel Presentation

Chair	Venue
Professor Joshua MOK Ka-ha	A401

Paper Presentations

Chair	Venue	Panel No.
Rainie Ke	A301	B1
Bo Yung Kim	A315	B2
Wing-kit CHAN	A302	B3
Tauchid Komara Yuda	A303	B4
Gary Tang	A314	B5
Nan Yang	A304	B6
Julia Shu-Huah Wang	A305	B7
Alfred Muluan WU	A306	B8
Grace Seo	A310	B9
Eva Hung	A311	B10
Padmore Adusei AMOAH	A313	B11

Panel Presentation

Chair	Venue
Young Jun CHOI	A401
Cheng SHI	A315

Paper Presentations

Chair	Venue	Panel No.
Padmore Adusei AMOAH	A311	A1
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Mathew WONG	A301	A3
Ayomide Oluwaseyi OLADOSU	A302	A4
Eva Hung	A303	A5
Bo Yung Kim	A304	A6
Alfred Muluan WU	A310	A7
Kin-man WAN	A305	A8
Lin NIE	A306	A9
Aya Abe	A312	A10

Panel Presentation

Chair	Venue
Jiaxin LIU & Antonios Roumpakis	A401

Paper Presentations

Chair	Venue	Panel No.
Stefan Kühner	A314	D1
Kin-man WAN	A301	D2
Jiwei Qian	A302	D3
Rainie Ke	A315	D4
Julia Shu-Huah Wang	A303	D5
Aya Abe	A304	D6
Gary Tang	A305	D7
Nan Yang	A306	D8
Bo Yung Kim	A310	D9
Eva Hung	A311	D10
Lin NIE	A313	D11

Panel A1 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Jiamin TAN
Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The Long Shadow of Childhood Hunger on Mental Health

This paper examines the long-term impact of childhood hunger on later-life mental health in China using two nationally representative surveys. Childhood hunger is measured using retrospective self-reports and an objective famine-exposure intensity measure based on county severity and birth cohort. We find that childhood hunger significantly increases the risk of depression and anxiety in later life, even after accounting for adult socioeconomic and physical health pathways. Age-specific alignment between hunger recall and mental health effects suggests autobiographical memory as a potential mechanism. Quasi-experimental evidence from rural social security reforms shows that public pensions and health insurance mitigate these adverse mental health effects.

Co-authors
Mengyun LIN;
Han YE

Author
Joo Ok KIM
Seoul National University Institute of
Social Welfare, Seoul, Korea,
Republic of.

Institutional Trajectories of Social Care: A Configurational Analysis of
Personal Assistance Services in South Korea

Social care services are designed to reduce reliance on informal family care and promote independent living for persons with disabilities. However, in many countries, including South Korea, policy shifts increasingly allow family members to serve as paid caregivers within formal personal assistance service systems. This raises a critical question: does the inclusion of family caregivers strengthen social care systems or reinforce familial dependence? This study examines how institutional arrangements shape the development of social care within South Korea’s personal assistance service program. Drawing on annual policy guidelines from 2011 to 2025, it investigates the specific combinations of institutional conditions associated with higher or lower levels of social care outcomes. The analysis employs fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) to identify distinct policy configurations and integrates Hasenfeld’s social service typology to trace the institutional trajectory of the program over time. The findings indicate that higher levels of social care emerge under configurations characterized by continued restrictions on immediate family caregivers, the presence of robust institutional governance mechanisms, and the implementation of needs-based service assessments. Although the role of extended family members as paid caregivers has gradually expanded, the formal inclusion of immediate family caregiving does not appear in configurations associated with stronger social care outcomes. Mapping these changes onto Hasenfeld’s typology further suggests that the program has evolved from a residual and people-sustaining orientation toward a more institutional and people-changing form of social care. These findings suggest that family participation in social services cannot be understood simply as a dichotomy between familialization and defamilialization. Instead, the institutional development of social care depends on specific combinations of governance structures, eligibility rules, and family participation policies.

Panel A1 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Yahan DUAN
Zhongnan University of Economics and
Law

The Impact of Long-term Care Insurance on Family Caregiving Burden

Amid rapid population aging and rising rates of disability among older adults in China, this study examines the impact of Long-Term Care Insurance (LTCI) on family caregiving burden. Using panel data from the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS) from 2011 to 2020, this study employs a multi-period difference-in-differences (DID) design that exploits the staggered introduction of LTCI across pilot cities as a quasi-natural experiment to identify the causal effects of the policy. Family caregiving burden is measured along two dimensions: adult children time spent on parental care and intergenerational financial transfers. The empirical results indicate that LTCI significantly reduces the time adult children devote to caring for their parents, suggesting a substitution effect of formal long-term care for informal family caregiving. However, the policy does not exert a statistically significant effect on children financial transfers to parents, indicating that LTCI primarily alleviates time-related caregiving burden rather than altering intra-household financial support arrangements. Heterogeneity analyses reveal that the reduction in caregiving time is more pronounced among urban residents, the oldest-old, and severely disabled older adults. Mechanism analysis further demonstrates that improvements in the health status of older adults serve as a key mediating channel through which LTCI alleviates family caregiving burden. Taken together, these findings provide robust empirical evidence that LTCI reshapes intra-family care arrangements primarily by substituting for informal caregiving time. They also underscore the importance of health improvement in understanding the broader effects of the policy. This study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the distributional consequences of LTCI and offers practical insights for optimizing long-term care systems in aging societies.

Co-author
Xindong XUE

Author
Nobu ISHIGURO
Department of Social Development &
Welfare, Universitas Gadjah Mada

Gendered Labour and the Organisation of Home Care Under New Public
Management in Japan

Japan’s Long-Term Care Insurance (LTCI) system, introduced in 2000, expanded home-based care through a NPM-inspired system that relies heavily on private providers and fee-for-service reimbursement. This scheme excludes essential activities such as travel between visits, documentation, coordination, and relational work from formal recognition and remuneration. At the same time, Japan’s gendered employment structure and family-based tax and social insurance arrangements continue to encourage supplementary, short-hours employment for married women, shaping the labour supply in home care. The aim of this paper is to examine how NPM-inspired institutions and gendered labour structures interact to shape the internal organisation of home care work. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 15 home care workers conducted in 2025 at four private providers in an urban municipality in Japan, the study analyses how work and responsibilities are redistributed within care organisations. The findings reveal a systematic division between part-time workers, who value flexible hours, and full-time workers often serving as service coordinators who absorb staffing gaps during early mornings, evenings, and holidays and carry out extensive administrative and decision-making responsibilities. Crucially, full-time workers also perform substantial emotional labour for their part-time colleagues, carefully negotiating schedules, guidance, and workplace relations to prevent turnover in a severe labour shortage. Standardised care plans and compliance pressures further concentrate accountability and micro-coordination on full-time staff. The paper argues that NPM-inspired institutions do not produce uniform labour outcomes; rather, their effects are mediated by welfare and gender regimes, generating a concentration of responsibility on core full-time staff in Japan. This finding suggests that the sustainability of home-based care depends not only on workforce supply but also on how institutional arrangements distribute coordination and responsibility within care organisations.

Co-authors
Yayoi SAITO;
Angela-Miku CHERRY

Panel A1 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Ijin HONG
National Taiwan University/College of Social Sciences/Graduate Institute of National Development

Co-authors
Guohuang CAO;
Giliberto CAPANO

Central and Local Policy Capacities as Drivers of Health Policy Reforms in China? A Comparative Case Study of Sanming, Shenzhen and Dongguan City

China has embarked on a massive healthcare reform to address the imbalances caused by excessive privatisation since the launch of the reform and open-up policy in 1978. Despite controversies concerning whether and to what extent policy goals are met, several practitioners and researchers observed improvements in healthcare outputs in terms of expenditure, coverage and accessibility over the last couple of decades. Yet scant attention is paid to the prominent variation among different territories, especially the underlying factors and mechanisms that led to existing regional disparities and how local governments addressed them. Ongoing theoretically informed and empirical research focuses on the actors that might impact healthcare outcomes from the individual, organisational, and institutional perspectives, respectively. However, mostly existing studies either rely on secondary data and quantitative analyses at an aggregate level, or on more specific case studies at the municipal level. Since successful policy implementation happens at the municipal level, we consider that a comparative perspective of how local governments designed and implemented their specific policies within their contexts is essential to make sense of how policy capacity at the local level affects successful policy implementation. How to define and analyse policy success stories in China? What strategies do policy actors adopt to ensure a successful implementation of the healthcare reform? Does policy capacity matter in shaping successful health reform, and how? By conducting a comparative case study based on the method of agreement, we focus on the municipalities of Sanming, Dongguan and Shenzhen as they are typically regarded as successful cases of healthcare policy reform implementation. We specifically aim to consider how the policy capacity theory enables us to disentangle which specific aspects of policy reform in these municipalities can be deemed successful, and based on which specific aspect of policy capacity (political, operational, analytical). We rely on policy reports, local news, interviews, and fieldwork data for our comparison. Even though on face value, all three cases can be considered successful (at least to a certain extent), our comparative focus allows us to disentangle some salient disparities among these three cases: while Sanming achieved most of the healthcare reform goals including Yiliao (医疗), Yibao (医保), and Yiyao (医药) (e.g. cutting down healthcare expenditure, expanding healthcare coverage, and improving healthcare accessibility), Shenzhen also achieved significant healthcare outputs, but its scale was weaker and characterized by its great improvement of healthcare accessibility. Comparatively, Dongguan achieved a much smaller scale of healthcare reform success, in large part due to the limits to its expansion of healthcare insurance coverage. The disparities among these three cases derived from the configuration differences of local capacities they had: Sanming has unparalleled preconditions in analytical capacity at individual level, operational capacity at organizational level, and political capacity at system level, which enable it to fully achieve most of the policy goals; Shenzhen has moderate analytical capacity at individual level, relatively strong operational capacity at organizational level, and strong political capacity at system level, which enable it to achieve the policy goals to a certain scale; while Dongguan has relatively weak analytical capacity at individual level, relatively strong operational capacity at organizational level, and moderate political capacity at system level, which has limited its healthcare reform outputs. This paper could foster the understanding of how policy capacity influences the policy implementation in a decentralised authoritarian system.

Panel A2 · Stream 14
Housing, Urbanization, and Regional Development

Author
Yichen DANG
Hong Kong Polytechnic University

How Does Residential Environment Exert Compensatory or Enabling Effects on Healthy Ageing? Examining the Impacts of Indoor Housing Conditions on Middle-aged and Older Adults’ Daily Activity Patterns in Urban China

Against the background of population ageing and residential environment deterioration in Chinese cities, scholars have extensively discussed the environmental challenges that older adults face, as well as the associations between residential environment and older adults’ well-being. Along with the ageing process, older adults tend to spend longer time at home for daily activities, and the effects of indoor housing conditions are also addressed, while most existing studies focus on indoor infrastructure and facilities, and indoor housing spatial structure is less discussed. Besides, methodologically, few studies addressed the various importance of single environmental attribute in predicting the well-being outcomes. Thus, by targeting community-dwelling older adults in urban China, this study aims to select the most influential attributes of indoor housing conditions in shaping well-being and examine the mediation effects of daily activity patterns between indoor housing conditions and well-being.

Author
Maggie LAU
Lingnan University

Co-authors
Richard RONALD;
Henry Hin Yan CHAN

Housing Opportunities and Family Reciprocity: Intergenerational Support for Young People and the Role of Housing and Welfare Policy in Hong Kong

In the context of diminishing housing affordability and homeownership rates amongst younger cohorts that enhance expectations of intergenerational housing assistance, this study addresses the impact on, and roles and perspectives of, parent givers. The case of Hong Kong, one of the world most expensive housing markets with high rates of homeownership amongst older cohorts, provides an important context for understanding generational inequities in housing wealth and access, and growing pressure on parental support for their adult children needs. Our analysis builds on a telephone survey of 1,012 parents living with their adult-children (aged 25?5 years), complemented by in-depth interviews with a small sub-sample of respondents. Our findings not only demonstrate the impact of intergenerational housing inequalities on family practices, but also how socioeconomic transformations, housing policy and welfare system are shaping both intergenerational responsibilities and expectations of government.

Author Understanding Housing Trajectories of Youth in Seoul: A Markov Transition

Ahyoung SONG

Yonsei University

Understanding Housing Trajectories of Youth in Seoul: A Markov Transition Analysis of Physical Quality and Affordability

Youth have recently emerged as a critical vulnerable group in the Korean housing market, making youth housing a core national agenda. This study examines the dynamic housing trajectories of using longitudinal data from the Seoul Youth Panel (2021- 2024). Employing a discrete-time Markov transition analysis, it tracks transitions in physical housing quality and economic affordability. The findings reveal a stark structural entrenchment in the housing market. While 91.85% of youth maintain adequate physical housing, the proportion persistently stuck in inadequate conditions (6.09%) is six times higher than those achieving upward mobility (1.02%). This limited mobility is primarily driven by the “Paradox of Debt”: housing-related debt facilitates physical upward transitions but fails to improve, and often exacerbates, economic affordability. Conversely, life-course events such as marriage act as a critical stabilizer, significantly inhibiting downward mobility into inadequate housing due to the relative stability of family-unit housing systems. These trajectories highlight a significant decoupling between physical improvement and economic stability, where current policies often fail to facilitate a genuine structural exit from inadequate conditions. Consequently, social policies must shift from a singular focus on upward mobility to a comprehensive “maintenance and exit-oriented” framework. This requires preemptive interventions at critical life transition points, such as initial independence or marriage and the establishment of public safety nets that reduce heavy reliance on private financial debt. Future policy frameworks must address the distinct mechanisms of physical and economic stability to ensure that “housing stability” does not become a euphemism for the persistence of sub-standard living conditions.

Author Regional Spatial Capital and Inequality in Young Adults' Labour Market

Ahreum BAEK Transitions

Institute of Social Welfare, SNU

Regional Spatial Capital and Inequality in Young Adults' Labour Market Transitions

This study examines how regional opportunity structures shape individual life trajectories by analyzing disparities in young adults' labor market transitions associated with regional spatial capital. Using data from the Korean Labor and Income Panel Study (KLIPS), the analysis focuses on 593 individuals born between 1991 and 1995 for whom observations at both ages 17 and 28 are available.

Spatial capital situated within regionally differentiated opportunity structures is measured using indicators constructed from 27 public administrative datasets across ten domains: natural environment, social services, culture and leisure, education, basic living infrastructure, transportation, economy, housing, politics, and demography. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with parallel multiple mediator analysis, this study analyzes how differences in spatial capital accumulated from adolescence to young adulthood contribute to unequal labor market outcomes during the transition to adulthood.

The findings show that spatial capital shapes labor market transitions through regionally structured opportunity distributions and internalized dispositions. But its conversion into human capital and subsequent labor market advantages is observed only among individuals from high-income households. Overall, the analysis shows that regional spatial capital contributes to cumulative labor market disparities among young adults, underscoring the need for more equitable regional opportunity structures.

Author **Beyond Jobs and Visas: How Social Capital Shapes Place Attachment Among**

Miyang JUN Student-origin Migrants in Regional Korea

Yonsei University

Beyond Jobs and Visas: How Social Capital Shapes Place Attachment Among Student-origin Migrants in Regional Korea

Facing acute population decline and the prospect of local extinction?in non-metropolitan areas, South Korea increasingly positions international student retention as a strategy for regional revitalization. Yet prevailing immigration policies remain largely employment-centred, overlooking socio-emotional determinants of long-term settlement. This qualitative study examines how social capital shapes place attachment and settlement intentions among student-origin migrants in a regional city. In-depth Interviews with twelve long-term residents show that settlement is governed by affective belonging mediated by distinct forms of social capital. Bonding ties often secure legal and financial stability, whereas bridging ties intercultural friendships and migrant-led communities are pivotal for durable emotional attachment to place. Intentions further depend on anticipated support, understood as trust in future social and institutional assistance. This research advocates a policy departure from economistic approaches to a framework recognizing the relational, affective, and anticipatory dimensions of integration, including investment in community infrastructures that sustain intercultural interaction.

Author **Migrant Workers' Integration to Work and Life in Japan: Examining the**

Angela Cherry MIKU

Onboarding Process by Intermediary Agencies

*Institute for Alternative Systems
of Social Welfare and Development,
Nihon Fukushi University*

Migrant Workers' Integration to Work and Life in Japan: Examining the Onboarding Process by Intermediary Agencies

Japan is increasingly relying on migrant workers, the majority of whom come from Southeast Asian countries. Language barriers, cultural differences and mismatch of expectations for work pose challenges for migrant workers' workplace integration. This is especially relevant for the eldercare sector, as care work requires communication skills, and the work itself may still be relatively unfamiliar in their home countries. Additionally, as these workers come to Japan through agencies rather than family or personal networks, the lack of connection to communities is also a challenge. The Technical Intern Training Program, one of the main routes for migrant workers to come to Japan, requires intermediary agencies to provide a 2-month-long onboarding course. Although there has been criticism for the disparity in support between agencies and the lack of quality control, the reality and the effectiveness of the onboarding process remain undiscussed.

The purpose of this study is to examine the reality and significance of the onboarding process for migrant workers in terms of integration into their workplaces and communities, especially for the care worker trainees (CWTs). It is based on participation observation and semi-structured interviews at an intermediary organization which recruits CWTs from Indonesia. The interviews were conducted in 2025 with two CWTs, seven staff and five local residents who are involved with the onboarding process.

This study revealed the significance of the onboarding process in terms of managing understanding and expectations for their work, opportunities to adapt to the Japanese language and culture, and connecting to local residents. However, the effectiveness depends entirely on how the onboarding is being provided by intermediary organizations. The frequent shortening of the onboarding period and an expansion of recruitment through a different program which does not mandate this onboarding process are indicators of the undervaluing of the process.

Panel A3 · Stream 15
Migration, Citizenship, and Diversity

Author
Iris Po Yee LO
Hong Kong Baptist University

An Intersectional Approach to Understanding the Experiences of Social Integration Among South and Southeast Asian Mothers in Hong Kong: Mapping Dialectical Social Imaginary

While research has documented the barriers faced by Hong Kong’s growing South and Southeast Asian (SSEA) populations, their gendered experiences have not been fully explored. This study addresses this gap by examining how SSEA women navigate their roles as women, mothers, and immigrants. Drawing on 54 in-depth interviews, we identify three types of “dialectical social imaginaries” experienced by SSEA women: balancing traditional and changing family roles; moving between silence and resistance to racialized bias; and negotiating distance and belonging across co-ethnic and local communities. These social imaginaries are dialectical in the sense that they reflect different and often opposing forces of gendered expectations and cultures, which play a key role in SSEA women’s experiences of migration. Findings show that motherhood norms continue to affect women’s schedule, mobility, and labor force participation. While many normalize everyday discrimination, mothers often mobilize voice and action to protect children. Class status intersects with ethnicity: some middle class participants deliberately draw boundaries with foreign domestic workers in order to avoid stigmatization. These dynamics reveal how gendered expectations, racialized labor, and language systems co shape experiences of migration, belonging, and mobility. Centering women’s narratives, the study emphasizes the importance of the concept of “dialectical social imagination” for future research on the intersection between gender, migration, and culture. It underscores the need for gender-sensitive policies and practices attuned to cultural knowledge and social inequality.

Author
Lucille Lok Sun NGAN
The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

Exploring Sources of Ict Support Among Older Long-settled Chinese Immigrants in Australia and Canada

Emerging research on transnational aging highlights the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in providing emotional and practical support to older adults in geographically separated families. Yet access to, and ongoing support for, formal ICT resources among marginalized older migrant communities remains underexplored. Drawing on in-depth interviews with long-settled older Chinese migrants from Hong Kong living in Australia and Canada (aged 60+), this study examines how they navigate ICT assistance. Findings show that ICT help is embedded in everyday relational dynamics rather than treated as a specialized service or training program. Participants primarily rely on informal assistance from family members and co-ethnic social networks, with limited engagement in formal ethnic community resources or external services. This pattern reflects broader intra-ethnic differentiation and a gendered dimension, with older women more frequently seeking ICT support within their families and social networks. ICT assistance encompasses not only practical guidance, but also vital emotional reassurance provided to older adults by family across generations. This paper argues that ICT help-seeking for older Chinese immigrants is best understood as a relational practice sustained through ongoing family and social interactions that bridge geographic distances, reinforce intergenerational bonds, and offer emotional reassurance and confidence-building support. Policy implications include developing culturally responsive and gender-aware ICT support initiatives that partner with family and community networks to better serve marginalized older migrant populations.

Panel A4 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author
Jiyeoun SONG
Seoul National University

Diverging Trajectories of AI in Labour Markets: Japan and South Korea in Comparative Perspectives

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has sparked intense debate regarding its potential to disrupt global labor markets. While digitalization and automation, increasingly driven by AI, substantially alter the nature of work, predictions regarding the scope and scale of these disruptions remain deeply contested. Industry stakeholders primarily focus on leveraging technological innovation to enhance productivity and efficiency, whereas labor advocates prioritize the protection of employment security and working conditions. Consequently, heightened concerns regarding widespread job displacement and the specter of a jobless future dominate discourse on AI’s labor market implications.

This tension is particularly acute in manufacturing-centered economies like Japan and South Korea, which face mounting pressure to integrate AI and physical AI into production sites. This paper examines the political and social debates surrounding AI’s labor market effects through a comparative analysis of these two nations. Despite their structurally similar economies, their domestic discourses diverge significantly. In Japan, AI is predominantly framed as a pragmatic solution to the structural challenges posed by a rapidly aging workforce. Conversely, South Korean state policymakers champion AI as a strategic instrument for industrial restructuring and national competitiveness. This paper argues that these divergent responses are not merely technological, but reflect distinct socio-political conditions, historical policymaking legacies, and embedded labor market institutions.

Author
Yeongmin MUN
Chung-Ang University

A Qualitative Study on Ai Use Experiences of Workers with Disabilities in South Korea: Reconstructing Independence, Identity, and Vulnerability

AI technology is driving structural transformations in the labor market, increasingly shaping how workers with disabilities in South Korea perform their jobs. While AI use provides clear benefits, it also raises concerns about technological dependency, identity confusion, and institutional exclusion. Despite the policy significance, empirical research exploring everyday experiences of workers with disabilities in AI-mediated work environments remains limited.

This study aims to examine the experiences of South Korean workers with disabilities who use AI in the workplace. Using deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this study conducted in-depth interviews with 15 workers with physical, visual, and hearing disabilities.

Four themes were identified. First, acquisition of labor autonomy through functional compensation: participants reported gaining autonomy in tasks, including task autonomy among hearing and visual impairment workers via AI transcription and image description. Second, disability passing and ambiguity around disability identity: while AI use enabled participants to work without disclosing their disabilities, it simultaneously intensified pressure to conceal disability when AI tools were unavailable. Some participants reported that the increasing reliance on AI gradually diluted their disability identity. Third, new dependency and institutional anxiety: increasing reliance on AI heightened concerns about technical error and the potential substitution of reasonable accommodations by AI tools. Finally, accessibility gaps and deepening inequality: disparities in AI proficiency across age, occupation, and access conditions revealed the potential for entrenching new hierarchies.

The findings show that AI is reconstructing dependency, vulnerability, and inequality by shifting dependency from human assistance to technology, vulnerability from bodily functional limitations to technological accessibility, and inequality from disability type to AI competency. These findings suggest the need to move beyond viewing AI solely as an assistive resource and to address the institutional gaps emerging from AI adoption, including protecting reasonable accommodation obligations and building differentiated AI accessibility frameworks.

Panel A4 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

<u>Author</u> Jaewook LEE	Uncertain Returns: Automation Risk and the Politics of Social Investment
<u>Co-author</u> Jiyeong JEON	Why does perceived automation risk reduce support for skill training while increasing demand for unemployment benefits? This paper argues that the key mechanism is not job loss anxiety per se, but uncertainty about the returns to retraining under rapid technological change. When AI-driven shifts in skill demands are hard to predict, workers rationally favor immediate compensation over long-horizon skill investment. We identify two reinforcing pathways: skepticism about whether newly acquired skills will remain marketable, and concern that retraining leads to work incongruent with one’s occupational identity or social standing. We test these arguments with two complementary studies. First, using pooled cross-national data from the OECD Risks That Matter (RTM) surveys (2020--2024) across 27 OECD countries, we show that higher perceived automation risk is associated with lower training support and higher benefits support, with the pattern especially pronounced among professionals. The occupational gradient is consistent with both pathways, but the observational data alone cannot adjudicate which is more influential. Second, to identify the causal mechanism, we present a pre-registered survey experiment in South Korea (n = 1,500), where participants are randomly assigned to a vignette forecasting low or high technological uncertainty about AI-driven change. We test whether heightened uncertainty shifts preferences from training toward benefits, and whether this operates through skill-return skepticism, identity and status risk, or both. Together, our findings illuminate why automation can generate muted responses or even lower demand for social investment, with implications for welfare state adaptation in rapidly digitizing Asian economies.

Author
Ka Wai CHUNG
The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

The Policy-technology Lag: Evaluating Social Welfare Gaps in Hong Kong Logistics 4.0 Transformation
The Hong Kong logistics sector is currently navigating “multiple disruptions,” characterized by a shrinking labor pool and the rapid integration of Industry 4.0 technologies. While the 2023 “”Action Plan on Modern Logistics Development”” incentivizes automation to maintain regional competitiveness, the socio-economic repercussions for the low-to-mid-skilled workforce remain a critical concern for Asian social policy. This research evaluates the ”Policy-Technology Lag” the disconnect between industrial automation growth and the evolution of social welfare protections. The study investigates whether capital-centric subsidies prioritize operational efficiency at the expense of wage stability and long-term employment security for foundational workers. The study employs a dual-component secondary research design to ensure analytical rigor. First, a quantitative trend analysis utilizes Census and Statistics Department datasets to project labor market shifts over the upcoming horizon. Second, qualitative document analysis is applied to official policy frameworks. This stage utilizes thematic coding to analyze the prioritization of ”economic productivity” versus ”labor protection” objectives within the HKSAR government’s strategic planning. The analysis seeks to identify the specific nature of the ”deskilling” penalty and whether technological integration facilitates labor augmentation or displacement. The outcomes aim to provide a forecast for low-skilled employment, highlighting the structural gaps between projected supply chain management (SCM) operational requirements and the current capacity of social safety nets to support a transitioning workforce.

Panel A5 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

<u>Author</u> Clara Jung Won CHOI <i>Hallym University</i>	Growing up as a Carer: Parental Disability, Stigma, and the Reshaping of Young Carers’ Lives
<u>Co-authors</u> Yun Min KIM	While young carers children and adolescents who provide care for family members support individuals with diverse needs, including those living with disabilities, chronic physical or mental illnesses, substance use disorders, or older relatives, the nature and complexity of caregiving demands vary substantially depending on the care recipient. Consequently, young carers’ challenges are not uniform but shaped by whom they care for and under what conditions. This study examines the lived experiences and support needs of young carers who began caring for a parent with disabilities in pre-adolescence. The study aims to identify the distinctive challenges they face and to propose interventions that promote healthy development and overall well-being. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with young carers, the analysis reveals significant constraints across multiple life domains, including peer relationships, psychological well-being, educational engagement, and access to formal support systems. Findings indicate that these challenges are shaped not only by the demands of caregiving but also by disability-related social stigma. Alongside communication barriers and emotional shock following acquired disability, stigma surrounding people living with disabilities was relationally transmitted and internalized by young carers. This process shaped their self-identity and future trajectories, influencing how they perceived themselves in relation to peers and society. Overall, the findings suggest that caregiving for a parent living with disabilities constitutes a complex life context in which care responsibilities and disability-related social perceptions intersect to shape young carers’ life experiences and trajectories. These challenges exceed the boundaries of individual or family responsibility and should be addressed as a matter of social responsibility. The study concludes with policy-oriented recommendations to more equitably redistribute caregiving responsibilities and protect the rights and future opportunities of young carers.

Author
Jiayin YUAN
The University of Hong Kong

Co-author
Chenhong PENG

All Roads Lead to Rome? Sub-national Patterns and Variations in China’s Pro-natalist Family Policy Configuration
Decades of stringent population control and a persistent “childcare deficit” have driven a sharp fertility decline in China. In 2022, China recorded its first population decrease since 1949, with a fertility rate of 1.09, ranking among the lowest globally. In response, the State Council relaxed birth control and encouraged local governments to expand family welfare following the three-child policy in 2021. Building on local policy experimentation, the Central Government issued a national Fertility Support Scheme in 2024, outlining 13 targeted birth-support measures spanning marriage, childbirth, and childrearing. Against this backdrop, this study examines subnational, city-level variations in family policy configurations across a stratified sample of 85 Chinese cities following the promulgation of the three-child policy. Using cluster analysis, we identify distinct city-level policy patterns based on the generosity of support, pro-natalist orientation, gender equity considerations, and concerns for social inclusion and equality within the broader family policy package. The analysis covers multiple policy instruments, including cash benefits for childbirth and childcare, parental time support and flexible sharing mechanism, and the accessibility, affordability, and accountability of public childcare services. By mapping these variations, the study demonstrates how cities developed distinct policy priorities prior to the introduction of a unified national framework, shedding light on local discretion in policy design and offering a comprehensive view of China’s evolving family policy landscape. It also contributes to updating China’s family policy analytic framework by incorporating emerging policy components that reflect the state’s ongoing shift to pro-natalism. More broadly, the study addresses the contextual gap in global family policy research by extending existing measurement approaches to assess the changing family policy patterns in developing economies.

Panel A5 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

Author

Seoyoung CHOI

Work-related Risks and Systematic Failures in Occupational Safety and Health Management Among Home-based Care Workers: The Publication of Elderly Home Care and the Reproduction of Patriarchal Relations

This study examines the work-related risks faced by home-based care workers and analyzes the labor environment that generates such risks or makes them difficult to manage. In particular, it focuses on the power relations surrounding the labor process that render it difficult or even impossible or home-based care workers to address the work-related risks they themselves perceive. Furthermore, the study investigates both the historical persistence and transformation of inequalities that structure the labor process of home-based care workers in ways that make their work inherently risky. Drawing on sociological theories of labor control and organizational failure, this research aims to explain the structural causes of the systematic failures that repeatedly emerge in workplace occupational safety and health (OSH) management in Korea. The analytical framework of this study consists of three components. First, the study argues that the performance of occupational safety and health management in the workplace is shaped by the degree of control over the care labor process exercised over care workers, as well as by the unequal relational structures embedded within that process. Second, control over the care labor process is constituted at three interconnected levels: the personal characteristics of care recipients, the characteristics of the spaces in which care is provided, and the organizational characteristics and profit structures of the institutions that employ care workers. These three dimensions are closely intertwined in shaping the control exerted over the labor process of care work. The structure of organizations, relationships among organizational members, and the relationship between service recipients and organizations can either strengthen or weaken care workers?capacity to respond to the work-related risks they perceive. Third, the study highlights how the historically persistent structure of health risks associated with caring for parents-in-law, long present in Korean society prior to the introduction of Long-Term Care Insurance for the Elderly continues to influence the formation of control over the labor process of home-based care workers and, in turn, affects their occupational health. Methodologically, this research adopts a case study approach designed to capture how institutions shape individuals' lives as systems that stabilize unequal power relations among social actors. The study draws on multiple sources of data, including policy reports on home-based care workers, materials from National Assembly policy forums, interview data, and relevant media coverage. In addition, statistical survey data and oral histories concerning family caregiving for elderly individuals requiring long-term care are also utilized.

Author

Hyunae RHO

Yonsei University

Co-author

Miyang JUN

Navigating Work-life Harmony: The Interplay of Organisational Culture and Leadership in the Utilization of Family-friendly Policies in the Korean Public Sector

South Korea has expanded family-friendly policies (FFPs) - including parental leave and flexible work arrangements - to address low female labor participation and fertility. However, usability remain limited by workplace pressure and organizational culture. This study examined how organizational culture and supervisory leadership shape FFP utilization and satisfaction in Korean public sector. Using the 2024 Public Employee Perception Survey (N=6,075), organizational culture was operationalized via the Competing Values Framework (CVF) and leadership via the Multifactor Leadership Model (MLM). Binary logistic and hierarchical regressions revealed that rational culture significantly reduced parental leave use, while hierarchical culture increased flexible working hours utilization. This suggests that performance-driven environments create barriers, whereas formalization provides a legitimate framework for daily flexibility. Additionally, transformational leadership significantly enhanced satisfaction with both policies. These findings underscore the need to mitigate rational culture's penalties, leverage procedural clarity, and strengthen transformational leadership through managerial training to activate FFPs effectively.

Panel A6 · Stream 1
Economic Policy and Social Investment Paradigm

Author

Kin Kwok LAI

Saint Francis University

Rethinking Policy Advocacy in an Era of Polycrises: Social Work, Civil Society, and Authoritarian Transformation in Hong Kong

Policy advocacy has long been recognised as a core component of social work practice by organisations such as the International Federation of Social Workers and the Social Work Registration Board. In Hong Kong, social workers have engaged in advocacy since the 1960s and 1970s, notably in campaigns to improve resettlement estates and urban living conditions. However, the political landscape has undergone profound changes following the 2019 Anti-extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement. In response to the social unrest, the government enacted the Hong Kong National Security Law in 2020 and later the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance in 2024. These developments have led some scholars to suggest that Hong Kong has entered a more authoritarian political era.

In the past four to five years, many civil society organisations have disbanded, suspended their operations, or significantly reduced their public activities. This contraction of civil society has weakened the infrastructure that previously supported policy advocacy. Social workers have lost important organisational partners, reducing their ability to mobilise collective action, represent community interests, and influence public policy. Consequently, policy advocacy in Hong Kong is increasingly perceived as constrained, raising questions about its viability and future direction.

This paper re-examines these assumptions by applying Bob Jessop's Strategic-Relational Approach to analyse how structural constraints interact with actors' strategic responses under changing political conditions. It also reviews advocacy experiences and research from other authoritarian or hybrid regimes to identify strategies that remain feasible under tightened political control. Through this framework and comparative insights, the study explores possible pathways for adaptive policy advocacy in Hong Kong and considers how social workers may continue to pursue social change within a transformed political environment.

Author

Sunshine Therese ALCANTARA

Lingnan University

Co-authors

Padmore Adusei AMOAH; Cheng SHI

The ‘circulation of Care’ in Global Migration: A Systematic Review and Implications for East and Southeast Asian Social Policy

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic and the acceleration of digital transformation, global societies relied heavily on the labor of migrant care workers, particularly women, to address their care needs. However, amidst the contemporary polycrises, migrant care workers are not exempted from experiencing personal crises while providing care to both home and destination countries. It is crucial to ask, who provides them with care? Thus, it is essential to examine the flow of care, as sending nations face socio-economic crises fundamentally similar to those in receiving nations. This paper systematically reviews the sources and types of care available to migrant care workers. Using databases such as Web of Science Core Collection, Scopus, ProQuest, and PubMed, the review identifies important key actors in the networks of care of migrants. In addition to their family members back home, they receive care from a variety of social actors, including their employers, non-governmental organizations, religious communities, and peer networks. The analysis reveals the participation of migrant care workers in a complex transnational care loop: providing care to their employers and engaging in transnational caregiving for their families in their home countries, while simultaneously receiving care in their destination and home countries. The findings also highlight the need for gender-responsive social welfare and healthcare policy frameworks to better support the circulation of care among migrant care workers. Finally, the paper discusses policy implications specific to the Southeast and East Asian experience. While the systematic review is global in scope, it offers insights into the dynamics between Southeast Asia as a labor-sending country and East Asia as a labor-destination country. The review concludes with the need to strengthen labor migration policy frameworks to protect the interests of migrant care workers.

Panel A6 · Stream 1
Economic Policy and Social Investment Paradigm

Author
Tauchid Komara YUDA
Department of Social Development & Welfare, Universitas Gadjah Mada

Co-author
Tual Sawn KHAI

Eco-social Policy in Emerging Economies: A Systematic Literature Review of a Green-buffering Trajectory

As a nascent field, little is known about eco-social policy, and to an even lesser extent, within emerging economies. This article examines how eco-social policies are framed and practiced in this context using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 20 peer-reviewed articles, selected from an initial pool of 985 records following a multi-stage screening and eligibility assessment process. The findings reveal that eco-social policy in developing countries has evolved as a sub-agenda within ongoing developmental expansion, operating alongside broader responses to structural complexities rooted in poverty, inequality, and labor informality. It is reflected in the central emphasis on preventive-institutionalized measures (i.e long-term planning, community-based resource governance, just transition strategies), complemented by compensatory short-term interventions (i.e social assistance, job training, and climate-related risk support), aimed at realigning welfare regimes with environmental and social welfare objectives. Nevertheless, these policies are not conditioned to supporting industrial decarbonization, but instead function as risk reducers for the just transition and the climate crisis, particularly given widespread informality and (environmental-related) structural vulnerability. Based on this pattern, the article argues that eco-social policy in emerging economies most likely follows a green-buffering rather than a production-oriented, decarbonization-driven trajectory characteristic of mature welfare states. The article concludes by outlining limitations and future research directions, calling for empirical testing and contextual refinement of the framework across diverse post-colonial settings and emerging just transition coalitions.

Author
Seung-eun KWON
Chung-ang University

Co-author
Jaejeong LEE

Translating the ‘gwangjang’ Network in South Korea: Social Policy Implications Through the Lens of Actor-network Theory (ant)

How can social policy be advanced in the process of democratic recovery? In responding to South Korea’s democratic crisis, civil society opened a ‘Gwangjang’ (the Square) that moved beyond demands for regime change toward calls for fundamental social reform. This study analyzes the ‘Gwangjang’, formed after the 12.3 insurrection, as an ‘actor-network’ comprising human and non-human actors that are intricately entwined. This network-based lens illuminates how diverse actors forge alliances and generate agendas for social reform, while contributing to social policy discourse by demonstrating that a resilient democratic network is essential infrastructure for sustaining welfare state agendas. The study applies Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as its analytical framework. Within this framework, the ‘Gwangjang’ is identified as an actor-network driven by civil society and marginalized groups, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and farmers, who demanded Yoon’s resignation, a transition of power, and comprehensive social reform. The primary empirical evidence is drawn from focus group interview (FGI) data conducted by ‘Getoutyoon’ (Youth Acting for Yoon’s Resignation) with 22 young protest participants. The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, the study identifies the martial law declaration as a disruptive event that ruptured the ‘black boxes’ of democracy, safety, and survival. Second, the study traces the ‘translation’ process of the ‘Gwangjang’, focusing on the mobilization of human actors (youth, ‘YoonOutAction’, politicians) and non-human actors (flags, light sticks, (social) media) to re-solidify the democratic network. Third, the study examines the emergence of the ‘far-right square’ as a counter-network and the struggle for hegemony between the two squares. Ultimately, the study reveals the complex and fluid structure of the ‘Gwangjang’ as a network and clarifies the power relations constructed within the network through the process of translation. Furthermore, it argues that democratic stability is a prerequisite for welfare agendas, while conversely, welfare failures create fertile ground for anti-democratic counter-networks.

Panel A6 · Stream 1
Economic Policy and Social Investment Paradigm

Author
Miseung SHIM
Department of Public Administration, Chonnam National University, Republic of Korea

Co-author
Jihyun PARK

How Climate, Housing, and Ageing Interlock: A Phenomenological Study of Vulnerability

East Asian societies are increasingly exposed to overlapping disruptions, including accelerating climate change, rapid population ageing, intensifying housing inequality, and the digital transformation of welfare systems. Older adults living in precarious urban housing face compounded risks at the intersection of these trends, yet their lived experiences remain insufficiently explored. This study investigates how climate-induced risks, particularly extreme heat, interact with housing conditions, ageing-related constraints, and limited access to public services to shape the everyday vulnerability of older adults in South Korea.

Employing a phenomenological approach, the study draws on 20 in-depth interviews with older adults residing in semi-basement units, deteriorated multi-family dwellings, and rooftop or converted rooms in a high-cost urban environment. The analysis reveals that heat-related vulnerability is not solely a function of environmental exposure. Rather, it emerges through the interlocking mechanisms of inadequate housing structures, energy poverty, chronic health issues, reduced mobility, social isolation, and exclusion from increasingly digitalized welfare systems. Participants reported indoor temperatures surpassing outdoor heat, reluctance to use cooling appliances due to electricity costs, and difficulties accessing cooling centers or navigating digital welfare programs.

These findings highlight systemic blind spots across fragmented housing, health, welfare, and energy policy domains. The study demonstrates how climate, housing, and ageing reinforce one another in producing emergent vulnerabilities that cannot be addressed through single-sector interventions. It argues for a more integrated and adaptive policy framework that includes heat-resilient housing improvements, community-based care networks, mobility and outreach support, and accessible digital or low-tech pathways to public services.

By illuminating how climate, housing, and ageing interlock in shaping lived experiences of vulnerability, this study contributes to broader debates on how East Asian welfare states can strengthen climate justice and protect highly exposed populations in an era of intensifying climate impacts.

Panel A7 · Stream 2
Social Security, Pensions, and Welfare Design

Author
Qian ZHANG
The University of Hong Kong

Co-authors
Chenhong PENG;
Ziyue CUI;
Stefan KÜHNER;
Sarah MARCHAL;
Julia Shu-Huah WANG

Expansion and Layering: How Social Safety Nets Responded to Covid-19 Across Europe and East Asia

Existing research on policy responses to crisis has largely overlooked social safety nets, despite low-income populations facing the greatest vulnerabilities during crises. This study analyzes social safety net responses to COVID-19 across 27 economies in Europe and East Asia through two dimensions: expansion in benefit generosity (i.e., the magnitude of change), and policy layering (i.e., the mode of change). Changes in benefit generosity are captured using two indicators focusing on families with no earnings: (1) changes in benefits received by all types of families, reflecting overall generosity, and (2) the benefit gap between families with children and single-adult households, reflecting the relative emphasis on family support. The data are constructed using the Model Family Approach. Policy layering is measured by the proportion of new social protection programs adopted during COVID-19, derived from the ILO Social Protection Monitor. Cluster analysis of changes in benefit generosity before, during, and after the crisis reveals four trajectories: temporary expansion (n=7), stable adaptation (n=16), retrenchment (n=3), and one delayed surge outlier. The benefit gap between families with children and single-adult families remained small or gradually narrowed in most economies, while Japan stands out in simultaneously expanding overall benefit generosity and widening support for families with children. Cross-classifying these trajectories with high versus low policy layering produces four distinct change patterns: stable adaptation, path-dependent expansion, crisis-driven layering, and transformative expansion. East Asian economies are uniformly high in policy layering, diverging only in generosity. Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong temporarily expanded benefits, while Singapore shows stable adaptation. European societies encompass diverse change patterns ranging from stable adaptation to transformative expansion. These divergent patterns are attributed to differences in welfare regimes, pandemic severity, and levels of economic development. This study contributes to the understanding of welfare states' crisis responses through benefit expansion and policy layering, engaging with debates on path dependency. Focusing on social safety nets, this study also provides comparative insights into welfare states' redistributive commitment across European and East Asian regimes.

Author
Julia Shu-Huah WANG
National Taiwan University

Co-authors
Dahye KIM;
Chenhong PENG;
Wei CHEN;
Ziyue CUI;
Songduo MA;
Junyou CHEN;
Stefan Kühner;
Paul YIP

The Effects of Covid-19 Social Policy Responses on Economic Wellbeing Across 164 Countries

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted the health and economic well-being of populations worldwide. As the pandemic has subsided, an important question remains: which types of social policies were most effective in mitigating the economic consequences of the crisis? To address this question, we constructed a country-level dataset combining indicators of COVID-19 social policy responses and economic outcomes from multiple data sources. Economic outcome variables include unemployment rates from the World Bank and measures of subjective income struggles and insufficient food from the Gallup World Poll (GWP), which provides annual data from 2000 to 2023. The key independent variables capture social policy responses during the pandemic and were compiled from several sources, including the International Labour Organization, the World Bank (Gentilini et al., 2021), the IMF Fiscal Monitor Database (IMF Fiscal Affairs Department, 2021), and social protection response budget data reported by Demirgüç-Kunt et al. (2024). Information on COVID-19 phases and policy responses was obtained from the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT), covering containment and health policy measures implemented between March 2020 and December 2022 (Hale et al., 2021). These periods were further coded into pre-pandemic, pandemic,

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and post-pandemic phases. Additional demographic controls were drawn from United Nations data (2024), and confirmed COVID-19 death counts were obtained from OxCGRT. We employ country fixed-effects regression models to examine the relationship between social policy responses and economic outcomes. The results indicate that market-oriented measures were associated with improved economic outcomes, whereas welfare-oriented measures were negatively associated with these outcomes. In particular, greater provision of basic needs assistance and social assistance was associated with higher unemployment rates and greater subjective economic hardship. By contrast, stronger job protection measures were associated with lower unemployment rates and reduced economic struggles, especially in the post-pandemic period. These findings provide insights for designing social policy responses to future large-scale external shocks.

Author
Stefan Kühner
Lingnan University

Co-author
Jiaying LIN

Inclusion and Exclusion in Pandemic Social Protection: A Scoping Review of Evidence on Food Security, Poverty, and Employment

The COVID-19 pandemic forced governments to choose between safeguarding incomes (such as cash transfers and unemployment benefits) and protecting jobs (through furlough schemes and wage subsidies). However, this binary decision conceals a more fundamental factor that determines effectiveness: the existing structure of who is included and who is excluded from social protection. Evidence on how different pandemic responses have addressed food insecurity, poverty, and unemployment remains scattered across countries and disciplines, with no comprehensive account of national-level quantitative data on these critical issues.

In this scoping review following PRISMA-ScR guidelines, we map and synthesise evidence from studies employing quantitative causal or quasi-causal methods (2020-2026). We find that cash transfers and unemployment insurance significantly reduced food insecurity and poverty, especially when benefits were generous and quickly implemented. In-kind transfers, such as school meals, helped ensure children's access to nutritious food. Job retention schemes maintained employment in the short term, although effects varied by sector and worker type. However, these overall effects conceal deeper structural issues: informal workers taking up around 65% of employment in the Asia-Pacific region were systematically excluded from unemployment insurance; gender inequalities in employment outcomes persisted across both high- and low-income settings; and refugees were completely absent from the evidence base. Moreover, one-off payments and transfers, unadjusted for household size or urban costs, were often inadequate.

Social protection acts as a strong shock absorber, but its effectiveness depends on design choices made well before a crisis occurs. Effective pandemic preparedness involves moving beyond the incomes-versus-jobs debate to create systems where who is included and who is excluded is shaped not by crisis improvisation, but by inclusive policy design: offering portable benefits for informal workers, providing differentiated support based on household composition, utilising hybrid delivery channels, and implementing real-time monitoring to reveal excluded groups.

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Author
Xue LI
Fudan University

From Expansion to Retrenchment: Winners and Losers in China’s Social Policy Change, 2008-2021

Following the social policy expansion of the early 2000s under the Hu–Wenadministration, China’s social security system entered a phase of sustained yet recalibrated retrenchment under the Xi–Li administration. As economic growth slowed and fiscal pressures mounted, financial responsibilities increasingly shifted to individuals, leading to a contraction in effective coverage. While existing literature largely focuses on the expansion phase and its effects, far less attention has been paid to retrenchment and its consequences. To address this gap, this study examines both the expansion and contraction of social insurance and compares their differential impacts across social groups. Focusing on residency-based social insurance and drawing on CSS (China Social Survey) data from 2008 to 2021, which captures both the expansive and retrenchment phases, we divide the period into three stages: expansion (2008–2012), consolidation (2013–2016), and retrenchment (2017–2021). Our findings show that both expansion and retrenchment were unevenly distributed across social groups. During the expansion period, compared to the consolidation phase, urban residents were the most likely to obtain resident social insurance coverage, followed by rural-to-urban migrants and rural residents. In contrast, during the retrenchment period, rural residents were the most likely to lose coverage, followed by rural-to-urban migrants, while urban residents were the least affected. A similar regional pattern emerges. The prosperous eastern region benefited most during expansion, while the central region suffered the greatest losses during retrenchment. Overall, the results indicate a stratified pattern of social policy change: urban residents were both the most likely to gain coverage during expansion and the least likely to lose it during retrenchment, whereas rural residents were the least likely to benefit from expansion and the most vulnerable during contraction. In this sense, these two groups emerge as the primary winners and losers of social policy change, respectively. This study suggests that China’s social security regime continues to operate through a divide-and-rule strategy of authoritarian governance, even though it temporarily extended benefits to disadvantaged groups.

Author
Ziyue CUI
The University of Hong Kong

Development and Validation of a Chinese Short-form Carin Welfare Deservingness Scale: A Comparison of Crisis and Non-crisis Scenarios

The CARIN (Control, Attitude, Reciprocity, Identity, Need) welfare deservingness scale provides a validated instrument for directly measuring deservingness opinions. However, its cross-cultural validity in East Asian contexts remains under-researched, and its length may burden respondents. This study validates a shortened CARIN scale in Hong Kong across periods of normalcy and pandemic crisis using population-representative data from the Hong Kong Panel Survey on WelfareAttitudes (N=1,491).

We selected the highest-loading items per dimension from the original CARIN scale to construct a short-form version. Then, we applied a CFA-CTC(M-1)? model across two scenarios (methods): the non-crisis scenarios (with deservingness opinion regarding public assistance as the designated item) and the pandemic crisis scenarios (with deservingnessopinionregardingCovid-19unemploymentreliefasthedesignateditem).

The results showed that the five-factor CARIN structure explained the majority of variance in welfare deservingness perceptions, with high trait stability across two scenarios (ranging from 78% to 85%). The crisis scenario demonstrated only modest method effects (variance = 0.17), and factor loadings for all five dimensions were high and significant, ranging from 0.79 to 0.90. The five-factor structure demonstrated good fit in the Hong Kong general population

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(RMSEA = 0.048, CFI = 0.991, TLI = 0.980, SRMR = 0.014), confirming the scale’s validity and reliability. Furthermore, the finding indicates that respondents became less stringent in their deservingness judgments during the crisis,?most pronounced for need-based deservingness and least for reciprocity.

Structural Equation Modelling further established construct validity by examining the scale’s associations with socioeconomic determinants and its predictive power on poverty attribution. The analysis identifies gender, education level, employment status, and welfare beneficiary status as significant predictors of deservingness attitudes. Moreover, stricter deservingness perceptions significantly predicted the individual attribution of poverty. Overall, this research contributes a short-form CARIN scale validated for East Asian populations. By testing it in both crisis and non-crisis settings, the study offers a practical tool for future research.

Panel A8 · Stream 5
Population and Demographic Shifts: Aging, Low Fertility, Intergenerational Relations

Author
Jung Hi WON
King’s College London

Pathways to Higher Fertility: A Configurational Analysis of Structural, Institutional, and Cultural Conditions

Fertility decline has become one of the most pressing demographic challenges confronting advanced economies, with particularly acute consequences in East Asia. Despite extensive scholarship, existing research has struggled to identify consistent determinants of higher fertility, as similar policies and socio-economic conditions often yield divergent outcomes across countries. This paper argues that fertility outcomes are best understood as the product of configurations —specific combinations of structural, institutional, and cultural conditions —rather than isolated causal factors.

Using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), the study examines 40 advanced economies to identify multiple pathways sufficient for sustaining higher fertility. Ten conditions are analysed across three domains: structural factors (economic growth, housing affordability, youth unemployment, temporary labour ratio, and urban concentration), institutional factors (childcare costs and parental leave), and cultural-demographic factors (gender norms, female employment, and female tertiary education). All conditions are calibrated into fuzzy sets, allowing for the identification of equifinal and asymmetric causal patterns.

The analysis reveals three main findings. First, no single condition constitutes a necessary requirement for higher fertility, underscoring the limits of universal policy prescriptions. Second, a set of core enabling conditions recurs across most fertility-sustaining configurations: affordable housing, low temporary labour ratio, youth employment, low childcare costs, high female education and employment, and relatively egalitarian gender norms. Third, institutional factors such as parental leave generosity, urban concentration, and economic growth operate as peripheral conditions whose effects depend on broader contextual combinations.

These findings highlight the configurational nature of fertility regimes and help explain why similar policy interventions produce divergent demographic outcomes across regions. For East Asian societies confronting persistent low fertility, the results suggest that effective responses require coherent policy packages that jointly address affordability, labour market security, and gendered opportunity structures, rather than reliance on single-instrument family policy.

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Population and Demographic Shifts: Aging, Low Fertility, Intergenerational Relations

Author
Lok Man Tiffany PANG
The University of Hong Kong

Evolving Family Norms and Fertility Decision-making in Hong Kong: A Dyadic Perspective

Over the past decades, the global fertility rate has experienced a dramatic decline. To explain fertility intentions and behaviours, research has predominantly relied on rational choice models focused on structural and demographic variables. Meanwhile, normative beliefs about family and wellbeing are often treated as secondary factors or background context. Drawing from the Theory of Conjunctural Action, this study foregrounds family norms as primary drivers of fertility decision-making.

The study is situated in the ultra-low fertility context in Hong Kong and addresses two questions: (1) How are individuals renegotiating traditional familistic norms? (2) How do these individual reinterpretations to shape dyadic fertility decision-making within couples? Maximum variation sampling is used to recruit married couples of reproductive age with different parities and income level. In-depth, joint-then-separate dyadic interviews are conducted. Reflexive thematic analysis is employed to draw out insights.

Preliminary insights reveal couples prioritising their children’s wellbeing over traditional functional roles such as care in old age and lineage values. Amid unaffordable housing and societal instability, some are discouraged and perceived parenthood as an unattainable goal. Meanwhile, those who view children as integral to family would willingly pursue parenthood despite the odds. This study informs policymakers on how normative shifts shape fertility behaviours, laying the foundation for policy redesigns beyond childcare and cash incentives.

Author
Kexin WANG
University of Sydney

“We Just Live Day by Day”: Aging, Poverty, and Everyday Struggles in China’s Poverty Alleviation Resettlement Communities

China’s Poverty Alleviation Resettlement (PAR) program has relocated more than 16 million rural residents from ecologically fragile and impoverished areas to newly built settlements, representing one of the largest state-led resettlement initiatives globally. While existing research has highlighted improvements in housing, infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities, limited attention has been paid to the lived experiences of older adults, who constitute a particularly vulnerable group in the relocation process.

Drawing on 32 semi-structured interviews with older residents relocated from remote villages to a county-level community in northwestern China, this paper explores how older rural migrants navigate later life at the intersection of aging, poverty, and displacement. The findings reveal a paradox of post-poverty development. Although relocation improves living conditions and access to public services, many older adults continue to face structural vulnerabilities, including inadequate pensions, limited healthcare coverage, and difficulties adapting to urban life.

Their everyday experiences are characterized by what this paper conceptualizes as “unretired aging”, a condition marked by continued labor, compressed consumption, and shrinking spatial mobility. Psychologically, many adopt a pragmatic orientation of “living day by day,” while placing their hopes for upward mobility primarily on the education and future success of their grandchildren.

These findings highlight the persistence of capability deprivation among older resettled populations and suggest the need to reorient anti-poverty and aging policies from a primary focus on spatial relocation toward capability-oriented and community-integrated welfare support.

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Author
Lu MENG
Hong Kong Baptist University

Co-author
Chunyan RAN

Decoding Policy Signals: Heterogeneous Effects of Pronatalist Policies on Fertility Decision in China

China is navigating a profound demographic crisis, with its total fertility rate (TFR) plummeting to a record low of 1.01 in 2023(Source: China Population and Employment Statistical Yearbook, 2024). In response, sub-national governments have enacted a suite of pronatalist policies, encompassing financial incentives, extended parental leave, and improved childcare services. Despite this significant policy effort, a conspicuous paradox persists: high policy intensity has yielded disappointingly low fertility responses. This study posits that a primary reason for this efficacy gap lies in the homogeneous, ‘one-size-fits-all’ design of current policies, which fails to account for substantial heterogeneity in the needs and preferences of different demographic subgroups and households. To address this, our research interrogates two pivotal questions: (1) Laterally, what are the differential effects of the three core policy signals—financial subsidies, leave extensions, and childcare support—in fertility decisions? How do different types of policies affect the various dimensions of fertility decisions (Readiness, Willingness, and Ability)? (2) Longitudinally, how does the effect of a given policy signal vary across different household and individual characteristics? Moving beyond conventional economic cost-benefit models (e.g., Becker, 1960), we develop a novel theoretical framework integrating Policy Feedback Theory and the Readiness, Willingness, and Ability (RWA) framework. We introduce policy signaling theory to argue that pronatalist policies are not merely instrumental tools but also function as communicative signals that shape citizens’perceptions of governmental support and social norms, thereby influencing their cognitive readiness, emotional willingness, and assessed ability to fertility decision-making. To disentangle these complex causal relationships, we employ a factorial vignette experiment. This methodological approach allows us to present a nationally diverse sample of Chinese adults of reproductive age (N ? 3,000) with randomized combinations of policy attributes. Participants evaluate their fertility intentions across multiple scenarios, enabling precise quantification of the marginal causal effects of each policy type and their interactions with respondent characteristics. The findings will deliver robust causal evidence on the mechanistic pathways through which policy signals influence fertility decisions. Theoretically, the study contributes by pioneering the application of policy feedback and signaling lenses to low fertility research. Its methodological innovation lies in its experimental design, which isolates the effects of multifaceted policies. The practical and comparative policy implications are substantial: the results will provide a clear evidence base for designing targeted, efficient, and equitable pronatalist policies in China. By identifying policies that effectively reduce the disproportionate care burden on women and enhance their social well-being, this study aims to contribute to the design of pronatalist measures that simultaneously promote gender equity, offering critical insights for other nations grappling with the global challenge of ultra-low fertility.

Author
Nan YANG

Why Do Family Policies Fail to Encourage Fertility? Institutional Incentives Across Welfare Regimes

Low fertility has become a defining challenge across East Asian societies, yet pronatalist family policies have largely failed to reverse this trend despite significant and growing policy investment. Existing research typically evaluates policy effectiveness through aggregate measures of generosity such as total family spending as a share of GDP, which may overlook how institutional design interacts with the stratified costs of childrearing across different income groups. This paper introduces the concept of “institutional misalignment” to capture situations where policy instruments fail to address the dominant cost burdens faced by families. To examine this argument

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Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author
Jiwei QIAN
National University of Singapore

Employment Before Insurance: Decentralised Governance and Procyclical Social Policy in China

This study examines a paradox in China’s unemployment insurance (UI) system: coverage expansion weakens during periods of economic deceleration, precisely when stable enrollment is most essential for UI to fulfill its countercyclical stabilization function. Using city-level panel data from 286 cities between 2011 and 2022, we show that UI enrollment growth weakens as GDP growth slows, a pattern that intensified after 2019, while pension and health insurance coverage remained comparatively stable. This selective vulnerability reflects weak compliance incentives and local government under-enforcement. Low benefit levels weaken workers’ incentives to demand and maintain coverage, while local governments prioritize employment promotion over social protection. In this context, local officials relax enforcement of UI compliance and tolerate labor market informalization. Analysis of expenditure data from major cities further reveals a post-2019 reallocation of resources away from UI benefits toward job stabilization subsidies. These findings contribute to comparative welfare state research by demonstrating that China’s UI system exhibits distinctly productivist features, with coverage shaped by economic conditions rather than protectionist welfare principles. Together, the results show how China’s decentralized social insurance architecture embeds systematic trade-offs between short-term employment stability and long-term worker protection.

Author
Tat Chor AU-YEUNG
Lingnan University

Extending Working Lives and Precarity: Low-wage Older Earners? Socioeconomic Imaginaries of Retirement and Pensions in Hong Kong

“While previous studies from sociology, social policy, and social gerontology mainly focus on the social determinants of extended working lives (EWL), older workers’ lived experience and normative expectations under neoliberal contexts receive less attention. Three research questions emerge in this study: (1) why and how do older people engage in EWL? (2) in what ways do low-wage mature workers understand their employment and pension incomes? (3) How is EWL shaped by actors’ socioeconomic imaginaries in a neoliberal context?

Informed by cultural political economy theories, this paper investigates older workers’ socioeconomic imaginaries, including the images of ageing, perceived uncertainty, and fictional expectations shaped by the labour market and pension systems. By conducting in-depth interviews with 48 low-wage older employees in Hong Kong, the findings unpack the material and semiotic forces driving workers’ EWL. First, interviewees encountered age-specific and health-related work ethic, in which ageist arrangements and discriminatory practices disempowered older workers, resulting in involuntary (un)retirement. Second, workers’ perceived precarity was premised on the insecurity beyond their control, for example, unpredictable employment, costs of living, and health risks. While nothing could be guaranteed, the only survival strategy was to work as long as possible. Finally, workers’ policy preferences of working time and flexible arrangements were associated with the pension and income inadequacy. Due to the policy design of means-tested old-age benefits, workers were struggled in the access to social protection and to better quality of work.

Arguably, low-wage older workers tended to unceasingly work without retirement plans, leading to the power asymmetries constructed in workplaces and the business costs shifted to workers. This paper reconceptualises EWL from a cultural political economy perspective on socioeconomic imaginaries, while the analysis of workers’ lived experience problematises the promotion of EWL as a good and low-cost policy approach to workforce ageing. “

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Author
Hayoung PARK
Seoul National University

Extending Working Lives in the Ageing Welfare State: The Heterogeneous Health Effects of Later-life Labour Market Participation in South Korea

Amid welfare state restructuring driven by the longevity revolution, the extension of working lives (EWL) has become a dominant policy response. However, the biographical impact of prolonged labor market attachment on older adults remains under-theorized. South Korea is a compelling case due to its high older-adult labor force participation rate, largely necessitated by economic marginality. The South Korean government has incrementally raised the pension eligibility age and recalibrated the legal definition of ‘the elderly’, justifying these shifts through a normative discourse that frames late-life employment as beneficial for health. Yet, this ignores the individualization of risk that may lead to disparate health outcomes across different socioeconomic statuses.

This study examines the health effects of labor market participation in later life to test the validity of the ‘healthy work’ assumption. Using nine waves of the Korean Longitudinal Study of Ageing (KLoSA, 2006–2022), I employ a two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model. To identify causal effects and mitigate the ‘healthy worker effect’, the sample excludes populations highly susceptible to selection bias. Health outcomes are estimated across two dimensions: physical and mental health.

The analysis reveals that while labor market participation significantly improves physical health, it has no significant effect on mental health. This divergence may reflect job mismatches and the precarious nature of the Korean elderly labor market. Furthermore, heterogeneity based on socioeconomic status were observed. Positive health effects were found exclusively among the low-educated group, with economic status changes acting as the primary mediator. For these vulnerable older adults, labor income serves as a last line of defense for survival. These findings suggest that the health benefits of working longer are driven by economic necessity rather than ‘active ageing’ ideals, underscoring the need to restructure old-age income security systems and labor market policies.”

Author
Genghua HUANG
Lingnan University

Co-authors
Yawen WENG;
Zhaiwen PENG

Institutional Complicity: Why Platform Workers Choose Instability in China

The global expansion of the digital platform economy has generated a rapidly growing workforce that largely falls outside existing social insurance systems, which were designed for standard employment relationships. Extending social protection to platform workers has therefore emerged as a pressing policy challenge and a focus of significant scholarly debate. In response, China, a pioneer in the digital platform economy with the world’s largest platform labor market, has initiated a pilot reform in recent years to establish occupational injury insurance for this group. By tracing the evolution of this policy reform, this study employs a political economy lens to analyze the structural drivers behind its initiation and the embedded tensions within its design. It examines the distinctive policy design of the occupational injury insurance scheme and critically assesses the limitations inherent in both the reform approach and its proposed framework. The paper argues that the reform reflects a state-mediated effort to reconcile capital accumulation in the digital economy with social stability yet remains constrained by institutional path dependence and the inherent tensions of regulating precarious labor. This research seeks to contribute to academic debates on social protection in the digital era and offers policy-relevant insights aimed at bridging the protection gap for platform workers in China and other developing economies.

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Author
Lei ZHANG
Chengdu University

Co-author
Nan YANG

Institutional Complicity: Why Platform Workers Choose Instability in China

Conventional scholarship on platform labour portrays workers as passive victims of structural exploitation, yet the experience of delivery riders in China reveals a more complex reality that many workers actively choose unstable employment arrangements over formal job security. When Chinese food delivery platforms began offering social insurance to comply with new labour regulations, an unexpected pattern emerged, that the majority of riders declined these protections, preferring to maintain their precarious but flexible working conditions. This study investigates a fundamental puzzle: why do rational actors choose instability when stability is available? And how do platforms identify and utilize these preferences to maintain flexible labour governance?

Through in-depth interviews with delivery riders of varying backgrounds (senior vs. novice, full-time vs. part-time) and platform managers, this research reveals the complex logic underlying workers' choices and platforms' strategic responses. Building on Kalleberg's framework of precarious work, Standing's notion of the 'precariat' and Lee's concept of 'melting labour' the study situates Chinese riders within broader debates on how digitalisation blurs the boundaries between standard and non-standard work while intensifying insecurity. At the same time, it advances a concept of institutional complicity to capture the dynamic relationship where workers' agency and structural constraints intertwine.

The findings reveal that riders' choice for instability operates through three interconnected logics: economic rationality (daily cash flow trumps long-term security given immediate survival needs), temporal autonomy (flexible schedule), and institutional distrust (skepticism toward both platform commitments and the broader social security system). Rather than being victims of false consciousness, riders engage in sophisticated cost-benefit calculations that prioritise short-term certainty over uncertain long-term promises.

Platforms, in turn, have developed complex strategies to identify, amplify, and institutionalise these preferences. Through discourse framing (('empowering entrepreneurs' rather than 'exploiting workers'), institutional design (gamified daily earnings displays that obscure long-term costs), and information environment management (promoting peer-to-peer sharing of flexibility success stories), platforms transform workers' survival-driven preferences into seemingly voluntary choices. This creates a feedback loop where rational individual decisions collectively strengthen the precarious labour system.

The concept of institutional complicity in this research captures this dynamic relationship where workers' agency and structural constraints intertwine. Unlike traditional coercion or false consciousness models, institutional complicity recognises workers as rational actors while revealing how their constrained choices ultimately serve platform interests. This represents neither pure exploitation nor genuine empowerment, but a more complex form of labour control that operates through the alignment of individual rationality with corporate strategy under conditions of structural inequality.

These findings contribute to labour sociology by challenging simple victim narratives and revealing the sophisticated mechanisms through which contemporary capitalism secures worker compliance. For precarity studies, the research demonstrates how instability can be actively chosen rather than merely imposed, complicating our understanding of agency in precarious work. The study also advances platform governance literature by showing how digital technologies enable new forms of soft control that work through preference manipulation rather than direct coercion.

In terms of the policy implications, current labor protection strategies fail not because they lack enforcement power, but because they misunderstand workers' actual preferences and constraints. Effective intervention requires addressing the structural conditions that make short-term rationality appear optimal, rather than simply mandating protections that workers actively resist. This suggests a need for more comprehensive labour policies that account for worker subjectivity while addressing the underlying inequalities that constrain their choices.

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Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Jung Min PARK
Seoul National University

Does Debt Relief Improve Well-being? Evidence from Debt Adjustment Programmes

Over 350,000 individuals (8 per 1,000 adults) apply for personal debt adjustment programs each year in South Korea. This study examines how the use of debt adjustment programs affects the quality of life of over-indebted individuals, particularly in terms of their economic situation and subjective well-being. The sample consists of approximately 1,200 individuals, divided into a pre-debt adjustment group and a post-debt adjustment group. Key findings are as follows: First, the post-adjustment group compared to the pre-adjustment group showed significantly increased income and decreased debt repayment burden. Second, the post-adjustment group showed significant improvement on subjective well-being measured by life satisfaction, depression, and happiness. Lastly, among the three types of debt adjustment programs, the Type 1 program that includes principal reduction had the greatest impact, followed by the Type 2 program that adjusts interest rates without principal reduction, and the Type3 program that allows for repayment extension. These findings provide empirical evidence that personal debt adjustment programs contribute to improving debtors' quality of life as well as their financial conditions.

Author
Soyoon WEON
Chung-Ang University

Dynamics of Multidimensional Poverty in South Korea Before and After Covid-19

Recent research tends to show that multidimensional poverty has fallen substantially over the past decades. Yet little is known about how multidimensional poverty dynamics are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic contraction. This study aims to examine multidimensional poverty dynamics in South Korea, with particular attention to whether COVID-19 altered its progress. Using data from the Korean Welfare Panel Study, which was surveyed from 2013 to 2022, this study applies the Alkire-Foster counting approach to measure multidimensional poverty across five dimensions and 10 indicators: living standards, education, health, economic status, and social security. I used three research questions: (1) How multidimensional poverty change before and after the pandemic? (2) Which deprivation indicators drove those changes? (3) Which groups were most vulnerable over time? This study revealed that multidimensional poverty declined steadily across the decade, with the multidimensional poverty index falling from 0.307 in 2013 to 0.203 in 2022. However, decomposition results indicate that while income and employment deprivation worsened during the pandemic for those who had remained poor since the pre-pandemic period, other indicators improved over time, allowing the aggregate poverty rate to continue its decline. Specifically, during the early post-pandemic recovery (2021-2022), while the non-poor quickly found employment, the poor experienced a continued deterioration in their employment status. Furthermore, older adults and households with children or members with disabilities were associated with greater vulnerability to persistent or recurrent poverty. These preliminary findings indicate that COVID-19 did not reverse trends in multidimensional poverty in South Korea, but these aggregate improvements conceal worsening conditions among those already disadvantaged. I suggest that future research should examine how the living conditions of vulnerable groups have changed in the post-pandemic era.

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Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Euiyoung KANG

Unequal Exposure to Workplace Risk: Occupational Injuries Among Workers with Disabilities

Occupational injury research has largely focused on damage to the bodies of workers presumed to possess ‘normal’ labor capacity. As a result, additional injuries and illnesses experienced by workers who already live with disabilities have remained largely invisible in both research and policy discussions. This study addresses this gap by examining the determinants of occupational injuries among workers with disabilities. It argues that such injuries are shaped less by impairment itself than by structural inequalities in the distribution of workplace risks. The analysis uses data from the second wave of Korean Panel Survey of Employment for the Disabled (2016?3). Occupational injury experience is treated as the dependent variable, and panel random-effects logistic regression models are employed. Key explanatory variables include disability type, severity status, work-related inconvenience due to disability, perceived job mismatch, workplace disability accommodations, and perceived workplace safety, while controlling for sociodemographic and employment characteristics. The results show that disability type and severity status are not significant predictors of occupational injury. Instead, work-related inconvenience due to disability and perceived job mismatch significantly increase the likelihood of occupational injury, while higher levels of workplace disability accommodation and workplace safety significantly reduce this likelihood. These findings indicate that injury risks arise less from impairment itself than from inequalities in how workplace risks are distributed and managed. Interaction effects further show that although accommodations and safety measures reduce overall injury risks, they do not significantly offset the negative effects of job mismatch or work-related difficulties. This suggests that workplace supports alone cannot fully mitigate risks produced by structurally mismatched jobs and unequal exposure to hazardous work. Overall, the findings highlight the need to move beyond impairment-centered explanations of occupational injury. Reducing injury risks among workers with disabilities requires addressing structural inequalities in job assignment, workplace safety, and disability accommodations through more integrated preventive policies.

Author
YONG-UN CHO
South China Agricultural University

Beyond Labour Income: Evaluating the Decoupling of Asset Formation Among South Korean Youth? A Comparative Analysis of Psm-did and Synthetic Difference-in-differences (sdid)

In contemporary South Korea, wealth—specifically real estate—has transcended its role as an economic asset to become a critical “social entry ticket” that dictates eligibility for marriage and family formation. The prevailing national crises of ultra-low fertility and rising non-marriage serve as the structural background for this study. This research focuses on the “income-asset decoupling,” where the link between labor income and wealth accumulation has fundamentally weakened, creating new barriers to social mobility.

Using long-term longitudinal data from the Korea Welfare Panel Study (KOWEPS, Waves 1?9), this study empirically demonstrates that the elasticity of asset formation from labor income reached a structural break following the 2015 asset price surge. We specifically highlight the systemic marginalization of the “high-income, low-asset” group, who possess high human capital but remain excluded from effective asset formation due to a lack of intergenerational transfers.

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Methodologically, this study provides a comparative evaluation between Propensity Score Matching Difference-in-Differences (PSM-DID) and the Synthetic Difference-in-Differences (SDID) approach. We argue that traditional models like PSM-DID may produce biased estimates when pre-trends are unstable, potentially leading to misguided policy decisions. By integrating unit and time weights, the SDID model yielded effect sizes 15?0% more refined than PSM-DID, proving that advanced causal inference is essential for accurate structural diagnosis. The study concludes that addressing the income-asset decoupling requires a transition toward asset-based welfare strategies grounded in precise empirical evidence.

Author
Kaori GOTO
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences,
The University of Tokyo

Co-authors
Chikako TANI;
Ami HARADA;
Akira MATSUBARA;
Aya ABE

Time Poverty and Economic Poverty Among Working Mothers in Japan

Japan’s labor market is characterized by a dual structure: regular employment is marked by lifetime employment, full benefits, and long full-time working hours, whereas non-regular employment involves short-term contracts, limited benefits, and part-time work. This structure has maintained a gender-based division of labor. Men are concentrated in regular employment and spend relatively little time on childcare and housework, while women often shift from regular to non-regular employment after marriage/child birth and assume primary responsibility for domestic work. In recent years, however, women’s labor force participation—both in regular and non-regular employment—has increased due to labor shortages. At the same time, previous research suggests that unpaid care responsibilities have not declined proportionately, potentially contributing to a shortage of free time among working women. One concept closely related to the scarcity of free time is time poverty. Since being formalized by Vickery (1977), time poverty has been examined using various measurement approaches and applied to diverse populations. While prior research identifies long working hours as a key determinant of time poverty, less attention has been paid to its relationship with economic poverty and to whether these two dimensions overlap or capture distinct aspects of living conditions. This study examines both time poverty and economic poverty among working mothers in Japan. It uses survey data from the Cabinet Office, provided by the Social Science Japan Data Archive, and analyzes which groups of working women, such as those defined by household type, employment status, and education level, are more likely to experience each form of poverty. The paper also investigates how time poverty and economic poverty relate to health and well-being outcomes, as well as to each other. By considering both dimensions independently yet, simultaneously, we aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of poverty beyond income-based measures alone.

Panel B1 · Stream 3
Climate Change, Just Transitions, and Environmental Social Policy

Author
Defri Bayu AFIF
Universitas Gadjah Mada

Just Energy Transitions and Indigenous Resistance: Social Policy Challenges of Geothermal Development in Flores, Indonesia

This paper examines the social policy challenges arising from geothermal energy development in indigenous territories on Flores Island, Indonesia. As part of Indonesia's climate strategy, the government designated Flores as a “Geothermal Island” to accelerate renewable energy expansion. While framed as a sustainable solution, geothermal projects in communities such as Poco Leok and Wae Sano have generated strong local resistance. This paper asks how indigenous knowledge informs community responses to energy transition policies and what this reveals about the limits of current social policy frameworks. Using a qualitative case study approach based on policy documents, civil society reports, legal records, and media sources, the study analyses how indigenous communities mobilise cultural values, customary institutions, and collective action to contest state-led development. The findings show that resistance is not merely opposition to infrastructure projects but reflects deeper concerns over land rights, social cohesion, and participation in decision-making. Indigenous knowledge functions as a basis for alternative conceptions of sustainability that challenge technocratic and top-down policy approaches. The paper argues that climate-driven energy transitions can reproduce social exclusion when social policy fails to incorporate local knowledge and community consent. By situating indigenous resistance within debates on just transition and environmental social policy, this study contributes to understanding how social policy in Southeast Asia must adapt to the interconnected challenges of climate change, governance, and social justice.

Author
Sangho YE
School of Social Welfare, Yonsei University

Policy Insurance as a Social Security Instrument for Climate Crisis Adaptation: Focusing on the Case of South Korea Gyeonggi Climate Insurance

Today, the climate crisis negatively impacts health, safety, livelihoods, and vulnerability through rapid environmental changes. Accordingly, social protection has been buffering these impacts through income protection and inequality reduction. However, existing social protection systems alone cannot fully alleviate the rapidly increasing temperature-related illnesses and the resulting economic burden caused by the climate crisis, which are particularly severe for vulnerable groups. This suggests the necessity of an integrated social protection policy that protects the health rights of social members while additionally supporting vulnerable groups related to medical needs. At the same time, social protection policies addressing these two issues are only just beginning, making it difficult to confirm specific examples. Therefore, this study identifies effective adaptation policy instruments and analyzes specific cases to propose an integrated social protection system that secures the right to health against the climate crisis while alleviating the medical and financial burdens of vulnerable groups. First, among adaptation instruments, ‘policy insurance’ was identified as a mechanism that complements the drawbacks and enhances the strengths of both direct public spending and insurance principles. Subsequently, Korea’s “Gyeonggi Climate Insurance” was selected as a case study and was analyzed using Gilbert and Terrell's framework, reflecting its operation as an insurance-based social service unlike similar international policies, its coverage of climate-related health and financial burdens, and its additional support for vulnerable groups. The analysis confirms that the program features automatic universal enrollment and tax-based financing, providing application-based benefits for mental distress, medical transportation, and accidents. Key strengths include the synergy of universal coverage and targeted support, alongside the prevention of adverse selection. However, limitations such as insufficient benefit levels, low utilization due to the application-based delivery system, and budgetary uncertainties were identified. Consequently, this study suggests that policy insurance can serve as an effective adaptation instrument, provided that delivery systems, benefit levels, and coverage scope are improved.

Co-author
Professor Ahyoung SONG

Panel B1 · Stream 3
Climate Change, Just Transitions, and Environmental Social Policy

Author
Yubin Mun
Yonsei University

Comparing Disaster Risk Reduction Policies in East Asia: Dictionary-based Text Analysis of Five Drr Documents

The overlap of the climate crisis and population aging calls for an intersectional approach to crisis preparedness and response. The IPCC warns that East Asia, where rapid aging coincides with dense urbanization in megacities, faces escalating risks from climate-related extreme events. Disaster risk reduction (DRR), oriented toward ex ante risk reduction and resilience-building, is emerging as a key welfare state function. Yet older adults and people with disabilities living in residential facilities experience disproportionate harm. Disasters expose the limits of general-population DRR frameworks in protecting institutional residents. Using the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015?030) as an analytical lens, this study compares DRR policies for long-term care and disability residential facilities in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Residents face compounded vulnerabilities—mobility constraints, dependence on medical and care support, and congregate living—making survival contingent on institutional decision-making and organizational response capacity. Based on Sendai Framework’s four priorities—risk understanding, governance, resilience investment, and preparedness—we systematically analyze regulatory documents, building standards, emergency protocols, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms. This comparative analysis makes three contributions: (1) it clarifies how the four Sendai priorities interact in practice and how these interactions shape policy effectiveness for residential facilities; (2) it identifies structural gaps between policy and practice that recur across East Asian megacities while synthesizing jurisdiction-specific strengths and limitations; and (3) it draws policy implications for facility-based DRR governance models responsive to East Asia’s demographic and urban conditions. Ultimately, the study bridges disability-inclusive DRR scholarship, welfare state theory, and climate justice debates by foregrounding intersecting positions of age, disability, and institutional dependence.

Author
Ruoxuan LI
King’s College London

Governing the Green Frontier: State Capitalism and Transnational Climate Finance in Singapore

Scholarship on Singapore's political economy has long highlighted the city-state's developmental capacity, pragmatic governance, and dense state-capitalist networks as the core engines of its economic resilience. As global climate finance shifts toward market-based mechanisms under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, Singapore has adapted this pragmatic developmentalism to a new frontier: transnational carbon credit trading. Despite a near-total lack of domestic carbon sinks, the city-state has rapidly emerged as a primary carbon hub. Therefore, this article asks how does a resource-constrained developmental state establish authority over a transnational carbon market without relying on traditional regulatory coercion?. Bridging theories of the developmental state and environmental political economy, this study argues that Singapore exerts cross-border power through “infrastructural intermediation”. Employing a narrative integrative review and historical tracing analysis of policy developments between 2019 and 2025, the article identifies three mechanisms of state-led market construction: infrastructural intermediation, orchestrated decentralisation, and soft gatekeeping. The findings reveal how Singapore mobilises government-linked entities and financial interoperability to curate market participation across a fragmented regulatory landscape. Ultimately, while this platform model successfully facilitates transnational climate finance, it concurrently risks entrenching new structural dependencies, positioning neighbouring, resource-rich nations as rule-takers within a Singapore-orchestrated financial architecture.

Panel B2 · Stream 8
Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Xi ZHAO
Renmin University of China

Patterns and Policy Feedback Effects of Welfare Exit: Evidence from Dibao Leavers in Urban China

In recent years, the number of Social Assistance recipients in China has been steadily declining. While several insightful studies have focused on the mechanisms behind such welfare retrenchment, relatively little attention has been paid to the subsequent experiences and policy perceptions of welfare leavers. This study uses data from the national representative survey on Low-income Households in Urban China?to classify different groups of welfare leavers based on their reasons for exiting (e.g., income increase, employment status change, or dynamic management leakage) and post-exit economic conditions. Drawing on policy feedback theory, the study further examines how the key experience of ‘exit’ influences individuals’perceptions of, trust in, and sense of social fairness regarding the welfare system. By comparing a series of social attitude indicators, such as government trust and attitudes towards redistribution, across various exit groups, this research uncovers the heterogeneous feedback effects of social assistance policies. The findings will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic consequences of the social assistance system and provide empirical evidence for improving social support systems.

Panel B2 · Stream 7
Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author
Ming Lin Alice CHONG
Caregiving Research and Development Centre, SFU

Organisational Feasibility of Supporting Working Caregivers: Employer Perspectives on Talent Retention, Job Nature Constraints, Qing Based Relational Culture, and Policy Directions for Complementary Government–nonprofit–employer Collaboration

Introduction: With rapid population ageing and labour force tightening in Asia, many working caregivers face dual work–care burdens, and their retention is crucial for organizational stability. Yet employer side feasibility of carer friendly workplace support remains underexplored in Hong Kong.

Methodology: This mixed methods study examines employers’attitudes, adoption conditions, and policy expectations regarding support for working caregivers. Quantitative survey (n=127) examined existing or proposed measures, reasons for adoption or non adoption, expected outcomes (e.g., turnover, absenteeism, morale), and ESG/CSR considerations. Moreover, eighteen in depth qualitative interviews compared perspectives across enterprise sizes and job nature demands, and explored how qing (?)–based relational norms influence policy acceptance.

Findings and Discussion: Three observations emerge. First, while employers generally acknowledge the importance of support, many view caregiving as a private responsibility, showing a cultural pattern of ‘willing to help but resistant to being forced’ Mandatory measures may trigger backfire effects. Second, job nature constraints shape feasibility: physical presence industries struggle to offer flexibility, whereas knowledge based sectors show higher readiness for remote or flexible work. Third, carer friendly measures are perceived less as welfare and more as a talent retention strategy. Accordingly, the study proposes a complementary tri sector collaboration model. Government should provide a low friction referral interface and soft incentives; nonprofits act as delegated executors handling confidential caregiver needs identification and needs assessment, conducting simplified, rreferral-based needs assessments, followed by matching and ongoing psychosocial support; and employers adopt practical, low?cost measures that fit their organizational scale and job nature constraints, such as flexible hours or remote?work quotas in sectors where tasks permit, and flexible rosters or shift?swap arrangements in physical?presence industries. This culturally sensitive, non coercive, sector specific approach enhances policy feasibility, minimizes employer burden, and strengthens organizational and social resilience.

Panel B2 · Stream 6
Education Policy and Social Mobility; Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations; Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Bo PENG
School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Shanghai International Studies University

Indonesia-australia Biosecurity Cooperation Under the “one Health” Framework

In the twenty-first century, the international community has turned its attention to the developing security area of biosecurity. As a result of the ongoing emergence of biological threats, nations have progressively improved their comprehension of biosecurity, and the idea of “One Health” has gained widespread acceptance. In recent years, the biosafety cooperation mechanism between Australia and Indonesia has matured, and the two sides have common interests in the field of biosecurity. Australia is assisting Indonesia in enhancing its biosecurity defenses to mitigate the threats posed by invasive species in the country. Indonesia aims to use Australia’s knowledge and superior technologies to better its biosecurity governance structure and respond to various biological threats. The two sides’ biosecurity cooperation focuses on four key areas: establishing a bilateral biosecurity cooperation mechanism, expanding multilateral international biosecurity cooperation, strengthening cooperation in biotechnology research and development, and improving collaboration in the prevention and control of various infectious diseases. Australia’s biosecurity cooperation with Indonesia still faces hurdles due to a variety of causes, including Indonesia’s flawed biosecurity infrastructure and ineffective biosecurity governance framework, as well as variations in biosecurity awareness between the two countries. The impact of the biosecurity cooperation between the two sides includes consolidating the Indonesia-Australia bilateral relationship, strengthening the regional biosecurity defense system, and optimizing the global biosecurity governance landscape.

Author
Suwara KAEWNUY
Prince of Songkla University

The Role of Social Welfare Policy in Efforts to Build Peace and Child Development in Thailand’s Deep South

This study examines the role of social welfare policy in promoting peace and addressing child health inequalities in Thailand’s Deep South, a region marked by protracted conflict and systemic inequality. Drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the research highlights the critical linkages between social welfare interventions and sustainable development. Social welfare policies targeting child health are analyzed as mechanisms for fostering human security, reducing vulnerabilities, and strengthening social cohesion. The analysis reveals that health inequalities in conflict-affected areas exacerbate social vulnerability, disproportionately affecting marginalized children through malnutrition, limited access to healthcare, and preventable mortality. Addressing these inequalities not only provides immediate relief but also contributes to long-term peacebuilding by disrupting cycles of poverty and promoting equitable development. The findings underscore the transformative potential of child-centric welfare policies within a human-centered development framework, demonstrating their capacity to mitigate structural inequalities and build community resilience. This article argues for the prioritization of child health as a core component of social welfare policy, underscoring its pivotal role in fostering a more equitable and stable society.

Panel B3 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Zhongbin HUANG
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

The Development of the Eldercare Industry in China: The Role of Public Long-term Care Insurance

The public long-term care insurance (LTCI) scheme has emerged as a key policy initiative to promote universal access to long-term care services in China. Drawing on data from 519,483 eldercare-related organizations across Chinese cities, this study applies a staggered difference-in-differences (DID) approach to estimate the impact of LTCI implementation on organizational growth. On average, the implementation of the scheme led to the establishment of approximately 164 additional eldercare organizations per city. Heterogeneity analyses show that the promotive effect is most pronounced among enterprise-type organizations (relative to self-employed business, private non-profit organization, and public institution), particularly in sectors such as elder care services, the sales and rental of products for older adults and health promotions, compared to sectors such as financial services for older adults. The impact is also found to be stronger in less developed regions.

Author
Hwiyoung LEE
University of Pennsylvania

Oral Health and Social Engagement of Older Adults: A Longitudinal Study

Although oral health is often treated as a narrowly clinical issue, its consequences extend beyond physical discomfort, particularly in later life. Impaired oral health can affect basic functions such as eating and speaking, but it may also undermine confidence and contribute to social withdrawal. At the same time, social connectedness is widely recognized as central to healthy aging, yet the role of oral health in shaping social engagement remains underexamined. Using nationally representative longitudinal data from older adults in South Korea, this study investigates the relationship between oral health and social engagement and explores whether financial and time burdens related to oral health may help explain this link. We analyze data from the Korean Longitudinal Study of Ageing using fixed effects models to exploit within-individual variation over time and address time-invariant unobserved heterogeneity. To strengthen the empirical strategy, we augment the analysis with a Double Machine Learning framework, using random forest for the main specification and boosting for robustness checks. We find that a one standard deviation improvement in oral health is associated with a 1.8 percentage point higher likelihood of meeting close contacts and about three additional days of social contact per year. Additional analyses suggest that social interaction is resource-intensive, as more frequent contact is associated with higher dining-out expenditures, whereas poorer oral health is associated with higher medical spending and more frequent dental visits. We also find that both poorer oral health and reduced social engagement are associated with elevated depression risk. These findings suggest that oral health problems impose not only physical burdens but also meaningful social costs, with implications for well-being in later life.

Co-authors
Koichiro SHIBA;
Ram CNAAN; Jung-Hwan LEE

Panel B3 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Manman PENG
*Department of Social Work,
The Chinese University of
Hong Kong*

Co-authors
Yinkai ZHANG;
Xing HE;
Pengfei WANG

Longitudinal Effects of Informal Care Intensity on Preventing Incident Physical and Psychological Multimorbidity in China: Variations by Age, Gender, and Locality

Objectives. Informal care receipt intensity represents a key symptom management strategy for reducing incident physical and psychological multimorbidity (PPM). Guided by the Symptom Management Theory, we examined the longitudinal effect of informal care receipt intensity on incident PPM among middle-aged and older adults in China, and assessed whether these effects varied by personal (e.g., age, gender) and environmental characteristics (e.g., urban/rural). **Methods.** Using data from 2,082 participants across three waves (2011, 2015, 2018) of the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS). The follow-up period was split into two intervals (2011?015 and 2015?018), and the data were restructured into a person-period format. Generalized linear models were used to examine the effects of informal care receipt intensity on incident PPM and to test for moderating effects by age, gender, and locality. **Results.** Middle-aged and older adults who received low-intensity informal care had a lower proportion of incident PPM compared to those who received no care. The health benefits of low-intensity informal care receipt were particularly strong among older adults, women, and rural residents. **Discussion.** Lower-intensity informal care may operate as an effective symptom prevention strategy by alleviating distress and facilitating early problem identification before severe symptom escalation. Age-, gender-, and locality-specific pathways to informal care may lead to health disparities. Policies and intervention programs designed to reduce incident PPM should therefore prioritize expanding accessible and tailored care resources, especially for vulnerable individuals. **Keywords:** informal care receipt intensity, symptom management strategy, incident physical and psychological multimorbidity, China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS)

Author
Joelle H. FONG
National University of Singapore

Trust and Demand for Formal Long-term Care: Evidence from South Korea

With global population aging, many governments have become increasingly involved in reforming social protection systems for long-term care in various forms. South Korea was the second country in Asia to introduce a social long-term care insurance (SLTCI) system in 2008. The present article investigates the association between institutional trust and demand for care services in South Korea's SLTCI scheme among community-dwelling older adults. Using data from the 2014-2022 Korean Longitudinal Study of Aging, we implement hierarchical logistic regressions to evaluate the respective roles of trust in the government—and trust in the SLTCI agency—on the demand for formal care services in the national social insurance scheme. We find that institutional trust does matter: a one unit increase in the level of trust in the SLTCI agency is associated with a 11% increase in the odds of applying for formal care, controlling for health characteristics and other covariates. Furthermore, moderation analysis reveals that the effect of trust varies by age and sex. The relationship between trust in the SLTCI agency and formal care demand is most pertinent for women and the oldest-old. Our results also show that older Koreans who are unmarried, not working, functionally disabled, depressed, cognitively impaired, with poor self-rated health, and without private health insurance are more likely to request SLTCI care services. These findings suggest that policymakers and administrators should pay attention to cultivating institutional trust in SLTCI schemes through good governance, enhancing accessibility, strengthening financial sustainability, and other relevant strategies.

Panel B3 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Jeonggi LIM
*Department of Social Welfare,
Yongin University*

Co-author
Sac-young HONG

Fragmented Care Pathways for Older Adults with Dementia: Evidence from Linked Administrative Data

As populations age, dementia has emerged as a critical challenge for health and social care systems. Despite growing policy attention, care for people with dementia is often fragmented across medical treatment, long-term care, and community-based services, producing uneven access and institutional gaps rather than coordinated support. This study identifies patterns of service utilization among older adults with dementia and examines the institutional disconnections that shape them.

Using individual-level linked administrative data for 2022, we identified 78,366 people with dementia through a composite administrative definition encompassing senile dementia diagnoses, registration for dementia-related cost-sharing exemptions, cognitive support grades under long-term care insurance, and receipt of dementia treatment. We applied two-step cluster analysis to four binary indicators of service use—long-term care hospitals, home-visit care, day-and-night care, and residential care—and cross-tabulated the resulting clusters with severity and socio-demographic characteristics.

The analysis identified five distinct utilization types: home-visit care only (42.7%), service-transition (12.6%), facility-centered (9.0%), day-and-night care only (21.1%), and complete non-use (14.6%). Home-visit care and day-and-night care functioned as substitutes rather than complements, indicating a failure of horizontal integration within home-based benefits. Non-linkage to formal care was pervasive across all severity levels—71.8% among those receiving only dementia treatment and 36.4% among the medically severe—driven not by economic barriers but by reliance on family care and limited institutional access. The day-and-night-care-only group showed the highest hospitalization rates at every severity level, indicating that reliance on a single home-based service transmits care gaps into acute medical use.

These findings suggest that service fragmentation, rather than a lack of available programs, constitutes a major barrier to effective dementia care. Strengthening institutional linkages across health and social care sectors—including more flexible benefit coverage and structured transition management between medical and long-term care—is essential for ensuring continuity of care for dementia populations in ageing societies.

Panel B4 · Stream 1
Economic Policy and Social Investment Paradigm; Youth Policy and Transitions

Author
Stefan Kühner
Lingnan University

Co-author
Mai Tam Aung SEINN

Toward Transformative Welfare Systems in the Polycrisis Era: Emerging Basic Income Discourses and Pilots in Taiwan and the United States

The era of polycrisis, characterised by the compounding effects of financial downturns, health pandemics, and climate-induced extreme weather events has exposed critical limitations in how social protection systems respond to acute, overlapping shocks. While policy actors and international organisations increasingly advocate for social protection that is adaptive, shock-responsive, and anticipatory, the conceptual boundaries among these terms remain blurred, and their translation into concrete policy designs has yet to receive systematic examination.

This conceptual paper presents a narrative review of academic and grey literature to clarify how these three distinct yet interrelated approaches to social protection have been conceptualised, operationalised, and critiqued across diverse disciplinary and policy contexts.

The paper addresses a significant gap: although adaptive social protection has gained traction within international development and climate change adaptation discourses, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and shock-responsive frameworks have emerged from humanitarian and disaster risk reduction communities, there has been limited scholarly effort to synthesise these parallel conversations or examine their applicability across the varied socio-economic contexts of the Asia-Pacific region.

Drawing on searches of major bibliographic databases (Scopus, Web of Science) and key grey literature sources (UNDRR, World Bank, ADB, ILO), the review traces the intellectual genealogies of each concept. It examines how they define: (i) the capacity to modify programmes in response to evolving needs (adaptivity); (ii) mechanisms for scaling coverage and benefits during crises (shock-responsivity); and (iii) pre-emptive actions and early warning integration to mitigate risks before escalation (anticipation).

The review identifies points of convergence and divergence among these frameworks, revealing tensions between short-term humanitarian imperatives and longer-term developmental goals, between universal entitlements and targeted flexibility, and between state-led provision and multi-actor welfare mixes. It maps the policy instruments associated with each approach, including scalable cash transfers, index-based insurance, public works programmes, and early warning-triggered benefits, and assesses evidence on their effectiveness, inclusivity, and sustainability. The paper further interrogates critiques that have emerged: that adaptive approaches may neglect structural inequalities, that shock-responsive mechanisms risk creating parallel humanitarian systems, and that anticipatory frameworks face significant political and technical barriers to implementation.

By synthesising fragmented literatures and clarifying conceptual terrain, this paper offers a foundational contribution to ongoing efforts to rethink social policy in an era of polycrises. It establishes analytical scaffolding for a larger comparative project examining how Asia-Pacific welfare regimes integrate these principles into disaster management frameworks, and provides researchers and policymakers with a clearer vocabulary for designing social protection systems capable of weathering the compound crises that define our contemporary moment.

Panel B4 · Stream 13
Economic Policy and Social Investment Paradigm; Youth Policy and Transitions

Author
Ti SHI
*School of Graduate Studies,
Lingnan University*

Co-author
Colin Keyu ZHAI

Adaptive, Shock-responsive, and Anticipatory Social Protection: A Narrative Review of Concepts, Definitions, and Policies for an Era of Polycrises

In an era of overlapping polycrises, including post-pandemic uncertainty, labour-market volatility, and intensified performance governance, education systems are increasingly mobilised as social policy instruments for skills formation and employment risk management. Graduate employability is widely framed as a long-term developmental process, yet in practice it is governed through short-term, outcome-oriented accountability regimes. This paper examines how such policy pressures reshape the timing and meaning of employability within transnational higher education in the Greater Bay Area. Drawing on the qualitative research of STEM Master’s students across three institutional settings, including a Hong Kong research-intensive university, its branch campus in China’s Mainland, and a transnational joint institute, the study explores how employability is understood and experienced at the point of graduation. Semi-structured interviews were used to capture students’ interpretations of curriculum experiences, institutional employability practices, and labour-market signaling under performance-based governance. The findings reveal three interrelated dynamics: First, employability is subject to temporal compression, as long-term capability development is re-timed into immediate and measurable outcomes at graduation; Second, institutional employability initiatives are experienced less as developmental support and more as audit-oriented infrastructures aligned with performance indicators; Third, in transnational and branch-campus contexts, students report heightened uncertainty about degree signaling, leading them to evaluate employability through a value-for-money lens rather than a capability-based trajectory. The paper contributes to social policy debates by conceptualising employability as a governed policy object shaped by accountability regimes and transnational institutional arrangements. It argues that skills policy frameworks should move beyond short-term performance metrics and re-centre employability as a developmental process embedded across the educational lifecycle, particularly in systems facing graduate saturation and expanding postgraduate participation.

Author
Chien-Chung HUANG
Rutgers University

Co-authors
Rong TIAN;
Jiou-Fang PENG;
Hao QIU

Mindfulness, Emotion Regulation, and Psychological Distress: An Intervention Study with Competitive University Students in China

Background: Students at elite, highly selective universities face an intensified risk of mental health challenges due to a pervasive hypercompetitive academic culture. This study investigates the efficacy of a mindfulness-based intervention in enhancing mindfulness and reducing psychological distress by modulating specific emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Method: A randomized two-group pretest-posttest design was implemented with 160 students from a Double First-Class university in China. The intervention group participated in an eight-session mindfulness program adapted for the developmental and contextual needs of high-achieving students. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the direct and indirect pathways linking changes in mindfulness to psychological distress through emotion regulation. Results: The intervention significantly increased mindfulness levels ($p < .05$), with the most robust improvements observed among students with low baseline mindfulness. SEM results supported a partial mediation model. Increases in mindfulness were significantly associated with increased cognitive reappraisal ($\beta = 0.23, p < .01$) and decreased expressive suppression ($\beta = -0.24, p < .01$). Furthermore, both increased mindfulness ($\beta = -0.18, p < .05$) and increased cognitive reappraisal ($\beta = -0.23, p < .01$) directly predicted significant reductions in psychological distress. While expressive suppression moved in the hypothesized direction, its unique impact on distress was not statistically significant.

Panel B4 · Stream 1
Economic Policy and Social Investment Paradigm; Youth Policy and Transitions

Conclusion: These findings demonstrate that mindfulness interventions are effective tools for mitigating psychological distress in high-pressure academic environments. By fostering adaptive cognitive reappraisal and reducing maladaptive suppression, mindfulness provides a mechanical pathway toward resilience. Universities should prioritize the integration of mindfulness training into student support services to safeguard the well-being of students navigating hypercompetitive educational systems.

Panel B5 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author
YONG-UN CHO

Evaluating the Impact of Ai Exposure on Wage Inequality and Job Polarization in South Korea: A Causal Inference Using Klips (waves 18–26) and Synthetic Difference-in-differences (sdid)

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) fundamentally reshapes the global labor market, it introduces a unique “technological disruption” by automating not only routine manual tasks but also high-stakes cognitive functions. This study investigates the causal impact of AI exposure on wage structures and job polarization in South Korea. By analyzing longitudinal data from the Korean Labor and Income Panel Study (KLIPS) spanning Waves 18 (2015) to 26 (2023), we track the long-term shifts in the labor market following the 2015 structural break in technological discourse. To quantify individual exposure, we employ a data-merging strategy that maps the AI Occupational Exposure Index (AIOE) onto the 3-digit Korean Standard Classification of Occupations (KSCO) within the KLIPS dataset. The methodological hallmark of this research is the application of Synthetic Difference-in-Differences (SDID). Given that AI adoption occurs asynchronously across industries with diverse pre-trends, traditional models risk producing biased estimates. By integrating unit and time weights, SDID ensures a robust causal inference, effectively constructing synthetic control groups to isolate the “AI shock.” Preliminary findings suggest that AI exposure facilitates a “hollowing out” of middle-skill administrative roles while concentrating labor in high-skill cognitive or low-skill service sectors, thereby exacerbating job polarization. The study concludes with policy implications for the Korea Employment Information Service (KEIS) and other public institutions, emphasizing the need for evidence-based reskilling programs and a robust social safety net to mitigate the disruptive effects of AI on the Korean social contract.

Panel B5 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author
Retna HANANI
Universitas Dipoengoro/Faculty of Social and Political Sciences/Public Administration Department

From Frontline Work to Digital Welfare: Enumerators, Discretion, and the Digitalization of Social Protection in Indonesia

This article examines how enumerators function as street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of Indonesian social policy, particularly in beneficiary registration, social assistance targeting, and the updating of welfare databases. In Indonesia, programs such as health insurance for the poor, cash transfers, and other forms of social protection rely heavily on data collection processes that appear administrative and technical. Yet, on the ground, enumerators do much more than collect information. As frontline actors, they interpret eligibility criteria, assess household conditions, and make practical judgments about how policy categories should be applied in socially complex settings. Their role shows that implementation is never simply the mechanical execution of national policy design, but a negotiated process shaped by discretion, local knowledge, and institutional constraints. The article argues that enumerators also act as ‘human middleware’ linking communities to the expanding digital infrastructure of the Indonesian welfare state. Although social policy increasingly depends on databases, digital verification, and standardized indicators, these systems do not operate independently of human mediation. Enumerators explain forms to residents, translate bureaucratic requirements into locally intelligible terms, verify identities, and reconcile mismatches between formal categories and lived realities. In many cases, they also navigate community expectations, local power relations, and the moral pressures surrounding inclusion and exclusion. This makes them central to how digitalized governance actually functions in everyday practice. By situating enumerators within the literature on street-level bureaucracy, this article highlights the gap between policy design and ground-level execution in Indonesian social programs. It shows that welfare access is shaped not only by formal rules and digital systems, but also by the judgments of frontline workers who determine how eligibility is interpreted and how claims are processed. Understanding enumerators in this way provides a more grounded account of how social policy is enacted, mediated, and contested in contemporary Indonesia.

Author
Zhonglai LIU
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Automated Totalitarianism: China’s Social Governance in the Age of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data

With the continuous development of artificial intelligence and big data and their increasing intrusion into daily life, China’s social governance has shifted from the conventional mode of techno-authoritarianism towards an automated form of totalitarianism, which manifests comprehensive control over society and individuals. This paper examines how the key focus of governance has gone beyond the tradition, characterized by focusing on the political sphere and relying on top-down management by administrative institutions, to exert influence on targeted groups, ranging from Internet celebrities to Party members and ordinary citizens. It discusses how the pervasive uses and presences of artificial intelligence and big data have been leveraged by the party-state and illustrates several mechanisms for achieving automated social governance through social media propaganda, political education, and ubiquitous surveillance. This paper offers a nuanced understanding of automated totalitarianism emerging in China in the era of artificial intelligence and big data. Moving beyond existing literature on politics and social governance, which tends to focus on citizens’ resistance against the joint encroachment of capital markets and governments on personal privacy within Western political and social contexts, this paper examines that Chinese citizens are integrating into the party-state’s social governance policies, and habitually accepting the normalized intrusion of AI and big data into their daily life, emphasizing that Chinese citizens are being compelled to practice self-discipline and internalize it as an integral part of their routines.

Panel B5 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author
Jihyun PARK

Co-authors
Hyoil KIM;
Miseung SHIM;
Kimin LEE

Beyond Case Closure: Ict-integrated Post-management and Its Effects on Self-efficacy, Anxiety, and Re-abuse Prevention Among Older Adults

Introduction: Re-abuse among older adults remains a persistent risk following case closure or return to community living. Previous studies on ICT-based elder protection have primarily focused on emergency detection or technical feasibility, with limited quantitative evidence on psychosocial outcomes such as self-efficacy and anxiety reduction. This study quantitatively examines the effectiveness of the Safe-Zone post-management program, which integrates ICT monitoring devices with structured follow-up support, focusing on psychological stability and perceived abuse-prevention effects.

Methods: A pre–post survey design was applied across three annual cohorts of Safe-Zone participants (Year 1: n = 160; Year 2: n = 194; Year 3: n = 150). Standardized scales measured self-efficacy and anxiety before and after program participation. Paired-sample t-tests were conducted to assess changes over time. In addition, participants evaluated the perceived abuse-prevention effectiveness of ICT devices and the contribution of digital helpers using five-point Likert scales. Subgroup analyses by gender, age group, and region were performed.

Results: Across all three cohorts, self-efficacy significantly increased after program participation (p < .001), with mean improvements of 3.49 points (Year 1), 4.68 points (Year 2), and 4.17 points (Year 3). Anxiety levels showed a consistent and statistically significant decrease (p < .001), with average reductions ranging from 4.26 to 6.27 points. Improvements were observed across gender and age groups, indicating broad program effectiveness. Participants reported high perceived abuse-prevention effectiveness of ICT devices (M = 4.17/5) and even higher ratings for the preventive role of digital helpers (M = 4.52/5). Implications: The findings provide robust quantitative evidence that ICT-based post-management interventions contribute not only to perceived safety but also to measurable psychological stabilization among older adults. The results highlight the importance of combining technological monitoring with human support to strengthen sustainable re-abuse prevention strategies in elder protection systems.

Author
Zhuoren SHAO
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Co-author
Yvette TO

Street-level Bureaucrats and the Use of Ai: The Making of “hybrid Bureaucracy” in Chinese Traffic Policing

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping public administration, raising concerns about the replacement of bureaucratic discretion with automated systems. Focusing on China’s traffic policing, we challenge the linear narrative predicting a seamless transition from street-level to system-level bureaucracy, using in-depth interviews with local police officers and technology vendors. We demonstrate that digitalization has reconfigured police discretion into a resilient “hybrid bureaucracy”, where human judgment and algorithmic logic work together through collaboration and contestation. Officers now exercise “evidentiary discretion” to verify, interpret, or override digital outputs. Furthermore, a triangular power structure has emerged, characterized by dynamic contestation among frontline officers, policy regulators, and technology vendors. This hybrid form is a stable equilibrium sustained by institutional fragmentation, the imperative to maintain stability, and micro-level sociotechnical frictions. We reveal the dilemma of technocratic governance in authoritarian settings: human officers are essential to mediate the friction between algorithmic rigidity and the complexity of Chinese society.

Author

Yuanyuan SHEN

School of Government,
Sun Yat-sen University

Co-author

Rou GUO

Guangzhou Long-term Care Insurance “alternative Cash Benefit” Model: Practical Logic and Path Reflection

The debate between cash benefits and in-kind services has been central to China’s long-term care insurance (LTCI) pilots. Guangzhou has developed a distinctive “substitutional cash benefit” model, while the policy nominally provides home-based services, over 90% of home care is delivered by family members acting as “part-time caregivers,” with LTCI funds indirectly converted into cash subsidies for families through care institutions. This “intermediate form” between cash and services offers a unique lens for understanding how intergenerational care relations are institutionally shaped under population aging. Based on multi-actor in-depth interviews with health insurance authorities, care institutions, insurance administrators, social work organizations, and family caregivers, this study systematically analyzes the formation logic and structural tensions of Guangzhou’s model. The findings reveal: First, this pathway emerged as a result of the coupling of choices among multiple actors—health insurance authorities, care institutions, insurance administrators, and families. Second, while this experiment satisfies families’ immediate care choices, it generates structural tensions for the development of professional care industries: on the demand side, families receive economic subsidies but face limitations in service quality; on the supply side, the part-time caregiver model crowds out demand for professional services, forming a “low-level equilibrium trap” characterized by “choice without services.” Third, Guangzhou’s experience reveals an inherent tension between “care choice” and “industry development” under the dual pressures of low fertility and population ageing, remature empowerment of choice may undermine the market foundation for industry growth. This study provides empirical evidence for understanding family transformation and care regime transitions in East Asia.

Author

Aran KIM

Department of Social Welfare,
Pusan National University,
South Korea

Co-author

Rosa PARK

Living Between Institutional Gaps: Experiences of Welfare System Fragmentation Among Older Adults with Disabilities in South Korea

This study explored how older adults with disabilities experience institutional arrangements within South Korea’s fragmented welfare system and how they construct meaning from these experiences. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, this study analyzed in-depth interviews with older adults with disabilities and identified the essential meaning structures of their institutional experiences.

The findings show that participants’ institutional experiences extended beyond the simple use or non-use of welfare services. Rather, participants understood their living conditions in relation to institutions and adjusted their everyday lives accordingly. They experienced the welfare system from a boundary position between aging and disability policies, where institutional support often arrived belatedly, transitioned discontinuously, and responded only partially to their needs. Although welfare services formally existed, participants experienced persistent gaps between “available support” and “needed support.” Such institutional fragmentation contributed to the contraction of social relationships and the deepening of gaps in care, while requiring ongoing adjustments in everyday life.

These findings suggest that the institutional experiences of older adults with disabilities cannot be understood simply in terms of exclusion or insufficiency. Rather, they reflect experiences negotiated within fragmented institutional boundaries. By illuminating how welfare system fragmentation is lived and interpreted in everyday life, this study highlights the need for more integrated welfare policy approaches for older adults with disabilities.

Keywords: older adults with disabilities; institutional fragmentation; welfare system; hermeneutic phenomenology; social exclusion

Author

Peter WHITEFORD

Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Pension Challenges and Pension Reforms in East Asia: Are There Lessons from Oecd Experiences?

Many East Asian countries are experiencing rapid demographic change due to reduced fertility and longer life expectancies. These changes have been much more rapid than in past experience in high-income OECD countries, partly reflecting the rapidity of economic growth in East Asia and its effects on social conditions. In turn, this has meant that some pension systems are characterised by low levels of safety-net benefits and low coverage for earnings-related schemes.

Increasing life expectancy may weaken financial sustainability as people live longer in retirement and the number of pensioners relative to contributors grows. Given this context, either the costs of social programmes will increase, and with them the contributions and taxes required to finance benefits, or benefit levels will have to be reduced, or deficits will increase, or there will be some combination of these.

Reforming pensions is politically challenging as it often entails unpopular measures, such as increasing the retirement age, lowering benefits or increasing contribution rates. It is also important to evaluate how effective these policy responses have been where they have been implemented.

Many OECD countries have already undertaken a wide range of pension reforms over the past two to three decades, including changes in benefit formulas, changing the indexation of pensions in payment, linking pensions to higher life expectancy, increasing the role of private provision, as well as reforms designed to increase incentives for later retirement.

This paper updates earlier analysis (Whiteford and Whitehouse, 2006; Queisser, Whitehouse and Whiteford, 2007) to analyse the relevance of past OECD experience to the daunting challenges facing East Asian pension systems.

Author

Vincent W. P. LEE

Hong Kong Baptist University

Empowering Older Adults Through Digital Training Activities: Experiences from Hong Kong

Older people are the generation overlooked by technological development trends. They face many challenges but receive little support. The main difficulties include skill and knowledge limitations, a lack of social support, and physical and cognitive impairments.

This qualitative study explored older participants’ involvement in digital training classes and intergenerational technology-related activities. It found that those who enrolled in the intergenerational digital activities gained new meaning in life and a sense of fulfilment. Participants overcame their hesitations and embraced the digital world thanks to the welcoming environment, with the involvement of youth volunteers from the community. However, they generally had poorer memory for operating mobile devices and applications. Intergenerational dialogue and engagement fostered greater understanding, support, and encouragement between generations. Participants recognised the potential for meaningful interactions and a more diverse society, and they reported feeling happy about these collaborations.

It is recommended that human service providers and technological designers should teach beyond applications and go for the holistic operational logic of the gadgets for older learners, provide more intensive and immersive support for their continuous learning, and empower them through more cohesive intergenerational interactions, from which they could gain technological knowledge and insights from the young people.

Panel B7 · Stream 5

Population and Demographic Shifts: Aging, Low Fertility, Intergenerational Relations

Author

Fei MENG

Lingnan University

Co-author

Xi CHEN

When Rapid Growth Hurts but Wealth and Longevity Buffer: Macro-level Moderators of the Relationship Between Ageism and Life Satisfaction

Background: Population ageing has become a central concern for social policy across many societies. National economic and demographic conditions shape resource distribution, intergenerational relations, and norms surrounding ageing. Ageism undermines older adults’ well-being, yet the role of macro-structural contexts remains understudied. Drawing on ecological perspectives, this study examines whether national economic and demographic factors moderate the relationship between perceived ageism and life satisfaction. Methods: Using data from Wave 6 of the World Values Survey covering 47 countries, we employed multilevel regression to predict life satisfaction. We analyzed the interaction between perceived ageism (age stereotypes, workplace ageism) and country-level economic (GNI per capita, GNI growth) and demographic (life expectancy, fertility rate) indicators. Results: Macro-level contexts significantly condition the relationship between ageism and life satisfaction. Rapid economic growth exacerbates the negative effects of age stereotypes, whereas higher national wealth (GNI per capita) mitigates the effects of workplace ageism. Demographic conditions also matter: higher life expectancy mitigates the negative effects of workplace ageism, while higher fertility rates buffer the effects of age stereotypes. Discussion: Consistent with anomie theory, which suggests that modernization disrupts traditional norms and devalues aging, rapid economic growth amplifies the harm of age stereotypes. Conversely, established wealth, longevity, and higher fertility rates provide protective contexts for older adults in which the negative effects of ageism are less pronounced. These results suggest that improving well-being in ageing populations requires attention not only to economic progress, but also to the pace of change and the demographic contexts in which ageing unfolds.

Author

Wenzhuo ZHANG

Lingnan University

Co-author

Silai DONG

Gerontechnology Acceptance Among Caregivers of the Elderly: A Case Study in Hong Kong

As aging societies face mounting pressures on care systems, Gerontechnology has emerged as a critical domain where technological innovation intersects with welfare governance and social policy transformation. While existing research often examines technological adoption among older adults, less attention has been paid to caregivers’ acceptance of Gerontechnology. This paper investigates Gerontechnology acceptance among formal and informal caregivers by applying a role-structured interpretation of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), framing adoption as a sociotechnical process embedded within evolving care arrangements. Drawing on qualitative interviews with caregivers across institutional and community-based settings, this study examines how perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and intention to use are mediated by professional responsibilities, relational values, and access to learning support. Findings indicate that formal caregivers tend to evaluate technology through institutional logics emphasizing efficiency and safety, whereas informal caregivers interpret usefulness in terms of emotional sustainability and relational continuity. Barriers such as learning anxiety, affordability concerns, and ethical reflections on human interaction further demonstrate that adoption decisions are shaped by broader caregiving ecologies rather than technological features alone. By advancing a role-structured extension of TAM, this research contributes to sociotechnical theory while reframing Gerontechnology adoption as a social policy issue. The study proposes a governance-oriented perspective that highlights digital inequality, the redistribution of caregiving labor, and the importance of aligning technological innovation with welfare values.

Panel B7 · Stream 5

Population and Demographic Shifts: Aging, Low Fertility, Intergenerational Relations

Author

Zhonghan WANG

Xi’an Jiaotong University

Co-author

Bingqin LI

Recognizing the Value of Care: A Longitudinal Historical Analysis of State Acknowledgement and Incentive Policies for Caregivers in China (1046 Bce–present)

As rapid population ageing reshapes East Asian societies, caregiving is increasingly perceived as burdensome labour rather than socially honoured contribution. While existing studies focus on familial obligation and financial transfers, less attention has been paid to how the state recognizes and valorizes caregivers. This paper provides a long-term historical analysis of central government policies toward caregivers in China from the Zhou Dynasty to the present. Drawing on an original database of 316 policy entries derived from 132 central-level historical documents, the study combines policy coding, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and quantitative frequency tracking to examine how state acknowledgement mechanisms evolved across dynasties and political regimes. Building on Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital, state recognition—through honours, rituals, and public commendation—is understood as an institutionalized resource that converts moral virtue into socially validated status and shapes caregiving norms. The findings reveal three major shifts. First, the overall symbolic recognition of caregivers has declined over time. Second, policy instruments have gradually transitioned from symbolic capital toward economic compensation, reflecting the monetization of care. Third, although familial responsibility remains rhetorically central, institutionalized community-level acknowledgement mechanisms have weakened significantly in modern governance. The paper argues that rebuilding sustainable eldercare systems requires more than financial support; it demands the reconstruction of a caregiving culture through renewed symbolic and community-level recognition. Historical evidence suggests that the state plays a formative role in cultivating intergenerational solidarity by shaping the moral and cultural valuation of care.

Author

Xi CHEN

Lingnan University

Co-author

Zhiyuan DING

Beyond “the More, the Better”: Policy Implications of Reciprocal Social Participation and Mental Health Among Older Adults in China

As East Asian societies face rapid population aging and shifting family structures, active aging has become a cornerstone of social policy. However, these policies often rely on a monolithic assumption that increased social participation is a universal good. This study critically evaluates this paradigm by examining the reciprocal relationship between different types of social participation and depressive symptoms among older adults in China.

Using four-wave national panel data from the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS), we applied random-intercept cross-lagged panel models (RI-CLPM) to disentangle stable between-person differences from within-person dynamics. Our findings reveal significant heterogeneity that challenges one-size-fits-all social policies. While collective participation (e.g., leisure clubs) serves as a robust protective factor against depression, particularly for urban residents, productive participation (e.g., volunteering) shows limited mental health benefits. Crucially, high-intensity productive engagement may inadvertently increase depressive risks among rural older adults, who often lack the institutional social protection found in urban centers. Furthermore, the study identifies a withdrawal effect where rural adults retreat from social life when experiencing mental health disruptions, indicating a lack of resilient community-based support systems.

These results suggest that in times of disruption, social policy must move beyond the “more is better” assumption. For policymakers in China, this study highlights the need for context-specific interventions: prioritizing accessible collective leisure infrastructure in urban planning while re-evaluating the “double burden” of productive engagement in rural areas. By addressing these disparities, social policy can better foster mental health resilience and social inclusion in an aging society.

Panel B8 · Stream 7
Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author
Yin MA
Lanzhou University

Reconceptualizing Decent Work for Digital Labor Markets: An Expanded Framework

This paper revisits the International Labour Organization 's (ILO) concept of decent work, traditionally defined through employment opportunities, workers?rights, social dialogue, and favorable working conditions, and extends it to address the realities of digital labor markets. While the ILO framework remains vital for understanding work as a cornerstone of individual and societal well?being, the proliferation of digital platforms, algorithmic management, remote work, and non?standard employment calls for a reconceptualization that reflects contemporary labor dynamics. We propose an expanded model organized around five interrelated dimensions: 1. Digital Opportunity Accessibility, ensuring equitable access to online and platform-based work and necessary digital skills; 2. Digital Rights and Algorithmic Fairness, safeguarding data governance and transparency in automated decision?making; 3. Digital Social Dialogue Mechanisms, enabling inclusive governance among platforms, workers, and regulators; 4. Digital Work Environment Safety and Health, addressing psychosocial risks, boundary management, and surveillance impacts; 5. Digital Income Security, encompassing transparent evaluation systems, minimum income guarantees, and income stability in platform economies. This framework retains the normative aspirations of the ILO's decent work agenda while integrating structural features of digital labor markets, offering both theoretical clarity and actionable metrics for future research. By situating decent work within digitally mediated work environments, the model aims to support policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in assessing, advancing, and promoting decent work in an era shaped by technological transformation and algorithmic governance.

Author
Man-kong LI
The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

The Worst of Both Worlds: Income and Labour Market Dualization of Hong Kong from a Variety of Capitalism Perspective

This research investigates the intensification of income dualization in Hong Kong, in the course of transition from a classic Liberal Market Economy (LME) toward a hybrid model shaped by external influence from the state towards the local economy. The paper argues that state-led interventions by the Chinese state, which aimed at cultivating a high-skilled, cross-boundary professional class to address national systemic vulnerabilities have exacerbated pre-existing labour market dualism. By integrating second-generation Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) literature with theories of state capitalism and veto players, the study identifies the Chinese state as a dominant veto player, external to the local economy, imposing a new developmental mandate on Hong Kong's finance and technology sectors. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combines policy analysis of Greater Bay Area (GBA) integration schemes with quantitative labour statistics (2010-2023), the analysis reveals a ""worst of both worlds"" outcome, from the social policy perspective. For the high-skilled workers in strategic sectors benefit from qualification recognition, security of resources guaranteed by state policies, and expanded regional mobility, effectively delinking their career trajectories from the local economy. Conversely, low-skilled workers in domestic service sectors, such as retail and hospitality, remain trapped in a traditional LME environment characterized by high flexibility, wage stagnation, and minimal social protection. The findings thus contribute to debates on the dynamics of institutional change and the role of state influence in the evolving political economy of hybrid capitalist systems

Co-author
Kim-ming LEE

Panel B8 · Stream 7
Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author
Shiyu YUAN
University of Kent; Global Institute for Women's Leadership, King's College London

Flexibility Under Work Intensity: Commuting, Overtime, and Willingness to Trade Pay for Remote Work in China

Long working hours and substantial commuting burdens remain defining features of urban employment in China. Although remote work expanded temporarily during the COVID-19 pandemic, most firms have since returned to office-based work and remote work remains institutionally limited in the post-pandemic labour market. At the same time, surveys suggest that Chinese workers express growing interest in remote work. While existing research has documented these preferences, we know far less about how strongly workers value remote work when it involves real economic trade-offs. Drawing on the theory of compensating wage differentials, the willingness to accept lower pay in exchange for remote work indicates the value workers place on spatial flexibility as a job attribute. From a JD-R perspective, remote work can also function as a job resource that especially matters for workers' work-life balance and wellbeings, because it offers workers greater control over the spatial and temporal structure of work. Using matched employer-employee survey data from Chinese firms collected in 2021, this study examines how commuting burdens and overtime work shape the wage reductions workers are willing to accept in exchange for remote work. This way, it provides evidence on the monetary value workers attached to remote work in high-pressure labour markets. The findings contribute to research on work intensification and remote work, and speak to ongoing debates on working time reform and employment practices in East Asia.

Author
Euiyoung KANG

Hierarchy of Impairment and Labor Market Vulnerability in Disability Employment Policy: Focus on the Impact of the Double Count Policy for Severely Disabled Workers

This study examines the impact of the Double Count Policy for 'Severely Disabled' Workers introduced in South Korea. The policy allows firms to count one severely disabled worker as two employees when calculating their mandatory disability employment quota. Using data from the first wave of the Panel Survey of Employment for the Disabled, this study applies propensity score matching to address selection bias and employs difference-in-differences (DID) and triple-differences (DDD) models to identify the policy's causal effects. The results show that the policy increased the probability of employment for severely disabled workers relative to those with mild disabilities. However, this quantitative increase in employment did not translate into improvements in job quality. The likelihood of securing permanent employment significantly declined among severely disabled workers following the policy's implementation, while no statistically significant changes were observed in wages or occupational status. These findings suggest that the policy expanded access to employment primarily through more precarious jobs rather than through improvements in employment stability or environments. Further analysis reveals variation in policy effects across disability types. Compared to workers with external physical disabilities, individuals with sensory or internal disabilities experienced weaker improvements in employment probability and wage. In terms of occupational status, workers with sensory disabilities showed relatively more positive changes, while those with mental disabilities consistently demonstrated the lowest outcomes across most indicators. Overall, the findings indicate that the Double Count Policy contributed to a quantitative expansion of employment without substantially improving the quality of work. Moreover, the uneven effects across disability types suggest that the policy has reproduced existing hierarchies of impairment within the labor market. By employing individual-level panel data and causal inference methods, this study highlights how employment promotion policies for vulnerable groups may unintentionally reinforce labor market segmentation and precarious employment rather than reducing structural inequalities.

Author

Liping ZHAO

The University of Hong Kong

Reducing Administrative Burden Among Welfare Applicants: The Role of Social Capital

Extant research suggests that social capital, specifically the social support individuals received from their network, mitigates administrative burdens during the application process, such as learning, compliance, and psychological costs. However, because existing evidence relies predominantly on qualitative methods, the question of how the structure and composition of an individual's social network affect administrative burden remains largely underexamined through quantitative approaches.

This study advances the literature by integrating conventional measures that conceptualize social capital as a societal resource, such as trust, reciprocity, and participation, with egocentric network measures that provide more detailed relational information. Egocentric social networks were measured by asking respondents to name alters who provided help across ten dimensions of the welfare application process, including but not limited to family members, friends, and street-level bureaucrats. Survey data were collected using a sample of welfare recipients from the most prominent social assistance scheme (i.e., Dibao) in China (N=356).

We find that higher community reciprocity is significantly associated with lower administrative burden of applicants. Egocentric network analysis indicates that higher degree (i.e., the number of alters named) is significantly associated with reduced administrative burden, while link strength (i.e., average strength of participants?reported ties) and transitivity (i.e., proportion of pairs of alters who are also connected) show no significant impacts. Furthermore, a higher proportion of strong ties is significantly associated with lower internalized stigma (a component of psychological costs) among widowed or divorced applicants; a higher proportion of weak ties is significantly associated with lower compliance costs among married applicants. These findings contribute to understanding how different dimensions of social capital shape administrative burden and serve to improve service delivery.

Author

Gaon KIM

Chung-Ang University

Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Workers Who Must Listen: Experiences of Workplace Microaggressions

This study aims to examine the experiences of workplace microaggressions among deaf and hard-of-hearing workers in office-based occupations.

In South Korea, discrimination against persons with disabilities is prohibited under the Disability Discrimination Act, while their employment is promoted through the mandatory employment quota system. However, microaggressions experienced by workers with disabilities in the employment sector, where direct discrimination is legally prohibited, have received little attention in labor policy research. In particular, the experiences of deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) workers who are excluded from spoken language-centered workplace communication remain largely unexplored.

This study conducted qualitative research with ten deaf and hard-of-hearing workers with experience in office-based employment, and the data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) deductive thematic analysis.

The findings show that under Korea's mandatory employment quota system for persons with disabilities, companies hired deaf and hard-of-hearing workers primarily to comply with legal requirements and failed to provide adequate support. At the organizational level, workplaces required deaf and hard-of-hearing workers to use spoken communication and the telephone for

work, thereby reinforcing ableism. They also faced difficulties in accessing work assistants and assistive technologies necessary for job performance. At the relational level, deaf and hard-of-hearing workers encountered the generalization of disability and difficulties in forming relationships with colleagues. As a result, they experienced exclusion from work tasks and limited opportunities for promotion and job expansion, leading to job dissatisfaction and a lack of meaningful achievement. In response to microaggression, deaf and hard-of-hearing workers tended to respond in individualized ways, such as resignation or refraining from raising formal complaints, which reinforced their exclusion in the workplace.

This study suggests that Korea's mandatory employment quota system should extend beyond promoting employment rates to include broader indicators such as work-related development. Ultimately, we call for stronger disability awareness programs in Korean workplaces and a more systematic accommodation framework, including closer linkages between companies and employment support services.

Author

Suet Giin SOON

Research Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, National Science and Technology Council, Taiwan

Disability Employment Quotas in South Korea and Taiwan: Welfare or Rights?

This article explores the historical transformation trajectories of disability employment quota systems in South Korea (hereafter Korea) and Taiwan over the past four decades to unveil whether past reforms have led to a paradigm shift from a charity model to a rights model of disability. As one of the oldest policy tools, the quota system has traditionally been categorised as a welfare measure, not until the past two decades, when international organisations (e.g., the UN and ILO) reinterpreted it as an affirmative measure for its potential to promote substantial equality. This reinterpretation has prompted a revisit and debates on quotas in disability research. Instead of engaging in normative discussion, this article analyses the political processes of past policy reforms in Korea and Taiwan, with a particular focus on the dynamic interplay between ideas, stakeholders, and institutions. The analysis finds significant divergence between Korea and Taiwan since the 2000s, despite both countries sharing a similar trend in the early stages of implementation that were based on a charity approach in their introduction in 1980, and further experienced progressive expansion in the 1990s. In Korea, although it has institutionalised anti-discrimination legislation while maintaining the continued implementation of quotas, this is not the result of institutional complementarity but a strategic compromise shaped by the complex power balance and vested interests, demonstrating a welfare-right hybrid dual-track model. In contrast, disability organisations in Taiwan tend to seek for a more fundamental paradigm shift and even express their openness to a sunset clause for quotas provided that a rights-based framework reaches maturity. This study argues that the divergent trajectories are influenced by the different logics of democratic transition, which have shaped the mechanisms of policy participation and the ways stakeholders leverage their power to drive policy reform.

Co-author

Shih Jiunn SHI

Author

Siu Ming CHAN

City University of Hong Kong

Bridging Housing and Poverty: Evaluating Transitional Housing and Multidimensional Poverty Alleviation

Transitional housing (TH) has become an important policy instrument in addressing housing deprivation and poverty in Hong Kong since its formal introduction in 2018. This paper synthesizes findings from two earlier empirical studies of TH projects conducted between 2020 and 2022 and between 2022 and 2024, and situates them within the context of recent developments in housing and poverty alleviation policies. The first study employed quantitative method to examine residents of a TH project, focusing on service delivery and social impacts. The findings demonstrated notable improvements in housing quality and affordability, including increased living space per capita and reduced housing expenditures, alongside enhanced community interactions. The second study adopted a longitudinal quantitative design across multiple TH cohorts, with cohort interviews conducted in late 2022 and early 2024. This study provided stronger empirical evidence of sustained improvements in residents’ sense of security., social participation, and mental well-being. This paper further examined the implementation of the Urban Graduation Approach (UGA) within TH projects in recent years, highlighting the role of Family Capacity Building Planners (FCBPs) in delivering tailored interventions encompassing employment support, financial capability, life skills development, and household asset-building. By integrating insights from these two TH studies, this paper assesses how transitional housing has evolved from a temporary accommodation measure into a multidimensional poverty alleviation platform. In light of recent policy expansion and an increased emphasis on sustainable livelihood outcomes, the paper underscores the importance of aligning transitional housing provision with comprehensive social interventions to promote long-term socioeconomic mobility for low-income households in Hong Kong.

Author

Qiu CHENG

Complaint or Compliment? Does Welfare Eligibility Threshold Improve Subjective Well-being of the Dibao Recipients in China.

Using longitudinal survey data from Dibao eligibility threshold reform in 2018 and 2020 in Guangdong Province, China, and a combination of propensity score matching and difference-in-differences methods, this paper investigates how welfare eligibility threshold impact subjective well-being of the Dibao recipients. It found eligibility threshold reform significantly reduced the self-rated poverty condition and boosted the subjective well-being of the Dibao recipients. Besides, heterogeneous effects of eligibility threshold reform on different magnitude of subjective well-being, as well as effects among different household registrations and regions types indicates decentralized implementation of Dibao program. Rosenbaum sensitivity analysis validated the robustness and estimated treated effect may not be affected significantly by the unobserved variable. These findings suggest except for the behavioral obligations, subjective well-being and life quality should be considered in the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee program design, and a standardized and stratified adjustment formula could be utilized to resolve decentralized implementation.

Co-author

Feiyan ZHONG

Author

Seo Eun OH

Yonsei University

Co-author

Junko YAMASHITA

Does Defamilisation Transform the Gendered Division of Care? : An Analysis of Policy Change and the Childcare Time Mix in South Korea

This study aims to quantify the childcare time mix in order to examine how the defamilisation and degenderisation of childcare have changed over time in South Korea, hereafter Korea, and how care policies have influenced the gender division of childcare time. Since the 2000s, Korea has expanded a wide range of care policies within a relatively short period, signalling a potential shift away from the traditional gender role model. These changes have been underpinned by policy efforts toward the “socialisation of childcare,” which entails two interrelated objectives: the defamilisation and degenderisation of care. However, the expansion of formal childcare services may substantially reduce the family’s relative share of care provision without necessarily reducing women’s disproportionate responsibility to the same extent.

This study empirically analyses changes in the defamilisation and degenderisation of childcare in Korea and explores how evolving policy configurations and institutional contexts are related to these patterns. Drawing on an integrated analytical framework, it quantifies the demographic-level distribution of childcare time by gender and sector using longitudinal data. While most existing research focuses on the gender distribution of childcare time within families, this study also incorporates the distribution of care within the formal care sector, defined here as the early childhood education and care sector. By empirically estimating the total volume of childcare time at the national level, the study identifies changes in the configuration of childcare provision across four groups of carer: formal male carer, formal female carer, family male carer, and family female carer.

By examining how comprehensive policy packages have generated both intended and unintended gendered outcomes within Korea’s institutional context, this study provides implications for moving beyond defamilisation toward a more gender-equitable care policy.

Author

Shuyun FAN

Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Neo-familism and Young Adults’ Early Childcare Preferences: Evidence from a Discrete Choice Experiment

The expansion of formal childcare for children aged 0–3 has become an important policy response to low fertility and rising care burdens in China. Yet this expansion remains embedded in a neo-familist context, where families continue to be treated as the primary site of care. This article examines what kinds of early childcare models young adults value when formal provision expands under continued family responsibility. Drawing on a discrete choice experiment with 1,680 Shanghai hukou residents aged 18–34, analysed using panel mixed logit models and willingness-to-pay estimates, the study examines preferences for childcare models varying by tuition, operator, location, administrative affiliation, operating hours, class size, teacher qualification, curriculum, and hypothetical number of children. The results show that young adults are highly price-sensitive, prefer public over collective and private operators, and place substantial value on smaller class sizes, fully qualified teachers, and enriched curricula. By contrast, care-coordination features, including proximity to parents’ or grandparents’ homes, stand-alone early childcare centres without links to kindergartens, and flexible operating hours, show limited effects. Each additional hypothetical child is also associated with a marked decline in willingness to pay for formal childcare. Heterogeneity analyses further show that price sensitivity and quality concerns are stronger among women and parents, especially those with more than one child. These findings suggest that neo-familism does not necessarily generate stronger demand for more familized childcare models that facilitate coordination with existing family care. Instead, it strengthens young adults’ preference for formal childcare that is affordable, publicly supported, and quality-verifiable.

Panel B10 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

Author
Iris Po Yee LO
Hong Kong Baptist University

Lgbtq+ People’s Experiences of Work-family Interface in Hong Kong: Mapping the Queer Economy of Welfare Mix

This research examines the ways in which gender, sexuality, and work-family responsibilities intersect in shaping lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) people's welfare. Previous social policy research on work-family interface has predominantly focused on heterosexual, cis-gendered households, overlooking the welfare needs and challenges of LGBTQ+ people. This research addresses this gap by mapping LGBTQ+ people's strategies for managing work-family dynamics through the framework of 'queer economy of welfare mix'.

Drawing on narrative interviews with 36 LGBTQ+ adults in Hong Kong, this research reveals the ways in which these adults navigate their work and family roles, against the backdrop of continued cis-heteronormativity in workplaces and the emerging neoliberal politics of diversity and inclusion in the city. The 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework conceptualizes how LGBTQ+ individuals mobilize resources across the family, market, and state to organize their welfare through three types of strategies: citizen strategies (exercising rights and entitlements), consumer strategies (securing welfare through market goods and services), and hybrid consumer–citizen strategies. The study findings highlight how LGBTQ+ people respond to institutional and societal exclusion by assembling resources across multiple domains and developing new ways of forming their work and family lives.

Bridging scholarship on gender, sexuality, and family with social policy studies, this research provides original knowledge about how LGBTQ+ people's work-family interface is shaped by the interplay of family negotiations, market participation, and constrained forms of citizenship. Mapping the diverse strategies used by participants through the 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework offers a new analytical lens for understanding how gender, sexuality, family, and changing social roles are negotiated, while highlighting the need for more inclusive work–family policies.

Author
Yaxin LIU
University of York

Changing Gender Roles and Low Fertility Intentions in China

China's persistently low fertility rate has generated extensive scholarly and policy debate, yet much existing research is mainly centred on women's attitudes and structural constraints, often relying on quantitative survey data. While this literature has been crucial in documenting declining fertility intentions, it has tended to treat fertility decision-making as either an individual (frequently female) preference or an outcome of economic calculation. Men's perspectives, as well as the relational dynamics between partners, remain relatively underexplored. This research addresses this gap by repositioning fertility intentions as negotiated outcomes shaped by changing gender roles. Drawing on scholarship on the gender revolution, individualisation, and East Asian developmentalism, the study argues that fertility decisions emerge from ongoing interactions between men and women navigating shifting expectations of breadwinning, caregiving, and partnership. The persistence of traditional gender norms alongside women's expanded educational and labour market participation may create tensions not only for women but also for men, whose roles are likewise in transition. Methodologically, the project adopts a qualitative design centred on semi-structured joint interviews with married heterosexual couples aged between 20 and 40 in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Changchun, complemented by individual follow-up interviews. This couple-based approach enables analysis of both shared narratives and intra-couple communications, foregrounding men's voices and the relational construction of fertility intentions. By integrating men's perspectives and adopting a qualitative, relational methodology, the study contributes to East Asian debates on gender transformation, family change, and the social policy implications of sustained low fertility.

Panel B10 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

Author
Soyeon PARK

Conditional Citizenship and Gender Performance of Transgender People in South Korea

Transgender refers to individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth (APA, 2013). While transgender issues have gained increasing social visibility and scholarly attention in Western societies, transgender populations in South Korea remain largely invisible within official policy frameworks. The national statistical system does not include gender identity as a demographic category, making it difficult to estimate the size and social conditions of the transgender population. Such statistical omission constitutes a form of structural exclusion. When a social group is absent from official statistics, it is less likely to be recognized as a legitimate policy subject, which limits the development of institutional protections and welfare provisions. In South Korea, transgender individuals therefore occupy an ambiguous position within citizenship and social policy regimes. At the same time, exclusion is not only institutional but also discursive. In recent years, online hate discourse targeting transgender individuals has intensified, particularly within polarized gender politics. Public controversies, such as the case of a transgender woman who withdrew from a women's university after facing intense online hostility despite having completed legal gender recognition, illustrate the fragile and conditional nature of transgender citizenship. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's concept of plurality, this study conceptualizes the issue not merely as a matter of minority rights but as a broader question concerning the institutional conditions under which diverse individuals can appear and participate in the public sphere. By examining statistical invisibility, public discourse, and institutional recognition, this research seeks to illuminate the structural conditions that shape transgender citizenship in South Korea. Ultimately, the study contributes to discussions on minority inclusion and the future of social policy in societies facing increasing diversity.

Panel B11 · Stream 16
Governance, Civil Society, and Social Policy Implementation

Author
WONG Yin Cheung, Eugene
The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

Co-authors
Xianfang YUE;
Ran WEI

From Philanthropy to Policy: A Digital Circular Regeneration Model for Sustainable Cultural Welfare? Evidence from the Hong Kong Tiger Balm Garden Vr Metaverse Project

The era of polycrisis demands social policy frameworks that are not only reparative but also regenerative - capable of transforming disruption into opportunities for sustainable welfare. This paper argues that digital cultural heritage, when governed as social infrastructure, represents an underexplored policy lever for addressing three intersecting challenges: the erosion of intergenerational solidarity, the sustainability deficit in cultural welfare, and the governance vacuum surrounding artificial intelligence (AI)-augmented public goods.

Using the Tiger Balm Garden (Aw Boon Haw Garden) Virtual Reality (VR) metaverse cultural heritage project in Hong Kong as an in-depth case study, the paper proposes and empirically validates a Digital Circular Regeneration Model (DCRM). The model comprises three nested loops. First, an outer policy-driven value loop translates Aw Boon Haw’s historical ethos of “taking from society, using for society” into a contemporary social–cultural circular economy framework. Second, a middle digital regeneration process loop, encompassing datafication, modelling, narrativisation, and platformisation, systematically transforms endangered heritage into regenerative digital public assets. Third, an inner AI-enabled intelligence loop embeds technologies such as computer vision, natural language processing, and predictive maintenance across the value chain.

Drawing on the project’s three-phase implementation roadmap (2024–2027) and preliminary user data (N > 700; mean rating = 3.82/5), the paper demonstrates three key contributions to social policy. First, it reconceptualises intergenerational welfare: the VR environment intentionally cultivates shared narrative spaces between younger and older cohorts, addressing relational poverty and age segregation as legitimate welfare concerns. Second, it advances a measurable model of welfare pluralism: the project’s public–private–academic governance structure, supported by charitable trust endowments and government in-kind contributions, offers a replicable financing and delivery model for digitally mediated social services. Third, it introduces a policy-transferable toolkit: the DCRM’s key performance indicators and checkpoint design matrix allows policymakers and non-profit organisations to evaluate, compare, and optimise the social value of digital heritage investments, thereby repositioning them from discretionary cultural expenditure to evidence-based social infrastructure investments.

At a time when digitalisation is predominantly framed as a source of labour market disruption, this paper repositions it as a welfare opportunity - one that enables the regeneration of the intergenerational social contract through algorithmically informed, ethically governed, and sustainably financed cultural technologies.

Panel B11 · Stream 16
Governance, Civil Society, and Social Policy Implementation

Author
Norihiro NIHEI

An Analysis of Factors Influencing Volunteer Volume and Needs Fulfillment in Japanese Municipalities

In Japan, under fiscal constraints and the expansion of neoliberal policies, there has been a growing tendency to delegate social security services to voluntary activities within local communities. However, in some regions the voluntary sector remains fragile, creating the risk that people whose living conditions are already vulnerable may face further insecurity. It is therefore important to examine the risks involved in shifting social service provision to the voluntary sector and to identify the structural conditions that produce these risks. Against this background, this study examines how the vulnerability of local volunteer centers is unevenly distributed across regions and how it is related to regional structural conditions. It also investigates the relationship between the social security system and the voluntary sector. To address these issues, this study analyzes data from a nationwide questionnaire survey of volunteer centers established in municipalities across Japan, together with data on regional structural characteristics. Multivariate analyses are used to identify the determinants of both the number of volunteers and the level of needs fulfillment. The main findings are as follows. With regard to the volume of volunteers, higher regional unemployment rates and lower levels of social security expenditure have negative effects. In contrast, needs fulfillment is negatively affected by a lack of human and time resources at volunteer centers, high unemployment rates, and the necessity for older adults to remain in the labor market. These results suggest that the social security system and the voluntary sector are not in a trade-off relationship but are instead positively correlated. Strengthening social security institutions is therefore important not only for social protection but also for sustaining an active civil society.

Author
YuKwan SIT
University of York

Structural Barriers in Cross-border Healthcare Collaboration in the Great Bay Area: Evidence from the Hong Kong-shenzhen Hospital

Collaborative governance is common across diverse policy areas and increasingly prominent in health-sector governance globally. High-quality healthcare delivery requires collaboration among governments, private actors, and community organisations. Such multi-actor collaboration improves service accessibility, patient well-being, and resource efficiency (Emerson, 2018; Frankowski, 2019). Collaborating actors originate from different sectors, governance levels, and even national systems. How do they work together, and what barriers do they face in jointly providing healthcare services?

Existing research takes a process perspective to explain collaboration and success, focusing on trust-building, process design, and communication mechanisms (Grootjans et al., 2022; Glandon et al., 2023). However, effective healthcare collaboration also depends on structural considerations among participating actors (Wu, 2025). Existing studies fail to address: (1) What do institutional, resource and organisational differences look like? (2) Do these differences facilitate or hinder collaborative efforts? (3) Which actors regulate and manage these differences, and how?

As part of an ongoing PhD study, this presentation examines the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital (HKU-SH) collaboration. Hong Kong and mainland China operate under different healthcare systems within the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ framework. In 2012, the Shenzhen Municipal Government transferred the management of its public hospital to the University of Hong Kong. This arrangement represents a rare opportunity to explore the implications for cross-border collaborative governance and operational practices.

The presentation reports provisional findings from the HKU-SZ Hospital case, based on interviews and policy documents. It highlights “structural differences” and how differences in institutional logic, resources, and organisational capabilities influence collaborative performance (Ansell and Gash, 2008). We explore how differences create opportunities and constraints for cross-border collaboration.

Panel B11 · Stream 16
Governance, Civil Society, and Social Policy Implementation

Author
Qi Xuan YUNCG
Lingnan University

Co-authors
Stefan KÜHNER;
Xi CHEN

Relocation as a Governance-shaped Process: A Two-layer Model of Senior Housing Transition Under Double Ageing in Macau

This paper examines how a structurally neglected housing and welfare issue in East Asia is addressed through a rare cross-sector governance response: public senior housing for older homeowners. Under ‘double ageing’ the simultaneous ageing of population and housing stock—Macau provides an empirically rich case of how ageing, housing, welfare, and governance gaps intersect. A substantial group of older adults live in aging, physically unfit tenement buildings yet remain overlooked because homeownership places them outside conventional public housing support. To address this gap, the Macau SAR government has introduced hotel-like public senior housing as an innovative housing-care intervention. Yet relocation remains limited, raising a key governance puzzle: why does an age-friendly alternative not automatically translate into credible and workable relocation? To answer this question, the paper draws on stakeholder-centered qualitative evidence from 48 semi-structured interviews with 53 interviewees conducted during the scheme’s early implementation stage. The study brings together system-side perspectives from government officials, NGO representatives and frontline workers, developers, property-management personnel, and scholars, alongside user-side perspectives from relocated and non-relocated seniors and caregivers. This broad coverage makes it possible to examine how relocation is shaped not only by individual needs but also by governance coordination, service intermediation, frontline implementation, family negotiation, and lived experience. Building on push-pull theory, the paper develops a two-layer theoretical model of senior housing transition under double ageing. At the decision layer, seniors and families negotiate push factors, pull factors, and perceived obstacles. At the system layer, governance collaboration, eligibility design, affordability arrangements, service integration, frontline capacity, and enabling infrastructures shape whether relocation becomes institutionally credible and practically achievable. The study extends push-pull theory by showing that later-life relocation is not simply a residential choice, but a governance-shaped and cross-sector process shaped by the interaction between housing deterioration, care needs, and institutional design.

Panel C1 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Chaeyoon LEE
Yonsei University

Co-author
Ahyoung SONG

How Are Older Adults’ Care Needs Met? Care-mix Typologies in South Korea

Care provision is not singular but socially organized through multiple providers and institutional arrangements. In South Korea, rapid population aging has intensified the care needs of older adults, particularly as the oldest-old population has grown. Historically characterized by a familistic welfare orientation, South Korea has introduced public programs to respond to older adults’care needs, including the Long-Term Care Insurance (LTCI) system in 2008 and the Customized Care Service in 2020. As care needs rise and multiple channels of care provision coexist, it is important to empirically identify how care is combined across providers. This study examines the heterogeneity of such care configurations. Using the 2023 Survey of Living Conditions and Welfare Needs of Older Koreans conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, this study analyzes care arrangements among 875 older adults with care needs. Care provision was operationalized as six binary indicators: co-resident family, non-co-resident family, friends/neighbors, paid market help, LTCI services, and Customized Care and other public care services. Latent class analysis (LCA) was conducted in R to identify distinct care-mix patterns, and model fit criteria supported a three-class solution. The three types identified were: (1) an informal-mixed type (centered on non-co-resident family and friends); (2) a formal dominant type (centered on LTCI with supplementary non-co-resident family and market help); and (3) a co-resident family dominant type (with minimal reliance on other providers). The study further examines the perceived adequacy of care across these classes, with attention to socioeconomic status, gender, health, and social relationships as factors shaping access to care. The findings offer empirical grounding for understanding how care for older adults is distributed and experienced across diverse social groups, and contribute to discussions on care inequality in South Korea.

Author
Xuehui WANG
Fudan University

Co-authors
Jidong QIU;
Feifan FANG

Elderly-to-elderly Caregiving, Frailty Acceleration, and Subjective Aging: Longitudinal Evidence from China (2014–2023)

Background: With population aging and declining family size, more older adults in China are caring for their own elderly parents, phenomenon termed ‘older-to-older caregiving’ Whether caregiving accelerates or mitigates aging-related decline remains debated, and potential discrepancies between objective and subjective aging are understudied. Methods: Using five waves (2014?2023) of the China Longitudinal Aging Social Survey (CLASS), we examined older adults aged 60+. Older-to-older caregiving was defined as providing non-zero weekly care time to parents or parents-in-law. Aging speed was assessed via frailty-based biological age (relative to chronological age) and perceived old-age threshold (relative to chronological age). Logistic regression models were employed, with sensitivity analyses including propensity score matching and inverse probability of treatment weighting. Results: Caregiving was significantly associated with faster frailty aging (OR = 1.439, p < 0.001) but slower subjective aging (OR = 0.760, p < 0.001), indicating accelerated physical decline alongside reduced perception of rapid aging. These divergent patterns were robust across sensitivity analyses. Higher education and being married were protective against fast aging, while larger household size increased risk of both aging types. Conclusion: Older-to-older caregiving simultaneously accelerates frailty-based aging and buffers subjective aging perceptions, highlighting the multidimensional nature of aging. Policies should recognize older caregivers as a vulnerable group requiring targeted health support, while leveraging the psychosocial benefits embedded in caregiving roles.

Panel C1 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Shaofen DING
Hong Kong Baptist University

Caregiver Tragedies and the Limits of Community Care: Structural Constraints and Policy Discourses in Hong Kong

Amid rapid demographic ageing, East Asian welfare regimes increasingly rely on unsupported familialism, placing growing pressure on informal caregivers. In Hong Kong, this structural strain has been reflected in a series of caregiving-related tragedies, including murder-suicides among older couples and families with disabled members. While existing literature often focuses on the absolute shortage of long-term care resources, this paper examines the tension between the structural limitations of community support services and the discursive strategies through which such crises are interpreted in policy discourse.

This study combines policy document analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Empirically, it analyses key Hong Kong government policy documents from 2015 to 2025, including Policy Addresses, budget speeches, the 2025 Ombudsman’s investigative report on community care services, and official press releases responding to caregiving tragedies, alongside relevant empirical reports on Hong Kong’s community care system.

The analysis reveals a significant mismatch between structural conditions and policy narratives. Despite nominal increases in care vouchers, access to respite and community support services remains constrained by administrative gatekeeping and spatial inequalities. However, official responses to caregiving tragedies tend to frame these incidents primarily through psychological narratives of caregiver stress and emotional breakdown. The CDA findings show that policy discourse frequently emphasises individual resilience, counselling support, and help-seeking behaviour, while paying limited attention to structural limitations within the care system.

The paper argues that such discursive framing may inadvertently shift responsibility for caregiving crises toward individuals and families. It highlights the need to move beyond psychologicalised responses and reconsider the role of the state in providing substantive material support within ageing East Asian welfare regimes.

Panel C2· Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author
Jaewook NAHM
Korea National University of Education

Social Insurance in the Era of Digital Labour: Focusing on South Korea’s National Employment Insurance and the Issue of Sharing Social Contributions

In many countries, labor market participants have traditionally been categorized through a binary distinction between employees and the self-employed. However, the continuous trend of shedding employment by firms since the 1980s, coupled with the advancement of digital technology for labor control since the 2010s, has led to a proliferation of dependent contractors, such as digital platform workers. Consequently, this traditional dichotomy is increasingly “melting” away. These structural shifts present a significant challenge to the operation of social insurance systems, which were originally established on the assumption that the majority of labor market participants maintain a continuous employment relationship. This study examines South Korea’s National Employment Insurance (NEI) as a strategic response to these labor market changes and the resulting pressures on the social security system. It reviews the key debates, achievements, and limitations identified during the implementation of the NEI to date. Based on this case, the paper explores the broader challenges associated with extending social insurance coverage to dependent contractors. In particular, the research focuses on the critical issues of “identifying the employer” and the “increasing burden on employers” that arise when applying social insurance to dependent contractors. As a potential counter measure, this study provides an in-depth review of alternative discussions regarding the social insurance contribution system, specifically from the dimension of the “taxification of social contributions.

Panel C2· Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author
Jung Eun CHOI
Korea Social Security Information Service

Bridging the AI Divide: The Role of AI Usage Experience and Competency in Shaping Opportunity Expectations

As AI technologies rapidly diffuse across society, they are reshaping opportunities for individuals, organizations, and economies. Building on the concept of the digital divide, defined as disparities in access to and effective use of digital technologies, the rapid development of AI has given rise to an ‘AI divide’ (Kitsara, 2022). While AI can enhance economic growth and individual productivity, uneven adoption and use may also generate new forms of inequality. Unequal access to and benefits from AI may widen gaps between those who can leverage AI for socioeconomic opportunities and those who cannot (Hammerschmidt et al., 2025), potentially limiting the broad distribution of AI’s benefits across society (Bentley et al., 2024). Against this backdrop, this study examines how AI usage experience shapes individuals’ expectations for expanded opportunities. The analysis uses nationally representative data from the 2024 Digital Divide Survey in Korea, including 7,000 respondents from the general population and 6,600 from vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and low-income individuals. The study focuses on two dimensions of AI usage: the extent of AI use (quantitative usage) and the perceived assistance derived from AI (qualitative usage). It also conducts comparative analyses between the general population and vulnerable groups and examines the mediating role of AI competency. This study finds that AI competency mediates the relationship between AI usage experience and expectations for opportunity expansion among the general population, whereas this mediating effect is not significant among vulnerable groups. This suggests that AI usage experience alone may not enable vulnerable populations to translate technological engagement into perceived socioeconomic opportunities. The findings are consistent with the concept of the third-level digital divide, which emphasizes disparities in outcomes derived from technology use. Therefore, policies should move beyond expanding AI access and instead focus on strengthening AI competencies and supporting the effective translation of AI use into tangible opportunities for vulnerable populations.

Author
Dah Ming CHIU
Saint Francis University

Beyond Self-reporting: Leveraging Ai for Automated Intervention-based Evaluation in Social Services

In Hong Kong, numerous social service projects are implemented through partnerships between NGOs and charitable organizations, complementing government welfare programs to address diverse community needs. These initiatives often require substantial funding and demand robust evaluation of their effectiveness. Traditional evaluation methods typically rely on participants’ self-reports, gathered through surveys, interviews, or focus groups, which can be subjective and resource-intensive.

With recent advances in information technology and artificial intelligence (AI), it has become increasingly feasible to collect and analyze data directly from the interventions themselves such as chat transcripts and other digital records (with participants’ consent). These records can not only reveal the immediate impacts of the intervention but also guide improvements for greater cost-effectiveness and sustainability. However, such analyses would be prohibitively expensive if conducted manually by domain experts. Leveraging the rapid progress in AI and large language models (LLMs), many of these evaluation processes can now be automated.

This paper explores the potential and limitations of AI-assisted evaluation by examining a large-scale social service project in Hong Kong. Through this case study, we discuss the methodology, results, and implications of integrating AI-based analysis into social service evaluation, highlighting the types of assessment tasks for which AI can meet or complement human evaluative standards.

Panel C3 · Stream 5
Population and Demographic Shifts: Aging, Low Fertility, Intergenerational Relations

Author
Cheng-wei HSIEH
National Chi Nan University, Taiwan

Digital Competence and Loneliness Among Older Adults in Taiwan: Living Arrangements as a Moderator

Background: Rapid digitalization and population aging challenge social policy in Asia. While digital tools may foster connection, loneliness among older adults—exacerbated by changing living arrangements—remains critical. Drawing on social capital theory as an explanatory framework, this quantitative study examines how living arrangements moderate the relationship between digital competence and loneliness among community-dwelling older adults aged 65+ in Taiwan.

Theoretical Framework: Drawing on Putnam’s (2000) social capital theory as an explanatory framework and Weiss’s (1973) emotional/social loneliness, this study proposes: (H1) Digital competence is negatively associated with loneliness; (H2) Older adults living alone report higher loneliness than those living with family members; (H3) Living arrangements moderate the digital competence-loneliness relationship, such that the negative association is stronger for those living alone than for those living with family members.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey will target community-dwelling older adults aged 65+ in Taiwan using stratified sampling by living arrangement (alone, with spouse only, with children). Validated instruments will measure digital competence and loneliness. Controls include age, gender, education, income, and health. Hierarchical regression will be used to examine the main effect of digital competence, the direct effect of living arrangements, and their interaction effect on loneliness.

Expected Contributions: This study expects digital competence to reduce loneliness, with effects varying by living arrangement. Findings will inform targeted policies: pairing digital training programs with community support for solitary elders, and strengthening intergenerational digital learning for those living with or near family members.

Author
Fen ling CHEN
National Taipei University

Co-author
San Lin CHUNG

When Productivist Welfare States Meet Demographic Crisis: Institutional Limits in the Taiwan and Singapore

According to the United Nations World Fertility Report 2024, the five lowest total fertility rates (TFRs) in the world are all found in Asia. Taiwan ranked fourth with a TFR of 0.86, followed by Singapore at 0.95. Despite sharing similar historical trajectories as post-World War II societies shaped by the baby boom, Confucian family norms, and patriarchal gender structures, Taiwan and Singapore have developed along distinct political and welfare paths. Both countries, recognized as two of the “Four Asian Tigers”, exemplify the productivist welfare state model (Holliday, 2000), in which economic development is prioritized over social protection. Yet, Singapore has maintained a top-down, authoritative governance and adopted strategies centered on international trade and a multicultural immigration regime. Taiwan, by contrast, has undergone democratization, strengthened civil society participation, and developed pluralist policy formation, while sustaining an export-oriented economy driven in recent years by semiconductor and AI industries. These differences make the two countries an analytically meaningful comparative pair in examining fertility decline and welfare policy. The persistence of ultra-low fertility has profound implications for both societies, including future labor supply shortages, intergenerational inequities embedded in social insurance systems, and the erosion of traditional family-based care arrangements welfare regimes. This study adopts a political economic perspective of welfare states to analyze the structural determinants of low fertility in Taiwan and Singapore, the ideological orientations guiding their governmental responses, and the policy challenges confronting productivist welfare states. It further discusses potential risks and future policy implications as demographic decline accelerates.

Panel C3· Stream 5
Population and Demographic Shifts: Aging, Low Fertility, Intergenerational Relations

Author
Zhen TIAN
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Co-author
Zhao CHEN

Embedding Active Ageing in Place: Perceived Residential Environments as Mediators Between Physical Activity and Health-related Quality of Life in China

Objective: Against the backdrop of rapid population aging in China, this study examines how older residents’ perceptions of their living environments shape the relationship between physical activity and health-related quality of life (HRQoL). It focuses on perceived residential environments, encompassing neighbourhood infrastructures and community-based social services, and examines their mediating role in the association between physical activity and HRQoL.

Methods: Data were drawn from the 2016 and 2020 waves of the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), restricting the sample to individuals aged 60 and above. Structured questionnaire items measured perceived residential environment, frequency of physical activity, and HRQoL (physical and mental components). Perceived residential environment included ratings of public facilities, environmental conditions, public security, neighbourhood relationships, neighbourhood support, and attachment to the community. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to validate the latent constructs, and mediation analysis was conducted to estimate the indirect effect of perceived residential environment on the physical activity–HRQoL relationship.

Results: Higher levels of physical activity were positively associated with older residents’ HRQoL. More favourable perceptions of the residential environment, including better public facilities, cleaner and safer surroundings, stronger neighbourhood ties and support, were positively related to both more frequent physical activity and higher HRQoL. Mediation analysis indicated a significant indirect effect, with perceived residential environment partially mediating the association between physical activity and HRQoL.

Conclusion: The study highlights perceived residential environment as a key mechanism linking physical activity to HRQoL among older adults in a rapidly aging East Asian context. Policies to promote active and healthy ageing in China and similar East Asian settings should complement individual-level interventions with investments in age-friendly neighbourhood infrastructure, accessible community-based social services, and initiatives that strengthen social cohesion and community attachment.

Panel C3 · Stream 5
Population and Demographic Shifts: Aging, Low Fertility, Intergenerational Relations

Author
Gezhi DENG
Hong Kong Baptist University

Reconfiguring Intergenerational Resources: Delayed Retirement and Women’s Fertility Behavior in China

Amid rapid population aging and persistently low fertility, China has progressively introduced the two-child and three-child policies and approved a gradual delayed retirement reform to mitigate demographic imbalances. At the family level, however, by reshaping grandparents' dual role as providers of childcare and financial support for young families, delayed retirement may influence women's fertility through these two channels in opposing directions. The effects of the two reforms can therefore offset or reinforce each other, potentially complicating each policy's intended goals. Drawing on Becker's household production framework and Ji's mosaic familialism—the residentially nuclear yet functionally multi-generational family form characteristic of contemporary China—we ask how delayed retirement reshapes women's fertility through two intergenerational channels (grandparental childcare time and financial transfers). We derive two competing arguments, crowding-out dominance versus income-effect dominance, and test them within a unified parallel-and-serial mediation framework.

Using the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) 2016–2022 on 9,908 married women aged 20–49 with at least one prior birth, we find that delayed retirement significantly reduces grandparental childcare and thereby suppresses fertility (time channel), while simultaneously raising grandparents' wage income and modestly increasing financial transfers and fertility (economic chain). The negative effect through reduced grandparental childcare is overwhelmingly larger than the small positive effect through extra financial transfers. These findings reveal the structural tension underlying the interdependence of intergenerational time and money resources in Chinese families, and suggest that delayed retirement and fertility policies are in conflict at the family level, calling for more coordinated design between retirement and care-support systems.

Panel C4 · Stream 7
Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author
Zhuoyu JIANG

Rethinking Protection: Digital Social Citizenship and Labour Rights in the Gig Economy

Digital platforms have facilitated a large number of informal gig jobs, which are characterized by precarity and the absence of social protection. From a worker - citizen perspective, this paper addresses this issue by exploring how social policies can be reconceived to protect the labor rights of gig workers. For decades, informal employment has served as the primary channel for low-educated or low-skilled labor within China's urban-rural dual structure. Yet, this landscape has been transformed by digitization and the growth of the service sector, giving rise to the widespread expansion of the gig economy in China. The nature of work has undergone a profound transformation from the industrial age to the digital age. Spatiotemporal flexibility, order-based compensation, technology-driven stratification, and atomization are the core attributes that distinguish gig work from industrial work. Consequently, existing social policies based on traditional standard labor relations are insufficient to safeguard the social entitlements of this vulnerable group. Gig workers face challenges with restricted access to social protection, including low job security, unstable income, weak collective bargaining power, and difficulties in determining liability for occupational injuries. In response to this challenge, this paper explores digital rights as an additional sphere of citizenship and incorporates the concept of digital social citizenship into labor protection frameworks. In this way, it proposes a viable pathway for advancing the gig economy from merely solving unemployment toward ensuring decent work.

Co-author
Tao LIU

Panel C4 · Stream 7
Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author
Yi WANG
Hong Kong Lingnan University

Cross-border Policy Synergy: The Instrument Misalignment in Shenzhen and Hong Kong Graduate Employment Governance

Amid the ongoing massification of higher education, the rapid increase in university graduates has intensified the landscape of graduates unemployment, posing a severe societal issue. Misalignments in employment policy instrument between Shenzhen and Hong Kong have created multi-level barriers to promoting university graduates employment prospects. To address this, the present study adopts the theoretical framework of Rothwell Zegveld's policy instruments typology to analyze 8 policy texts issued between 2019 to 2024 from the three policy instrumental dimensions of supply-side, environmental and demand-side. Through systematic policy text analysis, we examine the dynamics of cross-border policy synergy centered on university graduates employment between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. After in-depth analysis, findings reveal that Shenzhen's policies for university graduates' employment are predominately state-led and supply side-driven, while those in Hong Kong are primarily market-led and demand side-driven. However, both regions underutilize environmental policy instruments to innovate employment models. Institutional inertia rooted in the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework further constrains cross-border policy innovation and synergy. Therefore, the study recommends fostering cross-border policy collaboration by optimizing policy instruments, particularly enhancing financial support for graduate entrepreneurship. It contributes to the literature on regional employment governance by providing actionable recommendations for policy design in both jurisdictions.

Author
Chenlan SHU
School for Business and Society, University of York

Responses to the Unemployment and Employment Precarity in China: Ideas of In-work Benefits Under a Post-productivist Welfare State

In-work benefits (IWBs) are financial subsidies designed to address in-work poverty, employment precarity, and welfare inadequacy. Nevertheless, there is limited discussions on discursive construction and legitimation of IWBs in non-Western contexts. The research investigates how IWBs are framed and justified in China, a case of strong state interventions and welfare particularism. Chinese IWBs manage unemployment and precarious employment: social insurance subsidies and employment services are given for unemployed citizens who obtain informal work as their first employment. This study adopts discursive institutionalism to comprehend the construction of labour market subjectivity and reconceptualization of welfare boundaries by the policy discourse. The study focuses on youth-orientated strategies targeting at young people aged 16-29 and analyzes 213 policy documents. The study suggests a welfare post-productivism orientation logic underpinning IWBs. First, IWBs functioning as an activation strategy. The scheme legitimizes precarious work as a solution to unemployment and formulate youth employment as a means of increasing productivity and societal cohesion. Second, IWBs promote a selective social protection strategy, expecting to minimize institutional gaps between standard and non-standard workers. Overall, IWBs shape a normative labour market discourse that centred on both productivity and social justice, framing subjectivities of young people as active and self-reliant labour market participants. Theoretically, the study labour market institutions function as discursive mechanisms that (1) construct subjectivities of job seekers, (2) frame labour market risks, and (3) legitimize selective social protection. Together, the three mechanisms normalize precarious employment and reinforce the state as a norm-setting actor in structuring labour market expectations.

Panel C5 · Stream 8
Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Nurhadi Nurhadi
Universitas Gadjah Mada

From Aid to Autonomy: A Critical Examination of Policy Paradigm Shifts Towards Productive Social Protection

Across the Global South, social protection systems are undergoing a gradual policy shift from consumption-based assistance toward models that combine protection with economic empowerment. Yet the institutionalization of such ‘productive social protection’ within government systems remains uneven and contested. This article examines Indonesia’s Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara (PENA) program as a policy experiment aimed at facilitating the transition from welfare dependence to economic autonomy among poor households.

The study employs a qualitative research design based on fieldwork in six cities across four Indonesian provinces, drawing on interviews with policymakers, program administrators, social facilitators, and beneficiaries, complemented by document analysis and direct observation. Analytically, the article integrates welfare regime theory, the Graduation Approach, and the Context–Input–Process–Product (CIPP) evaluation framework to examine the institutional dynamics shaping program implementation.

The findings reveal a persistent tension between the normative ambition of graduation and the bureaucratic realities of social policy delivery. While PENA adopts the rhetoric of productive inclusion and self-reliance, its implementation remains constrained by institutional fragmentation, limited frontline capacities, centralized financing structures, and narrowly defined graduation indicators focused primarily on income and business licensing. These limitations risk reducing graduation to an administrative benchmark rather than a substantive process of expanding capabilities and building livelihood resilience.

The article argues that embedding productive social protection within national systems requires a reconceptualization of graduation as a multidimensional and iterative process supported by sustained institutional learning, decentralized governance, and long-term capability-building investments. The Indonesian case illustrates both the possibilities and structural constraints of transforming welfare systems from aid provision toward autonomy-oriented social policy.

Author
Ikhyun JANG
Hanshin University

Redistribution and the Political Consequences of Inequality

This study investigates whether the relationship between income inequality and far-right party support varies across European welfare regimes with different redistributive capacities. While a substantial body of literature links rising economic inequality to the electoral success of far-right parties, less attention has been paid to how institutionalized redistribution mediates this relationship. Drawing on welfare regime theory, particularly the typology developed by Gøsta Esping-Andersen, this study hypothesizes that in countries with stronger redistributive mechanisms, the political consequences of market-generated inequality are mitigated, thereby weakening the inequality–far-right nexus. Methodologically, the study employs a country-year panel dataset covering European democracies from 1995 to 2022. Income inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient before and after taxes and transfers) is drawn from the Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID), and far-right electoral support is compiled from the European Election Database and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. Fixed-effects panel regression models with interaction terms between inequality and welfare regime type are estimated. The findings are expected to clarify the conditional political effects of inequality and contribute to debates on how redistributive institutions shape contemporary populist radical right mobilization.

Co-author
Eunchae LEE

Panel C5 · Stream 8
Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Yuil CHOI
Seoul National University

Policy Gaps in Care-leaving Transitions and Mental Health Outcomes in South Korea: The Buffering Role of Social Support Against Suicidal Ideation

South Korea’s care-leaving policy has undergone notable reforms, including extending the age of protection and broadening eligibility for aftercare services. Yet approximately 2,000 young people exit the public care system annually, facing abrupt transitions into independent living with limited institutional safety nets. This study examines how gaps in post-care social policy are associated with the mental health of care leavers, focusing on the pathway from emotional vulnerability to suicidal ideation and the buffering role of social support. Using survey data from 105 care leavers (aged 19?3) in South Korea, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted with mean-centered interaction terms. The results revealed three key findings. First, eemotional vulnerability, characterised by persistent anxiety, loneliness, and hopelessness, significantly predicted suicidal ideation. Second, perceived social support had a significant negative effect on suicidal ideation. Third, social support moderated the relationship between emotional vulnerability and suicidal ideation: among those with low social support, suicidal ideation escalated sharply as emotional vulnerability increased, whereas this effect was substantially attenuated among those with high social support. These findings expose a critical policy blind spot. Current care-leaving assessments in South Korea focus predominantly on economic self-reliance, while systematic screening for emotional vulnerability and social isolation remains absent. The study calls for integrating standardised mental health assessments into care-leaving protocols, establishing multi-layered social support systems, including sustained mentoring and peer support programmes, and prioritising intensive case management for the dual-risk group with high emotional vulnerability and low social support. The implications extend to broader East Asian contexts where rapid demographic shifts and residualist welfare traditions similarly leave care leavers without adequate psychosocial safety nets.

Panel C6 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

Author
Tomo NISHIMURA
Kwansei Gakuin University

Time Poverty and Subjective Health: Evidence of Gender Differences in Japan

Married women who bear primary responsibility for childcare and eldercare are particularly vulnerable to time constraints. In Japan, where traditional gender divisions of labor persist alongside the expansion of dual-earner households, concerns about women’s time poverty have intensified. This study examines the prevalence of time poverty and its association with subjective health using nationally representative data from the Japanese Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities. Drawing on the discretionary time approach proposed by Goodin et al. (2008), time poverty is measured for approximately 190,000 employed adults. Ordered logit models are used to assess the relationship between time poverty and five-category self-rated health. The results show that women have 1.57 times higher odds of being time poor than men. Moreover, time poverty significantly shifts women’s subjective health distribution toward worse categories, primarily increasing the probability of reporting fair rather than good health. In contrast, no statistically significant association is observed among men. These findings suggest that gendered time constraints constitute an important mechanism linking unpaid care responsibilities and health inequalities. The results underscore the relevance of social policies aimed at reducing unpaid care burdens and improving working conditions in order to mitigate gender disparities in health.

Panel C6 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

Author
Wenting LIU
Chinese University of Hong Kong

Not Only Mothers: The Effects of Family Policy on Women’s Employment in China

Women’s employment, as a critical dimension of gender equality, is conditioned on national family policies. This research analyses how family policies affect multi-dimensional employment outcomes of women in China, where recent reforms in family policy are highly fertility-oriented and thus make the potential fertility a critical concern of employers as well as a barrier to female employment. Specifically, we examine how China’s maternity leave and funded childcare affect women’s wage, labor force participation, and occupational socioeconomic status, with an additional focus on childless women who might be affected by potential fertility, using seven waves of panel data from the China Family Panel Survey and provincial policy data.

Findings show that extended maternity leave exerts negative effects on women’s wages and occupational socioeconomic status among all Chinese female employees, irrespective of motherhood. By contrast, the negative effect of maternity leave on female labor force participation is much less prominent. Furthermore, I find that funded childcare has a protective effect on women’s employment, although quite limited.

I conclude that family policy may influence not only mothers but all women due to the realized or potential fertility, thus affecting the gender disparity in the labor market to a broader extent. It is suggested that the natalist family policy makes potential fertility salient in the workplace and disadvantage working women. Therefore, I argue that more policy efforts should be made to socialize the cost of childrearing instead of imposing the burden on individuals, especially on women.

Author
Julia Shu-Huah WANG
National Taiwan University

Supporting Women’s Employment: An International Comparative Analysis of Policies Across Cities

Globally, women’s labor force participation remains substantially lower than men’s, reflecting persistent gender inequalities in the division of labor and social expectations surrounding women’s caregiving roles, particularly after childbirth and during periods of family care. Policies such as childcare provision, family leave, eldercare services, flexible work arrangements, and employment support programs play a critical role in facilitating women’s labor market participation across different welfare contexts.

This study examines social policies supporting women’s employment from a global comparative perspective. We compiled policy information from 40 cities worldwide and analyze the data using fuzzy set ideal type analysis (FSITA) to identify distinct policy configurations that enable women’s employment. Our analytical framework includes three dimensions: Substitution, Work-family Reconciliation, and Training and Services. The substitution dimension captures policies that substitute for unpaid care work, including childcare provision, access to foreign domestic helpers, and eldercare services. Work-family reconciliation focuses on institutional arrangements that enable individuals to balance employment and caregiving responsibilities, such as flexible work arrangements and family leave policies. The training and services dimension examines employment-oriented measures, including job training programs, hiring subsidies, and support for women’s entrepreneurship.

By analyzing how different policy combinations operate across diverse institutional contexts, this study generates cross-national insights into policy pathways that support women’s labor force participation and highlights the importance of integrated policy frameworks in promoting gender-equitable labor market outcomes.

Panel C7 · Stream 11
Long-term Care Policy and Ageing

Author
Hyungyung MOON
Kyungpook National University

Process Tracing and Its Applications in Social Policy Research: Methodologies Reflections

This paper critically reflects on the emergence of process tracing as a key for tracking within-case social policy change. The paper comprises three parts. First, it presents the key premises of process tracing as a methodological tool for the purpose of theory-building and/or -testing. The second part demonstrates that despite the growing popularity of comparative qualitative analysis and in particular process tracing, there is little clear agreement on the scope and how these methods should be applied. In fact, while many studies evoke arguments and techniques of “process tracing” or “process analysis” few have claimed it to be their method. This only adds to the confusion reflecting thus what Beach and Pedersen (2013) refer as “murky” methodological guidelines. The third part of this chapter reflects on how social policy scholars have applied process tracing to explain welfare reform and social policy change. We review a wide range of studies that have explicitly identified process tracing as their method for analysing social policy reforms and, in doing so, highlight how these methodological approaches have been used over time, while also showing that many of these studies remain exposed to the same methodological ambiguities identified earlier. In this way, the chapter identifies both the growing use of process tracing in social policy research and the continuing lack of clarity surrounding its scope and application.

Author
Huping ZHANG
Sun Yat-sen University

What Kind of Welfare State Is China Building? ——an Analysis Based on the Structure of Social Expenditure from 2003 to 2023

The welfare regime of mainland China remains a central yet contested subject in the comparative East Asian social policy research, with little scholarly consensus. Objectively, it is because of the internal diversity in China that the statistics of social expenditure are difficult. Subjectively, we argue that the dominant influence of Esping-Andersen’s regime typologies research has led to a relatively neglect of characterizing China’s welfare model based on its social expenditure. Since the beginning of the new century, the Chinese government has made substantial efforts to expand social insurance coverage, rapidly incorporating farmers and urban residents without stable employment into the social insurance system. By 2018, China declared the establishment of the world’s largest social insurance system. This expansion pattern presents a unique paradox, as the majority of the population—farmers—participate in social insurance without linking it to formal employment. From the perspective of social expenditure structure, fiscal social expenditure, which carries universalist welfare characteristics, has been the primary driver behind the expansion of social insurance coverage. Consequently, China’s welfare expansion follows a publicly subsidized social insurance model, effectively a hybrid of Bismarckian and Beveridgean logics. We conceptualize this as an “insurance-based Beveridgean” model, which seeks to balance welfare equity with an emphasis on individual contributions to mitigate welfare dependency. This essentially reflects the conservative tendency of the Chinese government in welfare expansion.

Co-author
Ngok Kinglun

Panel C7 · Stream 11
Long-term Care Policy and Ageing

Author
Inhoe KU
Seoul National University

Distributional Impacts of Minimum Income Protection Packages in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan: Comparison of the Model Family Approach and Micro-data Simulation

Co-authors
Julia Shu-Huah WANG;
Aya ABE;
Wonjin LEE;
Keon KIM;
Kaori GOTO;
Yu-Tzu LO

How do minimum income protection (MIP) packages, comprising social assistance and tax-financed cash or near-cash programs,lead to divergent poverty and inequality outcomes in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan? To address this question, we evaluate the effects of MIP packages by simulating relevant policy rules drawn from the East Asian Model Family (MF) data using nationally representative household surveys. Welfare programs function in a bundle, but this combined functioning is seldom taken into account in comparative research on East Asian welfare states. The MF approach facilitates such comparisons by calculating the total MIP benefits for hypothetical family profiles in a uniform way for different countries. Despite its clear advantages for cross-country comparison, however, the MF estimates lack population representativeness due to their focus on specific disadvantaged family types and simplified assumptions regarding income and asset distributions. By applying MIP policy rules to representative micro-data, this study compensates for the unrepresentative nature of the MF approach. Our findings show real-world impacts of MIP packages by capturing the interaction between population-level income/asset distributions and features of MIP packages. Furthermore, the results provide suggestive evidence regarding the extent to which implementation failures of MIP packages influence distributional outcomes.

Panel C7 · Stream 11
Long-term Care Policy and Ageing

Author
Juxiong FENG
Hong Kong Baptist University

Exploring Social Capital as a Strategy for Social Work Practice in China: A Qualitative Inquiry

Co-authors
Kwok Kin FUNG;
Suet Lin HUNG;
Yu Cheung CHAN

This qualitative study explores the strategies employed by social workers in Guangzhou, China, utilizing social capital to enhance social work practice in the context of the region’s welfare recalibration. Through semi-structured interviews with 30 social workers and the analysis of 101 evaluation reports from 14 Social Work Service Stations (SWSSs), two primary strategies including associativity and resource mobilization are examined. The study identifies three key themes: More bonding, less bridging, even less linking in frontline practice; more mobilizing existing resources and less mobilizing new resources are employed; social capital strategies as adaptive responses to welfare recalibration. These strategies are not only essential in responding to local challenges but also serve as adaptive responses to the ongoing disruptions of neoliberal welfare restructuring and resource-constrained environments. By situating these findings within broader global debates on social policy transformation in the Global South, this study contributes to understanding how social capital can be strategically utilized as strategies to facilitate social services in contexts characterized by limited resources and shifting responsibilities. The findings provide insights for policymakers and practitioners, offering a practical framework for integrating social capital strategies for frontline practice.

Panel C8 · Stream 12
Child and Family Policy

Author
Bo-Yung KIM
Yeungnam University

Beyond the ‘cruelty’ of Application-based Welfare: A Critical Evaluation of Administrative Barriers Through the Experiences of Frontline Bureaucrats

The recent characterization of the “application-based principle” as an institutional framework “cruel to the poor” by the president revived a long-standing debate and prompted the government to re-examine its traditional approaches. For years, the policy focus in South Korea has remained on “active discovery” – proactively identifying households in difficulties and “ex-officio” applications. This study critically evaluates this paradigm through Focus Group Interviews (FGIs) with frontline social welfare officials, examining the fundamental disconnect between the identification of those in need and the actual provision of benefits. The findings from the FGIs reveal that the “burden of proof” remains a massive administrative barrier and a gatekeeping role encouraged by the fear of administrative liability excludes marginalized individuals. Eligibility is not determined simply by identifying those in need; instead, individuals are required to provide exhaustive documentation to prove their income, assets, and their incapacity to work. This functions as a “filtering mechanism” that often forces the most marginalized individuals to abandon the process. Within this structure, the state maintains an administrative convenience that shifts the burden of verifying poverty or need onto the citizens, resulting in what can be described as institutional harshness, while frontline officials raised significant questions regarding the utility of “discovery”. Consequently, this research advocates for a transition from a discovery-centric model to an “administration-led verification system.” By utilizing inter-governmental data to proactively establish eligibility and moving toward a comprehensive needs-based claim system, the state can move beyond being a passive gatekeeper and become an active guarantor of social rights. Such a paradigm shift is essential to ensure that individuals identified as being in need are not abandoned back into the blind spots of the welfare system due to procedural barriers.

Author
Jiayu ZHANG
The University of Hong Kong

Factors Associated with Mental Well-being of Older Adults in Hong Kong from a Socio-ecological Perspective

The mental health of older adults remains a critical challenge in the current ageing society worldwide. This issue is particularly important for Hong Kong, one of the most aged and unequal societies in the world. While social security schemes aim to support the most vulnerable populations, whether they also benefit individual mental health has rarely been examined. Despite extensive studies on the mental well-being of older adults in Hong Kong, little is known about the factors at multiple levels, particularly within its social welfare system. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the risk and protective factors for mental health among the aging population in Hong Kong, with a focus on the welfare benefits they receive. Based on a sample of 1,022 older adults aged 65 or above in Hong Kong, this research examines the factors associated with individual anxiety and depression symptoms from a socio-ecological perspective. Findings indicate that gender, individual intolerance of uncertainty, being a family caregiver, housing ownership, and housing type are significantly linked to mental well-being and the receipt of social security schemes in Hong Kong, especially those based on age and disability status. Policy implications include supporting family caregivers in an aging society and developing social welfare programs that address not only financial needs but also other dimensions of well-being.

Co-authors
Yuan CAO;
Ho Keung SHUM

Panel C8 · Stream 12
Child and Family Policy

Author
Gyu-Jin HWANG
University of Sydney

Architects of Constraint: Economic Bureaucrats and the Institutional Limits of Welfare Expansion in Korea

Contrary to the common view that Korea’s welfare state is limited because social policy was subordinated to economic growth, social policy has been integral to Korea’s developmental strategy. It has served as a tool for building markets and managing the economy. Positioned at the core of policy network, economic bureaucrats embedded welfare expansion to reinforce their institutional authority and created lasting opportunities for preferential resource allocation. Using housing and health policy as paired case studies, this paper examines how technocratic leadership expanded access and coverage while simultaneously institutionalizing structural constraints on redistribution. In housing, economic bureaucrats folded residential construction into the growth model, steering urban land development through state-led planning and public development instruments. This strategy fostered a mass apartment market closely tied to middle-class asset accumulation. With mortgage finance initially constrained, households and developers relied heavily on the Jeonse deposit system, facilitating capital circulation through quasi-financialized tenancy arrangements later codified and partially regulated by the state. Major supply initiatives linked homeownership to middle-class identity and political stability, deepening housing financialization. Over time, this produced an asset-based welfare configuration in which household security became tied to property appreciation, rendering de-commodifying or price-cooling reforms politically and institutionally costly. In health policy, technocrats pursued compulsory social insurance to generate demand for largely private healthcare. Korea reached universal coverage in 1989 and unified insurance administration in 2000, but institutionalized public financing layered over private delivery. While the state retained significant authority over reimbursement rates and claims review, provider autonomy and organizational fragmentation limited its capacity to reorganize service provision or expand public provision. Together, these cases demonstrate how technocratic market-building can produce welfare expansion that is broad and resilient yet structurally constrained in its redistributive capacity. By embedding social protection within asset markets and private provision, policymakers created vested interests that shape both the trajectory and the political limits of contemporary Korean social policy.

Author
Emefa Tonorgbevi AWUKU
Department of Sociology and Social Policy, Lingnan University

Gender Norms, Informal Work and Pension Engagement in Rural Agrarian Setting

There is increasing research on the dynamics that contribute to gender gaps in social security engagement across a wide range of working classes, including in formal labour markets and informal urban settings. This study shifts attention to how gender norms and informal work intersect to shape pension participation among rural agrarian workers in highly informal labour markets in the global south. Based on the feminist political economy theoretical perspective and data collected from in-depth interviews with stakeholders involved in the social pension scheme, as well as nine focus group discussions with 90 informal workers in three communities in Ghana’s central region, the study reveals that although women appreciate contributory pension schemes for their potential health-related financial security, issues embedded in dominated financial decisions and dual caregiving roles significantly influence women’s engagement in formal pension schemes. The research underscores that pension participation is not only an economic decision but also shaped by social factors, providing insights for developing inclusive, gender-responsive pension policies in the Global South

Panel C9 · Stream 14
Child and Family Policy; Housing, Urbanization, and Regional Development

Author
Chenhong PENG
The University of Hong Kong

Co-authors
Juxiong FENG;
Tijs LAENEN;
Hoi Ying LAM

Who Deserves Public Rental Housing? Unpacking Welfare Deservingness as a Spectrum

Despite the growing literature on welfare deservingness, two significant research gaps remain. First, scholarship focuses predominantly on welfare access, whereas deservingness should be unpacked as a spectrum spanning from entry (e.g., who is eligible and who should be prioritized) to exit (e.g., who should be given more leniency when transitioning out of welfare). Second, while research on cash benefits is abundant, studies on in-kind support, such as public housing, remain scarce. This study addresses these gaps by exploring deservingness reasoning regarding access to and transitioning out of Public Rental Housing (PRH) in Hong Kong, a city characterized by an unaffordable housing market and a PRH sector housing 2.13 million people (30% of the population), with 187,800 applications on the waiting list. We conducted nine vignette-based focus groups in 2025/2026 with a diverse range of participants, including PRH tenants (current, former, and applicants on the waiting list), non-tenants (including young and older adults, working- and middle-class individuals, and migrants), and social work professionals. Preliminary findings reveal that CARIN criteria (control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, and need) are employed to evaluate both access to and transitioning out of PRH. The dimension of “need” emerged as multifaceted, encompassing situational urgency, alternative support, and the interplay between economic and housing hardships, and is shaped by Confucian values of intergenerational nurturing and filial piety. Furthermore, while control, reciprocity, and identity are prioritized at the entry stage, attitude and identity carry more weight during the exit process. Finally, the selective use of these criteria is driven by both self-interest (utility-driven) and group stereotypes (biased-driven). This study bridges the welfare deservingness and public housing literatures, enhancing the conceptualization of deservingness by framing it as a comprehensive spectrum that extends from entry to exit.

Author
Ahyoung SONG
Yonsei University

Women on the Institutional Boundary: Structural Exclusion and the Paradox of Protection in South Korea’s Homelessness Policy

Objective: This study examined whether exclusion from South Korea’s facility-centered homelessness service system is associated with poorer mental health among homeless women. Method: We analyzed nationally representative data from the 2021 National Homeless Status Survey (n=439 women). Participants were classified as institutionalized (n=369; facilities) or non-institutionalized (n=70; street or Jjokbang). Depressive symptoms were measured using the 11-item CES-D short form (continuous score; clinical=risk cult-off >16). We conducted hierarchical linear and logistic regressions adjusting for sociodemographics (age, education, income, employment) and vulnerability/resources (self-rated health, debt, social network size). Results: Non-institutionalized women reported higher depression and were more likely to meet clinical-risk criteria. In adjusted models, non-institutionalized status predicted greater depression severity and higher clinical-risk odds. Better self-rated health was protective; higher education was associated with greater distress. Conclusions: Institutional boundaries function as structural determinants of women’s mental health in homelessness. Policies should decouple mental health care for facility admission and expand outreach-based, trauma-informed, flexible protection pathways, including for women in Jjokbang.

Panel C9 · Stream 12
Child and Family Policy; Housing, Urbanization, and Regional Development

Author
Feifan FANG
Fudan University

Co-author
Xuehui WANG

Institutional Shelter: Institutional Segmentation and Health Inequalities Among Older Adults in China

Background: China’s rapidly aging population faces significant health disparities. While socioeconomic factors and social security systems are well-studied contributors, the role of institutional segmentation remains underexplored. The public sector’s historical advantages in social security and networks may perpetuate health inequalities post-retirement, particularly amid delayed retirement policies and uneven regional development. Method: Using 2020 China Longitudinal Aging Social Survey (CLASS) data from 4,627 non-agricultural retirees aged 60+, a Frailty Index (FI) was constructed to measure health outcomes. Regression models analyzed the effects of institutional segmentation, with robustness checks and mechanism tests (social security, social networks) and heterogeneity analysis (gender, regional development). Results: Public sector retirees exhibited better overall health (lower FI), superior performance in daily living activities (ADL/IADL), and cognitive function (MMSE), but higher chronic disease rates. Further analysis revealed an internal gradient of protection, with the strongest health benefits observed in government agencies and public institutions compared to state-owned enterprises. Health inequalities stemmed from disparities in social security (higher income) and broader social networks. Effects were more pronounced among males and in underdeveloped regions. Cumulative analysis revealed widening health gaps with age. Conclusion: Institutional segmentation exacerbates health inequalities among older adults through structural advantages in social security and networks. Policymakers should prioritize equitable social security reforms, foster community engagement, and address disparities in vulnerable groups (e.g., private sector retirees, underdeveloped regions). These measures are critical to mitigating the compounding effects of delayed retirement and aging in China.

Panel C10 · Stream 15
Migration, Citizenship, and Diversity

Author
Gary TANG
The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

When Friends and Relatives Leave: Information Avoidance, Psychological Vulnerability, and Civic Engagement Among Hong Kong Stayers

Most migration research examines migrants’ experiences in host countries, but far less attention is paid to how stayers navigate an emigration-saturated environment at home. Amid rapid social and political change, Hong Kong has experienced a major emigration wave since 2020, with more than 300,000 residents leaving. Drawing on an online survey of stayers conducted in October 2024 (N = 1,059), this paper finds that individuals with more emigrated friends and relatives are more likely to actively avoid information about the everyday lives shared by those who have left. This relationship is stronger among psychologically vulnerable stayers, who report higher levels of social isolation and lower secondary control. Crucially, active avoidance of emigrants’shared content is associated with higher levels of non-institutional participation and greater optimism about Hong Kong’s future. These results contribute to migration studies by illuminating how stayers sustain commitment to their home city during a large-scale, politically driven emigration wave. While exposure to emigrants’ updates can maintain bonds between exiters and stayers, the findings suggest that active avoidance may function as a coping strategy that helps stayers manage the distress of seeing many friends and relatives depart.

Panel C10 · Stream 15
Migration, Citizenship, and Diversity

Author
Jia ZHUANG
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Co-authors
C.K. Jacky NG;
J. Zimmer-Gembeck MELANIE;
Qiaobing WU

Does parental out/return migration really matter? evidence from national and regional investigations and implications for migration policies

Despite substantial research, the current understanding of the effects of parental migration in China on rural children remains limited. Many studies rely on cross-sectional designs, failing to capture the temporal impacts of migration. In addition, critical comparisons between children affected by varying types of parental out/return migration have been overlooked. This study aims to empirically test current assumptions regarding the impact of parental out/return migration on child development in a Chinese rural context through comparing psychological distress, educational aspirations/expectations, school connection, resilience, and parental educational expectations and rules between groups of rural children defined based on the change in the number of co-resident parents over time. Two studies were conducted by drawing on data collected from grade 7 children every year as part of the nationally representative China Educational Panel Survey (2013/2014-2014/2015; N1 = 3,205), and data collected every six months from grade 7-8 children (03/2024-10/2024; N2 = 2,183) from a county in central China. In mixed analysis of variance models comparing groups over time, changes in psychological and educational outcomes as well as parental involvement did not significantly differ between the groups for both studies across a decade. These results challenge the conventional assumptions surrounding the repercussions of parental absence on children and contributes novel insights to ongoing academic discussions and public debates regarding parental migration. It engages with existing migration theories and enhances understanding of the complexities surrounding parental out/return migration and its effects on children's development, ultimately informing strategies that support rural left-behind children. Moreover, these findings challenge deficit-based narratives and suggest that policies should avoid pathologizing parental migration, instead focusing on universal support systems that bolster resilience and educational resources for all rural families. Interventions should target the quality of the caregiving environment and school connections broadly, rather than assuming migration-specific damage requires remediation.

Author
Kyunghwan KIM
Ajou University

Rethinking Welfare Chauvinism: Developmental Legacies in the Korean Welfare State

Welfare chauvinism has been widely studied in Western Europe, where it is typically defined as support for generous welfare provision for natives combined with the exclusion of immigrants from redistribution. Existing scholarship emphasises its political institutionalisation through populistradical-rightpartiesanditsgroundinginethnicandculturalboundary-makingembedded within citizenship regimes. However, considerably less attention has been paid to how welfare chauvinism manifests in late-developing welfare states beyond the Western European context. This study examines the Korean case and asks: Why does welfare chauvinism in Korea assume a form distinct from that observed in Western welfare states? Rather than undertaking a direct comparative analysis, the paper engages Western theories of welfare chauvinism as a conceptual reference point and explores how the phenomenon is reconfigured within Korea's particular welfare-state trajectory. Politically, Korea lacks a clearly institutionalised radical-right party that explicitly mobilises welfare chauvinism; instead, exclusionary tendencies emerge episodically and in issue-specific contexts. At the policy level, formal legal exclusion of foreigners from social rights remains limited, with boundary-setting occurring primarily through conditional access, eligibility requirements and contribution-based criteria. Drawing on semi-structured interviews alongside policy documents and official statements, the study argues that the key divergence lies in the discursive logic underpinning boundary-making. Whereas Western cases frequently foreground ethnic or cultural otherness, Korean welfare chauvinism is structured predominantly around contribution, reciprocity and fiscal fairness. This justificatory framework reflects the institutional legacy of Korea's developmental and productivist welfare regime, in which social rights have historically been conditional upon economic participation.

Panel C10 · Stream 15
Migration, Citizenship, and Diversity

Author
Ken FUNG
Soochow University, Taiwan

Co-author
Alan CHUNG

From Multicultural Competence to Social Rights? Global Citizenship Education and Migrant Welfare Approval in Taiwan

East Asian welfare states increasingly depend on migrants while allocating social protection through stratified eligibility, making public support for migrant welfare inclusion politically consequential. Building on deservingness and welfare chauvinism research (van Oorschot, 2000; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012), this paper examines whether Global Citizenship Education (GCE) relates to support for extending welfare to migrants in Taiwan.

We analyse a 2024 survey of Taiwanese university students (n = 564) with structural equation modelling and moderated mediation. Socioeconomic status (SES) is proxied by parental occupation and educational attainment by postgraduate enrolment. Multicultural competence is measured with the Multicultural Experience Assessment Scale (MExA). The outcome foregrounds welfare and entitlement items embedded in the Attitudes Toward Immigrants Scale (Bae, 2016), including support for government financial assistance to migrants and refugees and disagreement that migrants overuse welfare benefits. This operationalisation links learning to conflict over social rights.

We theorise that national attachment shapes whether multicultural learning translates into distributive solidarity. Patriotism refers to affective attachment that can accommodate critical loyalty, whereas nationalism emphasises national superiority and sharper in-group boundaries (Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Schatz et al., 1999). Accordingly, we test nationalism and patriotism as moderators.

Higher SES and postgraduate status predict stronger multicultural competence, but neither directly predicts migrant welfare approval. Multicultural competence is positively but weakly associated with welfare approval and does not mediate demographic effects. Nationalism shows no robust moderating role. Patriotism, however, strengthens the link between multicultural competence and welfare approval and produces a significant conditional indirect effect for the SES-multicultural competence-welfare approval pathway.

For EastAsian social policy, the findings caution against assuming that GCE automatically generates support for extending social rights. Policy-relevant educational interventions may need structured intergroup contact and a civic-patriotic framing of equal protection to build legitimacy for migrant-inclusive welfare reform (UNESCO, 2015).

Panel D1 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Ryozo MATSUDA
*College of Social Sciences,
Ritsumeikan University*

The Caring State: Toward a Conceptual Framework for Welfare State Research

Questions of how care is understood and organized have become central to contemporary welfare state debates. While the idea of “caring societies” has attracted growing attention, much of the discussion remains at the level of normative aspiration. This theoretical paper develops a conceptual framework for understanding the “caring state” by drawing on literature on caring societies, welfare state theory, and theories of relational care. Building on perspectives that conceptualize care as a set of social relationships embedded in intimate life, this paper examines the role of the state in supporting relational dynamics of care. Moving beyond a view of the welfare state as merely a provider of services, it conceptualizes the caring state as performing multiple functions. Specifically, it identifies four key roles: (1) regulating the care economy in ways that create conditions for relational care; (2) organizing and ensuring the provision of essential care services; (3) coordinating activities that empower individuals involved in caregiving; and (4) facilitating shifts in societal values surrounding care so that they better correspond to contemporary family realities. By bridging theoretical perspectives with institutional practices, this paper reconceptualizes how aspirations for caring societies can be grounded in practical policy frameworks of the caring state. Ultimately, it proposes a conceptual basis for evaluating and reconfiguring the comprehensive role of the caring state in contemporary welfare states.

Author
Aungsumalee PHOLPARK
*Faculty of Social Sciences and
Humanities, Mahidol University*

Exploring the Burden of Family Caregivers for Dependent Older Persons Under Community-based Long-term Care in Thailand

Population ageing has recently been intensifying across all major regions of the world. This trend has become a concern as ageing is often accompanied by the decline of intrinsic capacity and the need for support in basic functions and daily activities or long-term care (LTC). Among the countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand has experienced the fastest-growing ageing population. In response to rising long-term care needs, community-based LTC for all Thai dependent older persons has been implemented under the Universal Coverage Scheme since 2016. This study aims to investigate the burden experienced by family caregivers providing care for dependent older persons under community-based LTC in Nakhon Pathom Province, Thailand. The data were obtained from a questionnaire survey completed by 313 family caregivers benefitting from community-based LTC in Nakhon Pathom Province. The findings show that community-based LTC could partially alleviate the financial burden related to disposable products and medical equipment expenses. However, it did not substantially reduce the time-related burden. Additionally, the services were below the standard outlined in the benefit package guidelines, particularly in terms of the duration and frequency of visits. The findings highlight the need to enhance the quality of services and adopt a targeted approach for the distribution of disposable products and medical equipment to reduce the burden on family caregivers, especially those with lower incomes. This study provides lessons from Thailand’s experience that may apply to other developing countries in Asia facing challenges from ageing societies, informing the establishment of similar community-based LTC systems.

Co-author
Samrit SRITHAMRONGSAWAT

Panel D1 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Yumeng FAN
University of York, UK

Bridging the Public-private Divide: Policy Learning in the Development of China’s Supplementary Medical Insurance Scheme

Public-private partnerships in healthcare are becoming increasingly prominent in EastAsian developing countries in response to demographic change and growing fiscal pressures, and China is no exception. Over the past decade, China has sought to bridge public and private welfare provision by promoting government-backed and privately operated hybrid welfare schemes, most notably the city-level supplementary medical insurance scheme (Huimin Bao), which provides additional coverage on top of the basic medical insurance program. However, implementing this scheme at the municipal level remains highly challenging due to significant regional disparities and the absence of comprehensive national guidelines, requiring local governments to develop their own localized strategies.

In this context, policy learning through experimentation is often regarded as a useful tool for identifying feasible policy solutions and avoiding potential failures. Yet little is known about how such learning unfolds in practice during this process. This paper examines the development of Huimin Bao to explore the forms of policy learning that emerge, the mechanisms through which learning shapes local policy decisions, and the factors that facilitate or constrain these processes. The presentation reports preliminary findings based on elite interviews with key stakeholders and documentary analysis, and draws on theoretical insights from Dunlop and Radaelli’s (2013) framework. Upon completion, the study aims to deepen understanding of policy learning in health policy experimentation, shed light on the adaptation of Western policy process frameworks in Chinese settings, and contribute to broader debates on the governance of hybrid welfare arrangements in East Asia.

Author
Ming-Fang CHANG

From Structural Resources to Health Outcomes: A Structural Equation Modelling of Day Care Service Effectiveness in Taiwan

Background: Following the implementation of the Long-Term Care 2.0 policy, Taiwan has witnessed a rapid expansion of adult daycare centers (ADCs). However, empirical evidence regarding their operational mechanisms and effectiveness remains scarce, largely due to the high heterogeneity in institutional designs and participant profiles. Unlike previous studies comparing participants with non-participants, this research investigates how organizational-level variations in ADC operations lead to differences in service outcomes.

Methods: Grounded in Donabedian’s Structure-Process-Outcome (SPO) quality framework, this study utilized a nationwide survey of ADC managers. A total of 260 valid samples were collected, representing 21.1% of the national total. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test a model where “Human Resources” served as the structural exogenous variable, “Community Inclusion” and “Interprofessional Collaboration” as process mediators, and “Subjective Service Effectiveness” as the endogenous outcome. Alternative models were further constructed to examine distinct dimensions of health maintenance.

Results: The SPO model demonstrated a good fit with the empirical data. Findings indicate that centers with more sufficient human and financial resources significantly enhanced overall health maintenance among the elderly. Specifically, the mediation analysis revealed nuanced effects: robust community inclusion activities were pivotal in maintaining participants’ socio-emotional well-being, while higher levels of interprofessional collaboration were significantly associated with better stability in emotional behavior and functional self-care.

Conclusion: The study confirms that ADC operational processes directly influence diverse health dimensions. To optimize service quality and encourage consistent attendance, ADCs should prioritize the design of community-inclusive activities and strengthen interprofessional synergy. Policy-wise, continued support for community-based long-term care is recommended, with an emphasis on multifaceted health outcomes to achieve the goal of active aging.

Panel D2 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Wenbo ZHANG
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Examining Cognitive Biases in Integrated Medical, Rehabilitation, and Elderly Care Services from the Perspective of Compressed Modernity: A Case Study of Beijing

Mainland China has now entered a stage of moderate aging, with over 320 million older adults facing a growing demand for integrated medical, rehabilitation, and elderly care services. Door-to-door services provided by primary care physicians play a positive role in effectively meeting the treatment and nursing needs of the elderly, enhancing the quality of primary healthcare services, and supporting the goals of healthy aging and the Healthy China initiative. However, these services also face practical challenges, including limited primary healthcare capacity, a mismatch between supply and demand, and a lack of tangible benefits for the public. On one hand, the needs of older adults vary significantly by age group, type of health insurance, urban or rural income levels, and caregiving arrangements. On the other hand, primary care teams face developmental constraints such as workforce structure, diagnostic and treatment capabilities, and restrictions on door-to-door care and community drug formularies. Based on the health status and differentiated needs of urban and rural elderly residents in Beijing, this research focuses on investigating perceptions of and the supply and demand for door-to-door integrated medical, rehabilitation, and elderly care services provided by primary care teams. It attempts to explain the cognitive biases regarding the demand for such door-to-door services observed between the primary care teams and urban and rural residents through the lens of compressed modernity, and proposes relevant policy recommendations regarding service guarantee mechanisms, door-to-door service work mechanisms, and the administrative and social foundations for these services.

Author
Ahyoung SONG
Yonsei University

Homelessness as a Public Health Challenge: Linking Health Typologies to Housing and Care Needs in South Korea

Homelessness represents one of the most severe expressions of health inequality. Although housing-led approaches, such as Housing First, have become central public health strategies to address homelessness and its health consequences, existing systems often rely on simplified or uniform criteria of vulnerability, failing to account for variation in health status and functional capacity that may shape individuals housing preferences and care needs. Yet, empirical evidence on how such multidimensional health differences translate into distinct housing and care demands remains limited.

Co-authors
Chaeyoon LEE;
Jaeyeon LEE;
Hyeonjeong LEE

Using nationally representative data from the 2021 National Survey on Homeless People in South Korea (N = 1,700), we assessed health across four domains - subjective, physical, mental, and social - and applied Latent Class Analysis (LCA). The analysis identified four distinct groups: (1) Physically and Functionally Vulnerable, (2) Functionally Active and Independent, (3) Inactive with Mental Health Vulnerability, and (4) Healthy but Inactive. These subgroups varied not only in sociodemographic characteristics but also in their preferred living arrangements. While most expressed a strong preference for independent housing, the group with mental health vulnerabilities - particularly those with prolonged institutional residences - showed the highest demand for service-integrated, shared housing.

Findings highlight the need to reconsider standardized approaches to homelessness policy that rely on singular criteria of vulnerability. Recognizing variation in health status and functional capacity can guide differentiated housing and support strategies that better reflect the diverse circumstances of homeless populations, thereby providing a policy foundation for strengthening housing stability and health equity.

Panel D2 · Stream 10
Health Security and Social Care Systems

Author
Yi QIAN
Southern Medical University

Realistic Evaluation on Health Security Schemes in Hong Kong for Cross-border Elderly in Guangzhou

How can social policies contribute to welfare portability for the out-of-place elderly in Hong Kong? Under what conditions can the social policies work or not? Seeking answers to these questions is crucial for understanding and improving policy benefits for older adults who are out of place. To fulfill these research objectives, this study adopts the realistic evaluation method and the context-mechanism-outcomes (CMO) framework to explore the implementation of health security schemes for cross-border elderly individuals from Hong Kong residing in Guangzhou City, Mainland China. Due to the geographic and cultural proximity to their hometowns, tens of thousands of elderly residents from Hong Kong choose to live in Guangzhou after retirement. However, the isolation between the social welfare systems of Hong Kong and Mainland China leaves these individuals uninsured for health care, preventing them from accessing affordable services. To address these challenges, the Hong Kong government has introduced additional subsidies for health security under existing schemes for cross-border elderly residents in recent years, such as the Health Voucher Scheme and the Social Health Insurance in China. Conducting a realistic evaluation of these initiatives is important for understanding their pros and cons, as well as the mechanisms and contexts that lead to various outcomes. Additionally, by using Hong Kong as a case study, this research investigates the contextual enablers and barriers to effective welfare portability for the out-of-place elderly within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area and offers corresponding policy implications about how to improve their health and wellbeing.

Author
Jin JIANG
Hong Kong Baptist University

Intergenerational or Intragenerational Challenges? Family-level Care Constraints and China’s Delayed Retirement Policy

The implementation of China's delayed retirement reform in 2025 marks a significant departure from a longstanding fixed-age retirement paradigm. While policy research often emphasizes macroeconomic sustainability and individual financial incentives, this study argues that the feasibility of extended labor force participation is shaped by family as a care-providing unit. Moving beyond individual-level analysis, this paper adopts a linked lives framework to investigate whether and how intergenerational and intragenerational family caregiving responsibilities constrain actual labor participation of older people after reaching the pre-reform retirement threshold.

Utilizing a sample of adults aged 60-69 from the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS), this study reveals a complex landscape of care constraints. First, grandchild care significantly reduces non-agricultural labor participation and working hours among older women, suggesting that delayed retirement could intensify a profound work-family conflicts for this group. Second, contrary to expectation, upward care giving for parents and parent-in-laws shows no significant effect on the labor participation of older people. Finally, caring for a disabled spouse consistently decreases labor participation and working hours for both older men and women.

These findings indicate that the primary conflict posed by delayed retirement lies in downward intergenerational support (grandparenting) among older women, while intragenerational support (spousal care) remains a binding constraint. When disability occurs, families prioritize spousal care within the household over market work, thereby limiting reliance on the next generation. This study concludes that an effective implementation of China’s delayed retirement policy requires targeted social investments, particularly in formal childcare and long-term care services, to reconcile enduring tensions between family care obligations and extended working lives.

Co-authors
Ming LI;
Chunni ZHANG

Panel D3 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author Xiaohui ZHONG The University of Hong Kong	Navigating the New Frontier: Grassroots Implementation of Smart Eldercare Policy in Guangzhou This study explores the grassroots implementation of China smart eldercare policy, focusing on the choices of grassroots implementation behaviors and related factors that shape the implementation dynamics in a mega Chinese city. Based on the qualitative analysis of smart Elderly Canteen Project in 11 pilot sub-districts of Guangzhou, this article identifies three predominant implementation models- proactive, ad hoc, and passive each shaped by the interplay of factors including grassroots implementation contexts, implementors’ perceptions and local collaboration networks. Our findings shed light on the distinct challenges and uncertainties inherent in technology integration encountered by grassroots officials in implementing smart eldercare projects. This study contributes to understanding the complexities and uncertainties of grassroots implementation of smart eldercare projects in the context of rapid technological advancement and aging populations, offering unique insights for policymakers and stakeholders in similar urban settings.
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Author Junyou CHEN The University of Hong Kong	Framing Effect on Adolescents’ Willingness to Adopt AI-based Mental Health Support The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into everyday life has expanded its potential role in adolescent mental health support. However, little is known about how the framing related to AI-based mental health applications can influence adolescents’ acceptance and behavioral intentions. Drawing on cognitive framing theory, this study will examine how valence framing (positive vs. negative portrayal of AI) and framing orientation (analytical vs. emotionally salient narrative) together shape adolescents’ willingness to adopt and recommend AI-based mental health support application.
Co-author Chenhong PENG	We will conduct a 2×2 factorial experiment with a control group as a baseline. Approximately 2,000 Grade 10 students aged 16–18 from two public high schools in Southwest China will participate. Students will be randomly assigned to one of four framing conditions or a control group. After reading a hypothetical scenario, participants will report their willingness to use and recommend a hypothetical AI-based mental health application. Drawing on framing theory, we hypothesize that (H1) positive valence framing will increase adolescents’ willingness to use and recommend the application compared to negative framing; (H2) emotionally salient framing will increase willingness compared to analytical framing; and (H3) valence and framing orientation will interact in predicting adolescents’ willingness to use and recommend the application. Data will be analyzed using generalized linear regression to test the main and interaction effects of framing dimensions, as well as potential moderation by socioeconomic status (SES). By identifying how cognitive framing influences adolescents’ acceptance and recommendation of AI-based mental health support, this study contributes to emerging discussions on AI integration in youth mental health contexts, and by incorporating SES as moderator, this study examines if social inequality will differently shape adolescents’ behavioral intentions. Findings may inform evidence-based communication strategies that promote appropriate and ethical AI adoption for mental health.

Panel D3 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author Padmore Adusei AMOAH Lingnan University	Digital Inclusion, Ageing in Place and Health and Social Services: Networked Experiences of Ethnic Minority Older Adults in Hong Kong The rapid digitalisation of health and social services is reshaping how care is accessed, yet many older adults remain poorly equipped to participate in this shift. Ethnic minority older adults face particularly sharp challenges, as they often rely heavily on health services while simultaneously experiencing systemic barriers to digital inclusion. Drawing on in depth accounts from 42 ethnic minority older adults in Hong Kong, this paper explores how they navigate digital health services through their social networks, and the mechanisms, motivations, and constraints shaping this engagement. Findings show that close knit social networks especially family members provide essential day to day help with accessing and using digital health information and services. However, this support is frequently limited to basic or routine tasks, offering little in the way of sustained or technical assistance. In response, many participants actively cultivate cross border social networks, seeking digital support from relatives, friends, and acquaintances both in their home countries and within wider ethnic minority communities abroad. Even with digital resources, language barriers and low awareness of available digital resources remain barriers to access health services/information. This transnational support seeking amid the barriers reflects both a desire to bridge the digital divide and a need to manage common geriatric health issues in increasingly digitalised systems. These patterns highlight important gaps in institutional support for digital inclusion, despite Hong Kong’s policy emphasis on ageing in place and expanding digital service provision. The findings underscore the need for more effective, sustainable mechanisms beyond current public and non profit provision to ensure that health vulnerable older populations are not left behind. Strengthening and leveraging existing informal technological support ecosystems can be a crucial pathway for promoting equitable digital participation.
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Author Genghua HUANG Lingnan University	Digital Social Administration (dsa): A New Paradigm and Its Three Dimensions Digital public administration scholarship has expanded on broad trends in government digitalization, yet its generic categories citizen user service systematically overlook what is distinctive about welfare administration. From automated debt recovery and predictive risk modelling to algorithmic child protection, the digital transformation of social policy creates profound dilemmas that generic frameworks cannot capture: the co-optation of personalization for conditionality, algorithmic disentitlement, the insertion of commercial logics into public provision, and the technological production of welfare stigma. This paper proposes a new conceptual paradigm digital social administration (DSA) defined as the ensemble of digitized and automated systems, data infrastructures, algorithmic tools, and organizational practices that welfare states use to assess eligibility, allocate benefits, govern risk, and manage disadvantaged populations. To operationalize this paradigm, we develop the TOV Three-Dimensional Analytical Framework, focusing on the Technical, Organizational, and Valuational dimensions of DSA and their relationships. Applying the framework to four signature dilemmas demonstrates its ability to reveal dynamics that single-dimensional approaches overlook. DSA constitutes a qualitatively new administrative form, comparable to the bureau-professional state or new public management and demands concepts adequate to its specificity. We conclude by outlining a research agenda organized around the TOV dimensions and identifying implications for policy, practice, advocacy, and legal reform.
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Panel D4 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author
Ken FUNG
Soochow University, Taiwan

Co-author
Alan CHUNG

Higher Education as Social Investment for the Ai Transition: Psycho-attitudinal Mechanisms Across East Asia Welfare Regimes

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping entry-level work and intensifying uncertainty for young adults transitioning from education to employment an emerging new social risk for welfare states (Bonoli, 2005; OECD, 2023). Social investment research frames higher education as preventive social policy that builds capabilities for employment and social inclusion (Hemerijck, 2017; Jenson, 2010; Morel et al., 2012). Yet social welfare scholarship has rarely specified the psychological and efficacy mechanisms through which higher education equips cohorts to navigate technology-driven labour-market change, particularly in East Asia productivist welfare settings (Holliday, 2000).

This paper compares Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore societies sharing strong human-capital agendas but differing in welfare-state roles and higher-education governance (Hong et al., 2024). Because higher-education finance shapes distribution, we interpret cross-site differences through the politics of tuition, subsidies, and support (Garritzmann, 2016).

Using original survey data collected in late 2025, we estimate multi-group structural equation models (SEM) to test whether psycho-attitudinal readiness (positive mental health and beliefs about change) predicts attitudes toward AI (opportunity versus threat). We further examine economic efficacy (perceived capacity to manage AI-related transitions) as a mediator, and whether family socioeconomic status (SES) conditions this pathway. Across cases, psycho-attitudinal readiness is positively associated with opportunity-oriented AI attitudes, partly through stronger economic efficacy. However, mediation strength differs: in HK, AI attitudes depend more strongly on the efficacy pathway, consistent with a more market-oriented risk-management mix; in TW and SG, psycho-attitudinal readiness shows larger direct effects, suggesting a closer coupling of skills formation with well-being within state-linked social investment strategies. The SES gradient is also steeper where efficacy plays a bigger role.

The findings extend social investment debates by integrating mental health and perceived efficacy into the analysis of higher education as welfare-relevant risk management under digital transformation, with implications for targeted student support and inequality-sensitive transitions-to-work policy.

Author
Li SUN
University of Leeds

Co-author
Li ZHANG

Gendered Algorithmic Pressures and Domestic Conflicts: The Dual Burdens of Female Home Based Influencers in China

Drawing on social media content analysis and semi structured interviews with female influencers who work from home in China, this study identifies two interconnected burdens embedded in their everyday labour. First, these influencers shoulder substantial emotional labour related burdens, driven by anxieties over algorithmic metrics (e.g., volatile viewer traffic, engagement rate) and the continual need to develop new digital production skills (e.g., sound, lighting, and equipment quality). This burden spans the entire livestreaming cycle: before going live, influencers undertake extensive aesthetic preparation, including make up, wardrobe selection, and set design; during livestreams, they must continuously regulate their behaviours, emotions, and expressions while maintaining audience engagement as a form of relational care; and after livestreams, they review audience comments, including negative or hostile feedback, which adds to ongoing emotional and professional demands. Second, working from home generates significant work family conflicts, expressed primarily through temporal and spatial conflicts. Temporal conflict arises because pre-, during, and post- live steam demands substantial time investment,

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Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

contradicting many influencers’ initial expectation that home based work would allow more time for family. The always on rhythm of platform labour further collapses boundaries between private and public life, producing time based interference with caregiving and domestic responsibilities. Spatial conflict emerges because livestreaming requires a carefully curated visual backdrop and dedicated storage for products and props, which occupies considerable space in typically small urban apartments, which is termed as the platformisation of domestic space. These findings highlight the compounded and often invisible burdens borne by female home based influencers and contribute to a deeper understanding of emotional labour, gendered expectations, and the hidden costs of platform work.

Author
Lucy CHANG
Fudan University

Co-author
Jinghong LIU

An Applied Research of AI Virtual Client in Practical Skills Training for Social Workers

In the field of practical education, social work has been facing structural challenges such as an overemphasis on theory and a neglect of practice, limited training opportunities and high training costs. To address these issues, this study developed an AI virtual client with localized contextual settings based on Qwen which is a large language model in mainland China, aiming to support practical skills training for social workers. The study adopted experimental approaches and focus group interviews with a small-sample design. Twenty-five social work students and novice practitioners were recruited and divided into two groups: Group A, consisting of participants without prior experience interviewing real clients, and Group B, consisting of those with such experience. Both groups engaged in a three-day simulated interview training program. Data were collected through questionnaires measuring perceived realism of the AI virtual client, improvement in practical interview skills and willingness to recommend the AI virtual client to others, as well as through focus group interviews exploring participants’ experiences. Independent-samples t-tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to examine between-group differences. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the two groups across the three measured dimensions (p > 0.05), suggesting homogeneity in their evaluations. Both groups reported relatively high mean scores, indicating that participants perceived the AI virtual client as realistic, effective in improving practical interview skills and worthy of recommendation. Qualitative findings further demonstrated that the AI virtual client was particularly effective in strengthening structured interviewing, information gathering and problem-solving skills, while limitations remained in emotional resonance, nonverbal communication, sense of presence and long-term relationship building. Overall, the study concludes that AI virtual client can serve as an effective supplement to traditional practical education and training models of social work, offering a low-risk and highly accessible digital pathway for skills development. These findings provide practical implications for integrating generative AI into social work education and highlight the need for further technological refinement and ethical consideration in future research and implementation.

Panel D4 · Stream 4
Digitalization, AI, and the Future of Work and Welfare

Author
Antony Shuai ZHOU
Nankai University

Co-author
Mengyu WANG

Job Satisfaction During Gendered Race Against the Machine

Accelerated adoption of advanced digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace has sparked global concerns about labor displacement. Recent labor market literature has investigated the societal impacts of AI, robots, and automation technologies, especially on labor welfare, giving far less attention to women workers’ experiences. From a gendered perspective, this study examines whether and how automation risk might affect job satisfaction between men and women workers in China, a leading country in AI development and deployment. Our framework further explains how key job characteristics shape the gendered heterogeneity in the well-being effect of automation risk. Using nationwide representative data from the China Social Survey (CSS) 2023, the results reveal that Chinese workers in nonfarm jobs perceived a moderately lower level of replacement risk (Mean = 2.32, SD = 1.25) caused by AI, robots, and automation technologies. Automation risk is negatively associated with job satisfaction (OR = 0.84, SE = 0.02), with women workers experiencing lower job satisfaction. Women workers’ affective well-being is subject to more threats from automation when they work in the private sector, hold a job with more skill requirements, enter mid-later career stage, and stay in lower occupation class. The study suggests that men and women respond differently towards workplace technological advancements, thereby calling for a more nuanced sociological account for stratified working lives in the era of digitalization. Labor market policies that aim to promote digitalization while mitigating automation risk must address gendered inequalities by supporting women workers to secure benefits comparable to those of their male counterparts.

Author
Jing WANG
*Institute of Sociology,
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences,
Beijing, China.*

Adults’ Experiences in China’s Mobile Payment Systems

Digital inclusion has become a central policy objective in ageing societies, yet policy and platform responses often define older adults primarily as users requiring protection from technological and financial risk. In China, mobile payment platforms such as Alipay and WeChat Pay have introduced age-friendly functions intended to support older people’s access to digital financial services. Drawing on qualitative interviews with families using the Family Card payment function, this article examines how platform-based protection reshapes older adults’ participation in digital payment systems. The analysis shows that the Family Card expands access to digital payment infrastructures while reorganizing financial autonomy, privacy, and intergenerational authority through account linkage, spending limits, and transaction notifications. The article conceptualizes this arrangement as protective exclusion: a form of inclusion in which access is made possible through arrangements that simultaneously constrain independent participation. Older adults respond to these arrangements through withdrawal, selective use, and negotiated participation, revealing variation in how protection is accepted, resisted, or reworked in everyday family practice. The article contributes to social policy debates on digital inclusion, ageing, and platform-mediated welfare by showing that age-friendly technologies may reproduce dependency when inclusion is organized through assumptions of vulnerability and risk. These findings highlight the need for social policy to evaluate digital inclusion not only by access, adoption, or technical usability, but also by its effects on autonomy, privacy, and relational citizenship in later life.

Panel D5 · Stream 3
Climate Change, Just Transitions, and Environmental Social Policy

Author
Hong Weng (Lawrence) LEI
*The Hang Seng University
of Hong Kong*

Co-author
Wenbo CHENG

Managerial Overconfidence and Coporates’ Environmental, Social, and Governance Performance: Evidence from Hong Kong’s ESG Regulatory Policy

Corporates’ Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG performance has become an important instrument of environmental social policy in Asia. While prior studies link managerial overconfidence to ESG investment, little is known about how this behavioural driver interacts with regulatory policy intensity, particularly in Hong Kong, where the Hong Kong Exchange and Clearing Limited (HKEX) has progressively tightened ESG disclosure rules level from voluntary disclosure in 2013, Comply or Explain’Mandate in 2016, and enhancements in 2020, to International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB climate standards in 2024. Based on the context of evolving HKEX’s ESG regulatory intensity, this study examines how managerial overconfidence affects corporates’ ESG performance, and whether the intensity of HKEX’s ESG regulatory policy moderates this relationship. Using a panel of Hong Kong Main Board listed companies from 2013 to 2025, i.e., the period from voluntary disclosure to ISSB climate standards, we employ two-way fixed effects models to examine the moderating effect of the intensity of HKEX’s ESG regulatory policy on the relation between managerial overconfidence and corporates’ ESG performance. We hypothesise that firstly, overconfident CEOs allocate more resources to ESG, driven by optimism about returns and sensitivity to public recognition; and secondly, this positive effect is strengthened as ESG policy becomes stricter because stricter rules legitimise corporates’ ESG efforts and increase their visibility. Preliminary regression results support both hypotheses. This study offers two contributions to ESG policy in Hong Kong. First, it provides an early-stage evaluation of Hong Kong’s ESG disclosure regime as a regulatory instrument, informing reflections for the HKEX’s ESG policy implementation. Second, it highlights that regulatory policy can amplify the impact of existing managerial overconfidence, suggesting the value of incorporating behavioural assumptions into policy design. We therefore propose that future HKEX’s framework refinements could consider a strengthened board-level ESG oversight.

Author
Purnima SAINI
*The Hang Seng University
of Hong Kong*

The Empty Ocean, the Dying Planet: Commercial Fishing as a Climate and Social Policy Emergency

The climate crisis is predominantly framed through fossil fuels and deforestation, yet the collapse of ocean ecosystems represents an even more urgent but systematically hidden emergency. This paper argues that industrial fishing is the most destructive human activity impacting our planet, surpassing terrestrial agriculture in its direct assault on Earth’s primary life-support systems. Drawing on investigative evidence, the research exposes how commercial fishing destroys the ocean’s capacity to mitigate climate change. Phytoplankton microscopic marine plants generating up to 85% of Earth’s oxygen and absorbing four times more carbon dioxide than the Amazon rainforest depend on nutrient fertilization by whales and dolphins. As these keystone species are slaughtered as bycatch or for pest control, this natural carbon pump collapses simultaneously. Sharks, killing approximately 10 people annually, face extermination at 11,000 to 30,000 per hour, primarily for fin soup with no nutritional value. Bluefin tuna populations stand at merely 3% of historic levels. Meanwhile, public discourse on ocean plastics focuses on consumer waste while ignoring that fishing nets constitute 46% of total ocean plastic enough line daily to wrap Earth 500 times. Labels such as “dolphin-safe” and “sustainable fishing” are revealed as meaningless in the absence of independent vessel observation. With 90% of coral reefs projected dead by 2050 not primarily from pollution but from the removal of fish that sustain them and projections of empty oceans by 2048, this paper concludes that seafood consumption directly funds ecosystem collapse. The research calls for recognizing marine ecosystem protection not as conservation charity but as fundamental climate policy, demanding a just transition for fishing communities toward ocean restoration economies.

Panel D5 · Stream 11
Long-term Care Policy and Ageing

Author
Ijin HONG
National Taiwan University/College of Social Sciences/Graduate Institute of National Development

Co-author
Tacil KIM

How Do Small Welfare States Grapple with Demographic Decline? A Comparative Analysis of Social Expenditure in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan (2000-2025)

We aim to conduct a comparative analysis of social expenditure trends in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan over the past 25 years. The study has a twofold purpose: first, we examine social expenditure trends and main features by disaggregating main social policies therein; secondly, we seek to identify the main determinants of social expenditure changes in these three East Asian economies, which have traditionally been characterised as “small welfare states.” (Yang, 2017). First, based on the collection and analysis of secondary data from national statistical agencies and international organisations (notably, the OECD), we engage in a fine-grained descriptive analysis to understand:

(1) how social expenditure has evolved and developed vis-?vis other policy fields (e.g., public defence);

(2) how specific social policy fields (pensions, health, active labour market policies, family policies, public assistance, housing, etc.) have changed their respective structures over time;

(3) how different categories of beneficiaries have been targeted over time (ex. Working-age people vs. the elderly);

(4) whether the focus is more on cash or in-kind benefits for each economy’s welfare beneficiaries; and

(5) how social expenditure is financed (social insurance, various types of taxation s.a. VAT, housing tax, income tax, corporate tax, etc.).

The descriptive analysis will be concluded by a general assessment of how social outcomes in terms of poverty and inequality trends have also evolved in these three cases over the span of the observed years. This descriptive analysis is meant to assess whether these economies have maintained their status as “small” welfare states states or have undergone significant transformations in their social protection systems. Secondly, we run a pooled time series cross-section (TSCS) analysis to identify the key drivers of social expenditure changes. We consider that social needs (such as demographic ageing and unemployment levels), external shocks, the timing of policies, trade-offs with other policy fields (and, notably, public defence), and the dominant political colour of the government in power might have impacted on social expenditure levels in these three economies. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the evolving social policy landscapes in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, and to shed light on the factors shaping the development of their welfare systems. The results of this comparative study are anticipated to have important implications for policymakers and researchers interested in the social policy dynamics of East Asian countries. The findings may also inform discussions on the convergence or divergence of welfare state trajectories in the region.

Panel D5 · Stream 3
Climate Change, Just Transitions, and Environmental Social Policy

Author
Chanon KOMONMARN
Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University, Thailand

Co-author
Teerawat SUWANNASIN;
Nirumon RATTANARAT

The Paradox of Prohibition: E-cigarette Waste Management and Environmental Health Challenges in Thailand

Notwithstanding the legislative ban on e-cigarettes in Thailand, usage rates have increased significantly. National surveys estimate that approximately 80,000 individuals (roughly 1% of the population) use these devices, with children and adolescents emerging as the predominant consumer group. Emerging evidence also indicates a significant demographic shift, with female usage rates rising sharply compared to males. While the public health implications of this surge are well-recognised, the environmental consequences remain largely unaddressed. Global research has well-documented the detrimental impact of e-cigarette aerosols on air quality, particularly PM 2.5 levels. Moreover, the improper disposal of devices and e-liquids poses a toxicity threat to soil and water sources when commingled with general household waste. Although local governments in Thailand are responsible for waste management, data from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and two local governments in Pathum Thani Province reveal a complete absence of e-cigarette waste entering formal systems, despite high consumption in these areas. This invisibility suggests that hazardous components are leaking into the Thai environment unmonitored. Unlike nations that utilise Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) standards, Thailand's prohibition creates a regulatory paradox, preventing local authorities from managing this waste effectively. Consequently, immediate policy reform is required to bridge this environmental gap amidst the complex legal and social landscape.

Panel D5 · Stream 3
Climate Change, Just Transitions, and Environmental Social Policy

Author
MC SINN
Independent Scholar

Reimagining Environmental Justice Movements in Hong Kong: Visual Semiotic Analysis of Cartoon Icons/mascots

While environmental justice movements are often perceived to be bottom-up, I attempt to bridge this research gap by taking an alternative lens to examine top-down (i.e. official discourse-led) environmental justice movements through educational publicity via TV announcements in the public interest and social media platforms through a visual semiotic analysis. Tracing from the then cartoon icon Litterbug under Clean Hong Kong Campaign steered by the then Urban and Regional Councils coupled with the lyrics titled Litterbug Songin the 1970s to the current cartoon icon Keep Clean Ambassador Ah Tak (literally civic-minded) steered by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department coupled with the rap lyrics titled I have Trap Music today; Call Me as Keep Clean Ambassador TRAP MUSIC KEEP CLEAN AMBASSADOR? in the 2010s, I analyse the us versus them binary discourse embedded through demonising and scaremongering of the cartoon icon Litterbug through visual semiotics. In closing, instead of perpetuating othering/essentialist discourse, I propose an alternative imaginary of accommodating both cartoon icons Ah Tak and Litterbug to join hands with other bureau/departmental mascots (e.g. Water Save Dave of the Water Services Department and Big Waster of the Environment and Ecology Bureau) to synergise the holistic efforts of environmental justice under a one government’ mindset. Through a civic duty-centred approach, Hong Kong citizens take our green living apart from the punitive effect of contravening the law on public cleanliness.

Panel D6 · Stream 7
Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author
Yu Cheung WONG
Saint Francis University

Displacement, Discontent, and Coexistence: Local Workers’ Responses to Hong Kong’s Post Pandemic Migrant Labour Reforms

Since 2023, the Hong Kong Government has rapidly expanded the importation of migrant workers for special occupation categories that were historically protected from external labour competition, including waiter, retail worker, driver, junior chef, and selected industries. These changes, introduced in the post pandemic recovery period and justified by anticipated labour shortages, coincided with large scale out migration among Hong Kong residents and expectations of rapid economic rebound. Yet the economic recovery has been weaker than projected, and concerns have emerged regarding employers’ use of imported labour to displace higher wage local workers, particularly in the construction industry and among chefs.

This study examines how local low skilled and semi skilled workers perceive these policy shifts and their consequences. Using convenience sampling through NGOs, church organisations, and trade unions, the research targeted both employed and unemployed workers in the most affected sectors, including ethnic minority groups. A total of 411 valid questionnaires were collected. The survey assessed perceived employment impacts, attitudes toward importation policy, and impressions of migrant workers.

Panel D6 · Stream 7
Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author
Mengling HE
National Taiwan University/College of Public Health/Institute of Health Policy and Management

Findings show that while respondents express strong opposition to the importation policy, their impressions of migrant workers themselves are generally moderate, indicating dissatisfaction with policy design rather than interpersonal conflict. Respondents reported perceived displacement effects, declining job security, and downward pressure on wages. Unemployment has increased in some sectors even as labour force participation continues to fall, suggesting structural labour market imbalance. Although the government has since tightened the requirement for active local recruitment, respondents view current safeguards as insufficient. The study argues for a tiered, sector specific trigger mechanism to pause or limit migrant labour importation when adverse impacts on local workers intensify. Such an approach could better balance labour market needs with social protection for vulnerable local workers.

Precarious Employment and Workers’s Health: Evidence from the China Labour-force Dynamics Survey

Background:

Employment instability has become an increasingly important determinant of workers’ health in contemporary labor markets. Previous studies suggest that psychosocial factors, such as job burnout and social support, may also influence health outcomes. However, empirical evidence examining employment instability together with psychosocial factors remains limited.

Methods:

Using data from the China Labor-force Dynamics Survey (CLDS), this study examined the associations between burnout, social support, precarious employment, health behaviors, and self-rated health among workers. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were employed based on a sample of 4,165 respondents.

Results:

The results indicate that precarious employment is significantly associated with poorer health ($\beta = -0.283$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that workers experiencing greater employment instability tend to report worse self-rated health. Burnout is also negatively associated with health ($\beta = -0.108$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, social support shows a positive association with health ($\beta = 0.070$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that stronger support networks are linked to better health outcomes. Health behaviors are also positively associated with self-rated health ($\beta = 0.097$, $p = 0.030$).

Conclusions:

These findings highlight the significant role of precarious employment in shaping workers’ health. Improving employment stability, strengthening social support systems, and promoting healthy behaviors may help mitigate health risks and improve health outcomes among workers.

Panel D6 · Stream 7
Employment Policy, Labour Markets and Industrial Relations

Author

Kyuhee KIM

Yonsei University

Co-authors

Ahyoung SONG;
Jachoon LEE;
Sungbin CHOI

Does Freelance Work Increases Art Related Income of Young Artists?
Mediation Effect of Annual Art Activity

Young artists are often portrayed as precarious freelance workers characterized by unstable contracts and low income. While prior research has focused on the vulnerability of freelance work in the cultural and arts sector, less attention has been paid to its potential enabling function. In the cultural and arts market, where project-based collaboration, flexibility, and individual creativity are central, freelance work may not merely represent instability but also provide opportunities for diverse artistic engagement. In particular, the ability to participate in multiple creative projects may expand artistic production, thereby influencing income generation. This study examines whether freelance labor experience increases art-related income among young artists and whether the volume of artistic production mediates this relationship. Using data from the 2024 Artist Survey, this study analyzes a sample of 1,172 young artists to investigate how freelance work experience relates to their art-related income, focusing on the mediating role of the number of artistic creations. The results reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between freelance experience and the frequency of artistic creation ($\beta = .232$, $p < .001$). While freelance experience initially shows a positive correlation with artistic income($\beta = .072$, $p < .01$), this direct effect becomes statistically insignificant($\beta = .039$, $p = .139$) when the frequency of artistic activity is introduced as a mediator. Notably, the frequency of artistic activity maintains a strong positive relationship with income($\beta = .143$, $p < .001$). Bootstrapping analysis(LLCI=1.521, ULCI=4.015) confirms a significant full mediation effect. These findings suggest that freelance labor, often regarded as unstable, can also function as a productive environment that enables young artists to engage in diverse creative endeavors, ultimately increasing creative income. The policy implications point to the need for new social security frameworks that support young artists?flexible and project-based career trajectories while sustaining their capacity for continuous artistic production.

Author

Ayomide OLADOSU

The Hang Seng University
of Hong Kong

Co-authors

Maggie LAU;
Padmore AMOAH

Gender, Age, and Informal Work in Times of Crisis: Institutional Drivers of
Health Inequities in a Global South Context

In the wake of pandemic aftershocks and widening social inequalities, informal workers across the Global South have borne the brunt of crisis-driven disruptions to labour markets and welfare systems. Drawing on 32 in-depth interviews conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic with young informal construction workers, this study advances intersectionality scholarship by demonstrating how informal labour regimes institutionalise health vulnerability through organisational design and governance practices. Applying Crenshaw’s framework, the paper shows how gendered and age-based hierarchies are embedded within everyday workplace arrangements, generating patterned forms of occupational risk, social exclusion, and mental health strain. The analysis identifies three interlocking dynamics intensified during the pandemic: (1) gendered and age-based hostility normalised within workplace hierarchies; (2) systematic neglect of occupational health and safety protections; and (3) exclusionary social support structures that disproportionately compound women’s psychosocial distress. Moving beyond individualised or behavioural accounts of risk, the study argues that institutional configurations actively manufacture vulnerability, particularly where formal social protection systems fail to extend coverage to informal workers.

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By centring workers’ lived experiences during a period of acute labour market disruption, the paper challenges crisis-responsive policy frameworks that overlook the structural foundations of precarity. It further conceptualises informal welfare networks not merely as coping mechanisms, but as critical infrastructures of health promotion in contexts of fragmented state provision. While grounded in a Global South case, the findings generate comparative insights for East and Southeast Asian welfare systems confronting large informal sectors, gendered labour segmentation, and the persistent challenge of extending social protection under conditions of sustained disruption. The study calls for gender- and age-sensitive labour protections that address the institutional roots of systemic health inequities.

Panel D7 · Stream 8
Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author

Jaemin HWANG

Jeonbuk National University

Exploring Risk Factors for Suicidal Ideation Among Middle-aged Single-
person Households: A Machine Learning Approach to Rare Event Prediction

Suicidal ideation among middle-aged individuals living alone has become an increasingly pressing social policy concern in rapidly aging societies such as South Korea. Despite relatively extensive welfare systems, middle-aged single-person households often experience intersecting vulnerabilities—including economic strain, declining health, and relational isolation—that are not fully captured by conventional survey indicators or clinical frameworks. Drawing on theories of relative deprivation, structural strain, and social integration, this study conceptualizes suicidal ideation as a socially embedded phenomenon emerging from the erosion of material, psychosocial, and relational resources.

Using nationally representative longitudinal data from the Korea Welfare Panel Study (KoWePS), this study applies a machine learning–based rare-event prediction framework to identify nonlinear and interactive risk structures associated with suicidal ideation. Among the tested models, the Random Forest algorithm achieved the highest recall and interpretability. The findings indicate that individuals reporting low health satisfaction, weak family and social relationship satisfaction, and persistent financial insecurity face a substantially higher likelihood of experiencing suicidal ideation. Health satisfaction emerged as the most influential predictor, followed by family and social relationship satisfaction, highlighting the relational dimensions of psychological distress in midlife.

These findings extend existing research on suicide and social inequality by integrating sociological theory with computational prediction methods. The study suggests that suicide prevention strategies for middle-aged single-person households should move beyond individualized symptom management and incorporate community-based approaches that strengthen relational ties, social participation, and social support networks.

Panel D7 · Stream 8
Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Nathan PENG
Singapore Management University

Unmoving Needles: Learning the Limits of Incentive-based Social Policies from Singapore’s Absolute Poor

Evenamidssustainedfiscalsurplusesandanexplicitpolicyfocusonequalityofopportunity and social mobility, social sector practitioners in Singapore are increasingly reporting the emergence of a small but entrenched group experiencing persistent absolute poverty. This study investigates the mechanisms underlying this paradox. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with frontline practitioners and original survey data, we identify pathways through which disadvantage becomes ingrained despite favourable macroeconomic conditions and extensive social policy interventions.

We argue that Singapore’s incentive-oriented welfare architecture designed to leverage human capital accumulation and strong labour market participation can produce widening divergence within the lower end of the income distribution. Individuals able to respond to policy incentives and labour market opportunities experience upward mobility, while those facing compounded constraints remain excluded from these gains, resulting in an expanding gap between the poorest and the relatively less poor.

Tracing the evolution of Singapore’s social policy approach over time, the paper situates this dynamic within broader debates on welfare design, stratification, and state capacity. The findings contribute to comparative political economy by illustrating how intergenerational and absolute poverty may persist even intensify within highly affluent, high-capacity states committed to mobility-enhancing social policy.

Author
Mengyu LIU
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Did the Minimum Wage Alleviate Poverty? New Evidence from a Residual Welfare State

Hong Kong first implemented a statutory minimum wage (HK\$28 per hour) in 2011. While official and academic researchers have found that this policy has improved the earnings of the targeted population, the extent to which the minimum wage has alleviated poverty has not been fully examined. Using data from the Hong Kong Panel Study of Social Dynamics from 2011 and 2013, we employed difference-in-differences fixed effects models to evaluate the anti-poverty effect of the minimum wage in Hong Kong. We found that its introduction effectively increased earnings and reduced the risk of poverty. However, the anti-poverty effects were mainly observed in a subgroup with a moderate level of working poverty (receiving an hourly wage of between HK \$25 and HK \$28). The minimum wage increased the individual earnings of those who were extremely low paid (with an hourly wage below HK\$25) but had no significant effects on their household income or risk of poverty. Our findings support the literature on the anti-poverty effects of the minimum wage but demonstrate the importance of target efficiency. Poverty alleviation for the extremely low-paid workers requires alternative policy interventions.

Co-authors
Zhuoni ZHANG;
Xiaogang WU

Panel D7 · Stream 8
Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Namie NAGAMATSU
Kwansei Gakuin University

Employer Engagement and Workplace Transformation: Evidence from Japan’s Job Training Program

This paper examines employer engagement in employment support policy through Japan’s Job Training Program, introduced under the Self-Reliance Support for Needy Persons Act (2013). Drawing on qualitative interviews with nine firms in Osaka that accepted jobseekers remote from the labour market as trainees or employees, this paper addresses three questions: what motivated employers to accept these workers; what conditions sustain continued engagement; and what impact does acceptance have on the workplace. While the importance of employer engagement in promoting the labour market participation of vulnerable groups is increasingly recognised, the conditions that enable sustained participation and its organisational consequences remain underexplored. In Japan, institutional incentives for employer engagement remain weak, and existing research has focused on structural deficiencies in the policy framework rather than examining how participation shapes HRM practices within firms. Findings reveal the following. First, labour shortages were the primary motivation across all firms, alongside institutional incentives and social contribution goals, though these alone are insufficient to sustain engagement. Second, two conditions are necessary for continued participation: active support from employment support intermediaries, and an organisational commitment anchored by a key person to continuously questioning existing HRM practices, including recruitment, workforce development, performance evaluation, and workplace communication. Firms lacking these conditions accepted workers without substantive workplace adaptation. Third, where conditions were met, two layers of HRM change were observed: implicit practices were made explicit, operations standardised, and tasks redistributed in ways that benefited the wider workforce; and workers disadvantaged by conventional hiring processes demonstrated reliability and diligence once placed, suggesting that hiring practices themselves rather than workers’ capabilities constitute a structural barrier to labour market participation. This paper argues that sustaining employer engagement in social inclusion policy requires deliberate investment in employment support intermediaries and fostering organisational cultures that treat HRM practices as open to continuous revision.

Panel D8 · Stream 8
Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Peter WHITEFORD
Australian National University

Wealth and the Welfare State

Much welfare state analysis focuses on effects on income distribution (Saunders, 2021), but it can be expected that welfare states structure the level and distribution of wealth; these effects are not straightforward and may take a long time to work through.

Feldstein (1974,1980) argued that social security reduces savings for retirement and thus the level of private wealth. More recently critics of the welfare state such as the US Cato Institute(Edwards,2019)argue thatlargerwelfare states actuallyincrease wealth inequality, citing research by the European Central Bank (Fessler and Schürz, 2019) which shows that the measured wealth inequality is higher in more generous European welfare states.

Fessler and Schürz (2019) argue that the substitution effect of welfare state expenditures is relatively lower at higher levels of net wealth. Given an increase in welfare state expenditure, the percentage decrease in net wealth of poorer households is relatively stronger than for households in the upper part of the wealth distribution. This analysis, however, ignores the central point made by Feldstein (1974) that for lower income households their most important source of wealth is their entitlements to public pensions.

This paper shows that some low income-inequality countries have very high private wealth inequality (Norway, Sweden, Denmark) while some of those with higher income inequality have lower wealth inequality (Australia, Italy, Japan). What explains this apparent paradox?

This paper analyses the relationship between the size and structure of welfare state spending and the size and distribution of private and public wealth. In the context of increasing concerns about increasing inequality of wealth, particularly in access to housing the paper discusses the vulnerability of different welfare state designs to differing risks, including the reliability of public pensions due to population ageing and the insecurity of private pension wealth due to market volatility.

Author
Bazlin FADILAH
Gadjah Mada University

Navigating Poverty Within Education: A Phenomenological Study of Children Lived Experiences and Institutional Ecosystems in Sekolah Rakyat Yogyakarta (a Government-led Community School for Underprivileged Children in Indonesia)

With 11.80% of its child population living in poverty, children account for over one-third of Indonesia’s impoverished demographic (Statistics Indonesia - BPS, 2025). This condition creates a reality where children experience limited material resources, hindering their ability to fulfill their rights, develop their full potential, or participate actively and equally in society. Childhood poverty is intrinsically linked to the family ecosystem, forming experiences of deprivation that can harm their growth. Recognizing that deprivative home environments are difficult to transform through sporadic material aid alone, the state has implemented an innovative institutional intervention through the Sekolah Rakyat Program (a government-led community school for underprivileged children in Indonesia). This program aims to comprehensively reconstruct the child’s life ecosystem to break the cycle of extreme poverty through structured education and the fulfillment of basic needs.

This study aims to understand the experiences of poverty children face at home and how the presence of Sekolah Rakyat reshapes their lived experiences differently. Using a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation with 10 informants (aged 15??) categorized as living in extreme poverty and enrolled in the Sekolah Rakyat Program. The results reveal diverse forms of material deprivation (housing, education, health, nutrition, and information) and psychosocial deprivation (protection and participation) at home. Furthermore, the study identifies significant shifts in both material and psychosocial experiences following the intervention of Sekolah Rakyat. This research serves as a valuable reference for a new model in child poverty alleviation initiatives.

Panel D8 · Stream 8
Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Zaiping YANG
School of Public Administration, Southwest Jiaotong University

Co-authors

Yihan GUO;
Xiangyi YU

State Resource Devolution and Local Governance Transformation: How Industrial Agents Reshape Rural Development in Post-poverty China

This study investigates the evolving role of state-supported rural entrepreneurs referred to as industrial agents in China’s Rural Revitalization era. By analyzing in-depth interviews with 20 industrial agents from W County, a former national-level poverty county, and supplementing with documentary analysis and participant observation (2023-2024), we uncover how these entrepreneurs, endowed with distinct forms of capital, reshape local governance. Our findings reveal three predominant agent typologies: expertise-based agents, socially embedded agents, and politically connected agents. Each type maintains differentiated relationships with local government, forming a nuanced corporatist governance structure where the permeability of state-society boundaries aligns with the agent’s primary capital endowment. However, the model encounters significant challenges, notably opportunistic behaviors such as benefit capture, selective implementation, and information asymmetry. These issues highlight a core tension in elite-mediated development: while state-cultivated entrepreneurs can drive local economic development, their elite status often incentivizes self-interest over collective benefit, potentially marginalizing intended beneficiaries. Theoretically, this research advances the understanding of state-society relations by demonstrating that resource devolution engenders differentiated incorporation patterns rather than uniform integration. It underscores the necessity for robust accountability mechanisms to mitigate elite capture risks in development policies.

Author
Ke FANG
Shanghai University of Finance and Economics

Co-authors

Xuan WANG;
Kinglun NGOK

Social Status, Human Needs and Welfare Proximity: The Evolution and Challenges of Relief for the Extremely Poor in China

The dichotomy between the universal and selective models of social policy is reflected in two targeting logics based on human needs and social status, and the concept of “welfare proximity” provides a novel analytical perspective for interpreting the evolutionary combination of the two within the welfare system. This paper takes China’s relief system for the extremely poor as the case, and based on the analytical framework of welfare proximity, combs its diachronic evolution from the separate operation of the rural five guarantees system and the urban three-nos relief system to the institutional integration. It further analyzes the characteristics of welfare proximity changes during the system’s transformation from collective support to fiscal support, and from a social status-oriented approach to a human needs-oriented one. The study finds that as a social policy integrating universalism and selectivism, China’s relief system for the extremely poor is confronted with practical dilemmas in its development, including distorted welfare incentives caused by benefit stacking, ambiguous rights and responsibilities of the fund coordination subject, and social risks and fiscal pressures arising from isomorphic effects. The root cause of these dilemmas lies in the unbalanced adjustment of welfare proximity during institutional evolution: the excessive narrowing of the relative welfare proximity of the extremely poor group has led to welfare provision exceeding the scope of basic human needs, thus inducing unintended consequences that undermine the fairness of the social welfare system. On this basis, this paper proposes a reform path of constructing a unified social assistance identity and implementing hierarchical and classified assistance based on the Dibao identity. Constructing a unified social assistance identity is not only in line with the trend of welfare proximity moving towards equal proximity based on civic identity, but also enables social policies to achieve differentiated satisfaction of basic human needs within an equal framework. This path can promote the rational combination of universalist and selective elements, and provide an optimized approach for the social assistance system to fulfill its fundamental goal of ensuring basic living standards and delivering bottom-line support.

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Poverty, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion

Author
Ruobing LI
Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Co-authors
Haijing DAI;
Jian’e LIU

Living Better Under Poverty: Expenditure Structure, Multi-source Support, and Life Satisfaction Among Ethnic Minority Households in Yunnan, China

Adjusting expenditure structures and utilizing support strategies to enhance life satisfaction in impoverished regions has been a key focus of recent research. Using household survey data from Yunnan Province, one of China’s most economically disadvantaged regions, this study examines how household expenditures, categorized as subsistence (daily necessities and housing), developmental (healthcare and education), and enjoyment (relational) consumption, affect life satisfaction among ethnic minority households. Multi-source support, including interpersonal financial aid, village collective subsidies, and government policy subsidies, is further examined as a moderator in these relationships. The results show that higher shares of daily necessities and relational consumption are positively associated with life satisfaction. In addition, interpersonal financial support and government policy subsidies strengthen these effects, respectively. These findings suggest that policy support transforms subsistence consumption into an institutionally secured standard of living, thereby promoting life satisfaction, whereas relational consumption contributes more to well-being when reinforced by tangible interpersonal networks. Academically, this study separates household expenditure patterns from the income framework to examine their effects on life satisfaction and the moderating roles of different types of support among ethnic minority households in poverty. Practically, it provides guidance for optimizing household expenditure strategies in impoverished ethnic minority regions and offers policy implications for targeted poverty alleviation by better aligning welfare support with household needs.

Panel D9 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

Author
Jo BOBAE
Seoul National University

The Impact of Parental Leave Development in Korea and Japan on Women’s Employment Retention After Childbirth: Focusing on Differences in Women’s Employment Status

Japan and South Korea are the two countries with the widest gender pay gaps among OECD countries. Women’s career breaks after childbirth are a key factor contributing to the motherhood penalty and the gender pay gap in the labour market. South Korea and Japan, as nations within the Confucian cultural sphere, traditionally had a common policy framework that prioritized economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s, shying away from state intervention in the family and advocating that women should bear the responsibility for care within the household (the principle of subsidiarity).

However, as these two countries faced a severe national crisis of low birth rates, Japan since the 1990s and Korea since the 2000s have rapidly developed work-family reconciliation policies. Notably, in terms of Parental leave scheme, both nations share the common feature of introducing parental leave benefits through employment insurance respectively in 1995(Japan) and 2000(South Korea), and since then, continuously raise parental leave benefit levels and introduced institutional incentives to increase male’s parental leave use. However, as the Parental leave scheme is based on employment insurance, it has limitations in that it does not apply to all employees, with precarious workers who do not meet the eligibility criteria for employment insurance being excluded. This study therefore aims to empirically examine whether the effectiveness of changes to parental leave schemes in both countries differed according to women’s employment status, specially “income levels”, and to derive policy implications.

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Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

In particular, this study examines the change of parental leave schemes in Japan and South Korea since the 1990s, identifies key periods of change in these schemes, and empirically analyses their impact on women’s employment retention. In the empirical analysis, this study addresses three research questions: 1) Does the use of parental leave have a positive impact on women retaining their jobs after birth? 2) Does the impact of parental leave use on women’s employment retention change as the parental leave changed? 3) Does the impact of changes to parental leave use on women’s employment retention vary according to their income level? The analysis utilized data from Japan Household Panel Survey(JHPS) covering the period 2004–2023 and Korean Labour and Income Panel(KLIPS) covering the period 2000–2024 using the Cox’s Proportional Hazards Regression Model. “

Author
Jing GUO
University of Hawaii

Beyond the Binary: The “undecided” Demographic and Gender Attitudes in Japan

Japan’s aging society and family policy reforms over the past decades make it a crucial case study for understanding evolving gender attitudes. Literature shows the significant differences between Japan and other welfare states such as Sweden and U.S., and suggests the various socio-cultural and ideological context for family policies implementations. Methodologically, a common practice is to operationalize gender attitudes by dichotomizing survey responses into categories of “agreement” or “disagreement.” This method overlooks the “undecided” group, and less is known about the demographics and correlates of those who choose “neither agree nor disagree” This study highlights the analytical significance of “neither agree nor disagree” responses to shed light on Japan’s unique transition in gender attitudes.

The analysis of this paper based on data from World Value Survey (WVS), time-series data of Japanese responses (N=7848) from the 1981 to 2022. The study focuses on a standard survey question: “When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women”, which includes a “neither agree nor disagree” option. Demographic characteristics focus on gender, age (16-29, 20-49, and 50+ years), education, employment, income, subjective social class, and marital status.

Preliminary findings reveal a consistently high percentage of “neither agree nor disagree” responses over time in Japan, ranging from 40.4% in the 1989-93 wave, peaking at 55% in the 2005-09 wave, and standing at 45% in the latest 2017-2022 wave. Age and education level shows interesting patterns of the responses. For young adults (aged 16-29), there are lowest agreement (14.3%), highest disagreement (33.3%) and highest undecided (51.4%). This finding is critical as it challenges the simple binary of “traditional” vs. “egalitarian” measurement of gender attitudes. It suggests that a large segment of the Japanese population is in a state of attitudinal transition, particularly for young adults.

Panel D9 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

Author
Pritish ANAND
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

How Gender Shapes the Relationship Between Economic Security and Voting Behaviour Across East, Southeast, and South Asian Democracies: A Comparative Study

Economic security affects civic participation in several democratic contexts, yet gender gaps continue to shape electoral behaviour (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Lijphart, 1997; Verba et al., 1995). This paper explores how economic security’s influence on voting patterns are shaped by gender in select East, Southeast, and South Asian democracies. The analysis leverages differences in development levels, gender norms, and institutional contexts across Asian subregions and draws on nationally representative data from Wave 7 of the World Values Survey. The primary indicator of civic engagement taken in the study is voting behaviour, which is measured by self-reported participation in national and local elections, as it is cross-nationally comparable and less sensitive than other, more contentious types of participation. Economic security is operationalised through a multidimensional set of objective (cash, food, and housing adequacy) and subjective (financial satisfaction, perceived job security, intergenerational mobility, and relative income position) indicators. The paper develops the resource and grievance perspectives to investigate how the implications of economic security in participation are systematically differentiated by gender. The methodology of the paper employs ordered logistic regressions using country fixed effects in a comparative study. The study sheds light on gendered economic inequalities by foregrounding the electoral participation process, which is part of the current social policy discussions on inclusion, voice, and micro-foundations of civic participation in various Asian democratic settings.

Co-author
Alex Jingwei HE

Author
Sunwoo RYU
School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol

Diverging Childcare Policy Trajectories in Japan and South Korea

Japan and South Korea (Korea hereafter) were traditionally a familialist regime characterised by minimal public support for families and children based on the gendered division of labour with men as breadwinners and women as caregivers. However, amid the intensifying low-fertility crisis, both countries have accelerated their childcare policy reforms. Intriguingly, looking into their latest developments, the two countries exhibit divergent trajectories in the form of childcare support (services vs cash), which in turn has implications for where childcare occurs (formal institutions vs homes) and by whom it is provided (formal staff versus family members). Looking into Japan first, childcare reform has mainly focused on expanding formal childcare services. This direction was strengthened by the introduction of free early childhood education and care in 2019 and the recent widening of access beyond strict employment requirements. While Homecare Allowance is available, the availability is limited to a small number of local authorities. Korea also initially focused on subsidising childcare services at formal institutions, resulting in free provision for all age and income groups in 2013. Simultaneously however, Korea has also gradually expanded service and cash support for home-based childcare by introducing Homecare Allowance, At-home Childcare (by government-registered nannies), Infant Allowance (later renamed Parental Payment) and widespread local-level Grandparental Payment. Overall, Korea is more focused on supporting a variety of childcare arrangements than Japan. This research, therefore, aims to investigate what explains this diverging trajectory between these two once-very-similar countries, in terms of the form, location and providers of childcare. This research compares these two countries structurally (demography and labour market), institutionally (broad landscape surrounding care) and politically (pressures from party competition and interest groups) by using a plethora of primary and secondary data sources.

Co-authors
Hiromi TANAKA;
Kanako ANDO

Panel D9 · Stream 9
Gender, Family, and Changing Social Roles

Author
Seohyun JUNG
King’s College London

The Effects of Reduced Working Time Policy on Couples’ Labour Supply and Economic Dynamics in South Korea

Long working hours remain a defining feature of many labour markets and constitute a major barrier to gender equality in both paid employment and household labour. In contexts where ideal worker norms reward continuous full-time work and overtime, women, who continue to bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care, face structural constraints on sustained labour market participation. This study examines whether reducing excessive working hours can reshape labour supply decisions within households. We focus on South Korea’s 52-hour workweek reform, introduced in 2018, which reduced the legal weekly maximum working time from 69 to 52 hours.

Using data from the Korean Labor and Income Panel Study (KLIPS) covering 2011-2024, we analyse heterosexual married couples and apply a difference-in-differences design with couple fixed effects. Treatment is defined by men’s pre-reform exposure to long working hours (52+ hours per week), allowing us to estimate how reductions in excessive male working hours influence women’s employment, working hours, and household earning structures.

The results show that the reform facilitated women’s labour market participation without reducing men’s employment. Female employment increased and women’s share of paid work hours within couples rose among households where men previously worked over 52 hours. The probability of dual-earner households increased, while male single-earner and male breadwinner arrangements declined. These effects are particularly pronounced among couples with preschool-aged children.

Overall, our findings provide causal evidence that working time reduction can reshape intra-household labour supply dynamics and weaken traditional male breadwinner structures. The study highlights how labour market institutions can influence gender inequality not only through individual employment outcomes but also through household-level economic arrangements.

Panel D10 · Stream 12
Child and Family Policy

Author
Wittayarrath PUANGNGAM
University of York, School for Business and Society, PhD in Social Policy and Social Work

A Rational Gamble? How Thailand National Saving Fund Lottery Seeks to Increase Voluntary Pension Savings

Thailand aims for universal pensions coverage and has targeted expanding pensions coverage for both formal and informal workers. However, a substantial gap remains in provision for informal workers: only 13 percent participate in the National Savings fund, a voluntary contribution scheme for informal workers providing a guaranteed monthly pension on retirement.

Increasing coverage and contributions is a policy priority. Despite efforts to enhance scheme coverage, including government matched contributions and social marketing campaigns, low participation leaves informal workers at continued financial risk during retirement.

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Child and Family Policy

Thailand’s policymakers have sought to innovate policy interventions, specifically a Prize-Linked Savings product which includes a lottery element, whereby savers are entered into regular lotteries with cash payouts to encourage savings behaviours. What assumptions underly the choice of combining lottery rewards with savings products; why do policymakers seek to utilise lottery elements; and how is the lottery expected to shape Thais’ saving behaviours?

This presentation reports on early findings from a wider PhD project on pension savings for Thai informal workers. Here it draws on 12 elite interviews with senior officials, politicians, and scheme administrators, combined with policy documents, to explore the beliefs and assumptions informing policymakers’ choice of instruments. We relate these data to policy intention and instrument selection, and to wider linkages with prospect theory and libertarian paternalism.

Author

Qian LIU

Beijing Normal University

Does Social Assistance Reduce Multidimensional Energy Poverty? Evidence from Rural Older Adults in China

Energy poverty remains a persistent challenge in rural China, especially among economically disadvantaged elderly households. This study examines whether China’s Minimum Living Standard Guarantee (Dibao) one of the largest cash transfer programs in the world reduces multidimensional energy poverty among rural older adults. Using panel data from the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS) covering 2011-2018, we employ household fixed-effects models to estimate the causal impact of Dibao participation on energy-related outcomes. We construct a multidimensional energy poverty index that captures deprivations in clean cooking fuel adoption, heating conditions, electricity access, ownership of basic household appliances, and access to communication and entertainment devices. The results indicate that Dibao participation significantly reduces multidimensional energy poverty among rural elderly households. Heterogeneity analyses reveal stronger effects among lower-income households, elderly individuals in relatively good health, and those maintaining closer intergenerational interactions with their adult children. Overall, these findings underscore the broader role of social assistance programs in alleviating energy deprivation, promoting rural energy transitions, and improving the well-being of aging populations. The study contributes to the growing literature linking social protection policies to sustainable development and equitable energy access.

Co-author

Huawei HAN

Panel D10 · Stream 12
Child and Family Policy

Author

Rongguang PENG

Shanghai University of Finance and Economics

The Effect of Long-term Care Insurance on Household Spending Among Rural Chronic Disease Patients

To examine the effectiveness of long-term care insurance policies and propose targeted policy recommendations regarding institutional coordination, coverage scope, and care quality. Methods: Using five waves of the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS) data from 2011 to 2020, this study employs the difference-in-differences (DID) model to empirically test the dynamic changes in household consumption among rural chronic disease patients in Qingdao, Shanghai, Suzhou, and Jingmen following policy implementation. Results: Long-term care insurance significantly increased per capita household consumption among rural patients with chronic diseases by 27.9%-33.2%. The policy primarily influenced survival-type consumption expenditures and effectively reduced the utilization of inpatient services among elderly rural chronic illness patients.

Co-author

Yingying

Author

Yucheng DU

HKUST PPOL

Attitudes and Behavioural Intentions of Platform Economy Workers Under Delayed Retirement Policy: Evidence from a Randomised Controlled Experiment

This study examines how platform economy workers in China respond to delayed retirement policy shocks relative to their non-platform counterparts. In 2025, China officially initiated its delayed retirement reform, progressively raising the statutory retirement age. Concurrently, the platform economy has undergone rapid expansion, with gig workers including food delivery riders, ride-hailing drivers, and digital content creators constituting an increasingly significant segment of the labor force. Yet these workers are characterized by low social insurance participation, ambiguous employment relationships, volatile incomes, and limited occupational stability, placing their pension security in stark contrast to that of workers in traditional formal employment.

Drawing on a nationwide online survey conducted in late 2025 with 7,625 valid responses (7,059 in the analytical subsample after excluding unemployed individuals and full-time homemakers), this study implements a randomized controlled experiment (RCT) in which respondents are randomly assigned to one of four conditions: a control group reflecting current retirement ages (63/55-58) and three treatment groups featuring progressively higher retirement ages (64/60, 67/63, and 70/66). Respondents are further categorized into six subgroups by employment type (formal, flexible, and self-employed) and degree of platform dependence. Five outcome variables are assessed: confidence in the pension system, perceived likelihood of personal pension receipt, confidence in medical insurance, willingness to adjust pension contributions, and early retirement intentions. The empirical strategy employs OLS regression with stepwise model specifications, controlling for demographic covariates and province-group fixed effects, and is supplemented by a suite of robustness checks including randomization balance tests, placebo tests, alternative operationalizations of dependent variables, and ordered logit estimation.

Co-authors

Xuan ZHANG;

Alex Jingwei HE

Panel D11 · Stream 15
Migration, Citizenship, and Diversity

Author
Daesung KWON
*The Hang Seng University
of Hong Kong*

Passing Presences: Foreign Residents Between the Presence and Absence of Immigration Policy in Japan

This paper examines how foreign residents in Japan are rendered socially present yet politically provisional in a context where the presence of immigration is growing while a clearly articulated immigration policy remains absent. As Japan increasingly depends on foreign workers, international students, and highly skilled migrants to address demographic decline and labour shortages, official discourse avoids naming the country as an immigration society. Foreign residents are thus incorporated economically while remaining symbolically and institutionally treated as temporary, in ways that pre-empt immigration from becoming part of Japan’s national identity while systematically refusing to recognise them as potential citizens. Conceptualising foreign residents as passing presences, the paper traces how immigration becomes politicised through the simultaneous presence and absence of migrants in public life: their selective visibility in public discourse, their ambiguous positioning within administrative categories, and their contested presence in debates over social order, labour, and national belonging. It highlights the disjuncture between the expanding presence of immigration-related measures and the continuing absence of political resolution, whereby migrants’ presence is acknowledged for pragmatic reasons, yet long-term settlement remains weakly institutionalised. The analysis argues that Japan’s immigration politics are structured by a persistent pairing of presence and deferral, sustaining a configuration in which foreign residents are needed and governed but not fully imagined as permanent members of the polity, while contributing to broader debates on the politicisation of immigration in contexts where patterns of long-term residence develop ahead of explicit immigration policy.

Author
Muhammad ISLAM
National defence university

Securitisation, Welfare Retrenchment, and Displacement: Rethinking Social Policy Responses to Forced Migration

Forced migration in Asia is increasingly governed within a landscape of multiple, intersecting disruptions that have reconfigured the relationship between security, welfare provision, and social policy. This paper examines how processes of securitization interact with welfare retrenchment in refugee hosting states, arguing that contemporary policy responses to displacement are progressively shaped by security oriented rationalities rather than rights-based or protection-centered frameworks. These dynamics have intensified amid geopolitical instability, fiscal constraints, and institutional uncertainty, producing new forms of social exclusion for displaced populations.

Using qualitative policy analysis, the study analyzes migration governance and social protection arrangements in selected South Asian contexts to assess how refugees are incorporated into, or excluded from, formal welfare regimes. The analysis demonstrates that displaced populations are frequently managed through temporary and exceptional policy instruments that restrict access to public services, institutionalize legal ambiguity, and shift responsibility for welfare provision to non-state actors. Such arrangements result in fragmented and uneven systems of support that reproduce socio-economic precarity and limit pathways to social inclusion.

Conceptually, the paper advances an integrated framework that understands securitization and welfare retrenchment as mutually reinforcing processes. Welfare contraction facilitates the normalization of security driven governance, while securitization provides political justification for the erosion of social entitlements. By situating forced migration within broader debates on social policy in an era of polycrisis, the paper contributes to a more holistic understanding of welfare governance under conditions of uncertainty. It concludes by reflecting on the implications of these findings for social policy design and institutional accountability in Asian contexts marked by protracted displacement and persistent political volatility.

Panel D11 · Stream 15
Migration, Citizenship, and Diversity

Author
Tual Sawm Khai
Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Humanitarian Crises and Mental Health Coping Strategies Among Myanmar Refugees in Mizoram State, India

The Myanmar military coup in February 2021 exacerbated the existing severe humanitarian crisis, resulting in the displacement of over 3.5 million civilians as of June 2025. Additionally, 78,731 individuals sought asylum in neighboring India as of 2023, fleeing the persecution and armed conflict in their homeland. This qualitative study examines the lived experiences and coping mechanisms of Myanmar refugees in Mizoram, India, after the 2021 coup through interviews with camp leaders, refugees and camp helpers. This study findings highlight the challenges faced by displaced populations, including insufficient humanitarian assistance for basic needs, restricted livelihood opportunities, and barriers to accessing healthcare have worsened their psychological distress and well-being. This study findings also revealed that due to lack of formal mental health support in refugee camps, refugees have to rely on religious coping strategies and communal gatherings as resilience mechanisms. This research findings underscore the need for structured humanitarian interventions, including the enhanced provision of essential services, COVID-19 vaccination programs, and psychosocial support for displaced Myanmar populations in Mizoram. This study contributes to the refugee welfare discourse in conflict-induced displacement settings by highlighting the role of international and local aid agencies in addressing asylum seekers’ vulnerabilities.

Author
Hyun Ok KIM
Gyeong Sang National University

Rohingya Discursive Structure and Its Implications for the Minimum Analytical Baseline of International Refugee Research Within the Asian Academic Community

The Rohingya crisis represents one of the most severe contemporary cases of genocide, statelessness, and forced displacement. While international refugee scholarship has increasingly addressed issues such as citizenship deprivation, international criminal responsibility, psychosocial recovery, and human security, relatively little attention has been paid to how the Rohingya crisis is discursively constructed within Asian academic communities. This study comparatively analyzes Korean and international Rohingya-related academic discourses to examine how refugeehood, violence, protection, and responsibility are differently framed across scholarly contexts. The analysis includes 24 Korean articles indexed in the Korean Citation Index (KCI) and 360 international articles collected from Scopus and major refugee studies journals. Using trigram analysis and non-negative matrix factorization (NMF), the study compares keyword co-occurrence structures and thematic distributions across the two corpora. The findings reveal substantial differences between Korean and international refugee discourses. Korean scholarship tends to frame the Rohingya crisis through geopolitical conflict, military rule, democratization, and regional political structures. In contrast, international scholarship more directly emphasizes citizenship deprivation, crimes against humanity, international legal responsibility, psychosocial support, and the lived experiences of women and children. These findings suggest that refugee discourse is not a universal analytical framework, but a regionally differentiated structure shaped by geopolitical position and normative engagement. Ultimately, the study argues that the Rohingya crisis reveals not only the asymmetrical operation of international refugee norms, but also the uneven development of refugee discourse itself within Asian academic communities.

Co-authors
JinSol KIM;
Haeson PARK





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香港新界沙田小瀝源行善里

@ gs@hsu.edu.hk
🌐 <https://gs.hsu.edu.hk/>

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