

**INCLUSIVE SOCIETY AND BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY IN THE AGEING ERA:
WELFARE SOCIETY BASED ON SANPO-YOSHI PHILOSOPHY FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Facing the common issue among developed countries that demographic imbalance has created distortions in pension and social welfare systems and widened intergenerational disparities, this study proposed a model to eliminate intergenerational disparities and build a society in which all people can play an active role, including the reemployment of generations with specialized skills and knowledge after retirement. There, based on the spirit of "Sampo yoshi," which is deeply rooted in Japanese corporate culture and should serve as the basis for building a sustainable society and economic development. Moreover, we introduced the Japan-led Society 5.0 framework, while pinpointing a new perspective and agenda for discussion.

The study outcome highlighted the backbone of the corporate culture, it is necessary to share the spirit of mutual support and elicit the active contribution and contribution of relevant stakeholders. It is hoped that the output of this study will serve as a useful guideline for its implications in markets outside of Japan.

Keywords: Inclusive society, active elderly, Society 5.0, Innovative eco-system, “mukou sangen ryo-donari (nearest neighbours)”.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Japan's total population is declining. In 2019, statistics showed that the number of people decreased by 400,000 in the whole nation and the population appears to be declining rapidly. Moreover, the number of people aged over 65 years grew by 27.6% as of July 2017. In other words, more than one in four people are 65 years old or older, which is a significant number, and this number this number is rising every year (Campbell, 2014).

Once you get to 65, you are expected to live 24.38 more years if you're a woman and 19.55 if you are a man, reflecting the longevity of the Japanese. So, it seems that this figure exceeds or is close to 20 years, which is the highest level globally. Such a long retirement is often said to be like second life, and one can lead a fulfilling retired life if one prepares for it from an early stage. Furthermore, the government supports the activities of the elderly through its 'Japan 100 Million Total Success Plan' and the 'Work Style Reform Implementation Plan' (Cabinet Office, 2019). These schemes were launched in 2019 at the same time as discussions on how to enhance human resource development reform were top of the political agenda.

1.2 Challenges in Coping with the Increasing Aging Population

The increasing number of the ageing population is expected to continue. It will create an environment in which the elderly can play an active role by fully demonstrating their strengths, such as the experience and knowledge cultivated throughout their lives and connections (Campbell, 2014). Furthermore, it is essential to create a society where all generations can participate to build a sustainable economy. For these reasons, the government is currently reviewing its policy and measures regarding the ageing society.

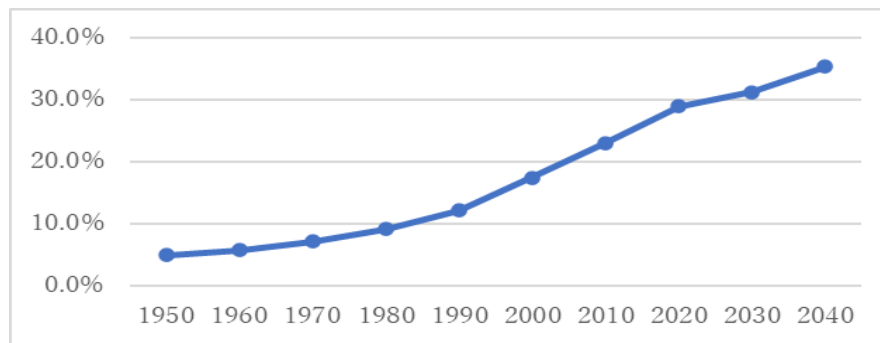


Figure 1: Trend of the percentage of elderly citizens.

A group of experts in the Cabinet Office will design effective policies to support an inclusive, diverse society.

1.3 Research gap and research questions

In Japan's ever-aging population, research into the benefits of social stability, fiscal balance and intergenerational equity have been undertaken from an interdisciplinary perspective (Kendig et al., 1999). In particular, intense debate on public sector interventions and reframing policies, including pension reform, has been taking place in Japan since 1990, when the need for structural changes caused by the aging population were strongly voiced (Allen & Cassill, 2010). However, the results have not been evaluated. For example, the nudge effect, which has been emphasised in Britain and the United States, is a psychological factor in changing behaviour, and the creation of mechanisms for non-economic values, such as mutual aid and mutual support in local communities, is still in the trial-and-error stage (e.g., Clark & Ogawaf, 1996; Lu et al., 2019; Nakano et al., 1996; Wada, 2016).

In addition, although solving social problems with ICT is an attractive idea for researchers, there is still insufficient knowledge to propose, for example, how all generations can contribute to an advanced information society and how they can participate in social development through intergenerational cooperation from a comprehensive perspective (Ienca et al., 2019).

In light of the discussions on this topic, this study attempts to provide a more comprehensive perspective and identify and propose practical answers to the set research questions as follows:

RQ1: What are the key elements to build a sustainable ageing society that incorporates all generations into an inclusive social system?

RQ2: What kind of public interventions can support building an inclusive social system involving active elderly citizens?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research approach

This paper applies the method of thematic analysis. We have used secondary textual data as the object of analysis, and search for answers to the research questions through the following steps: familiarisation, coding, theme generation, theme review, and theme definition and naming (Johnston, 2017).

This process was originally developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke for psychological research but has since been applied to a wide range of social science disciplines (Braun et al., 2019) because of its flexible, iterative application and ability to delve into a subject deeply.

In addition, comprehensive source material has been collected in the form of books, journals, papers and other similar sources to conduct preliminary research from the nature of the study. Throughout the thematic analysis, the dataset was descriptively and critically analysed with the text mining software NVivo 12.0 to develop word clouds and reveal the logic among the keywords. Additionally, observations were made using an etymological approach (Alhojailan, 2012; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

2.2 Data source for the study

Unlike primary data, which is collected by researchers themselves to achieve a particular research objective, secondary data is collected by other researchers who are likely to have different research objectives. Researchers and institutions may share data with each other in order to maximise its usefulness (Guest et al., 2011). Government agencies also collect data that they make available for secondary analysis, and, in many cases, the data is not only used for policy making but is also made available to the public for further research.

To ensure the reliability and timeliness of the information of the data source, the authors examined and scrutinise the origins of the dataset and collect data that is consistent with the objectives of the study (Vartanian, 2010). Because qualitative data is usually generated in known circumstances by individuals nominated for that particular purpose, this allows for research that takes into account biases, gaps, social context and other issues that can be analysed (Tripathy, 2013; Johnston, 2017). With these issues and considerations in mind, this study adopted an exploratory thematic analysis of Japanese national government and local government publications, data, and reports; peer-reviewed research papers, published in English between 1995 and 2020; and public reports and reports of The Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) and the Japan Association of Corporate Executives (Keizai Doyukai), in order to examine the arguments corresponding to the research questions set in the previous section and to develop a conceptual model from them.

From the databases of EBSCO, Web of Science, and Japanese government publication departments, we manually selected sources to be included based on key words (age*; society;

generation; ICT; technolog*; inclusive; collaborat*), and then compared the results with those in the A total of 186 sources were identified and analysed after an exploratory study by NVivo.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Collaboration and inclusiveness

3.1.1. Support and Involve the Elderly in Society

To overcome the challenges of the declining birth rate and aging society, the elderly generation, which accounts for most of the population and has a wealth of life experience, is expected to play a leading role in community development (Morikawa, 2014). Furthermore, to sustain and develop the country, it is necessary to create a symbiotic relationship between all generations, from the elderly to the young (Donizzetti, 2019).

At the end of the Meiji era (1868–1912), Shibusawa Eiichi established the Tokyo Metropolitan Nursery School facility, which took care of orphans and homeless people. Since then, social projects have supported vulnerable citizens by researching human health, social participation and life support for the elderly (Titchen & Hobson, 2005, p. 123). The Tokyo Metropolitan Nursery School: This facility has been serving as a supportive community hub, and it is one of the critical interventions for supporting people in need (Sagers, 2018). The essential topic of starting from the elderly, connecting generations and community development has been discussed by researchers and within the public sector. This perspective of involving a multifaceted cluster of citizens is a useful guideline for the realisation of a welfare society (Dahl, 2018). The participation of the elderly, which is the subject of this paper, is just as necessary for the construction of a fair, diverse society as the public assistance of single mothers, for example (Ezawa & Fujiwara, 2005).

At the same time, because the older generation is used to contributing to the development of the economy (and they are still motivated to continue their contributions to society through their expertise), they are willing to share and pass on their knowledge and skills to the next generation (Morikawa, 2014). The key takeaways from these themes will be discussed below.

Theme 1: Connections and collaborations among multiple generations. With the declining birth rate and the increasing population of the elderly, creating a scheme for intergenerational cooperation and interaction has become an urgent issue for many local governments (e.g. Ansell et al., 2020; Cardoso, 2020; Miyazawa & Hatakeyama, 2021; Börsch-Supan et al., 2015).

Theme 2: Social participation is vital for the health and independence of seniors. After Shibusawa (who is called the 'father of Japanese capitalism') passed his business on to the younger generation after he turned 80, he concentrated on enhancing the welfare policy and interventions in supporting vulnerable citizens. The current National Council of Social Welfare was one of his greatest legacies, and it has been one of the pillars of Japan's social welfare schemes based on social capital and cohesions among generations (e.g. Fridenson & Takeo, 2017; Piškur et al., 2014; Phillips, 1967; Dawson-Townsend, 2019; Ejiri et al., 2019).

Theme 3: Retired citizens with expertise should continue to be involved in business (significantly contributing to building inclusive society with intergenerational contributions). In an ageing

society with increasingly diverse values, there is a need for opportunities to enrich our minds and realise our purpose in life through learning and social participation activities (Provencher & Poulin, 2020). In addition, as the number of elderly people living alone increases, the importance of multi-generational interaction in the community is being reaffirmed (Herring, 2019).

Therefore, in order for the elderly to be able to play an active role in the community and in employment, there is a need to increase opportunities for re-employment, to provide a variety of lifelong learning opportunities so that all people, including the elderly, can engage in working, to encourage appropriate evaluation of the results of these activities, and to make the most of them in community activities and in obtaining employment opportunities (Thomassen et al. 2020).

3.1.2. Sanpo-Yoshi

In his manuscript *The Analects and Abacus*, Shibusawa explained that the essence of the *Analects* is welfare and morality, and the core of the *abacus* is business. He referred to the idea of *Sanpo-Yoshi* as the secret to balancing welfare and economic benefits, which *Omi* merchants (Merchants from Omi Province (present-day Shiga Prefecture) who were active from the Middle Ages to the modern era in Japan) suggest (Oe & Yamaoka, 2020). *Sanpo-Yoshi* (three-way goodness in consumers, suppliers, and communities) needs to benefit all involved: it must benefit customers, businesses, and the society.

If one projects this philosophy into building today's society, it can be argued that the seller, who enhances social participation, will bring health and motivation to the elderly. Moreover, it can be assumed that other stakeholders can derive merits from this as well (Ogura & Jakovljević, 2014). By spreading this philosophy, potential societal issues can be resolved in the region, and this can be a basis for the smooth promotion of socioeconomic activities for all citizens.

In particular, there is great potential for the 'elderly-oriented *Sanpo-Yoshi*' in which the elderly act as supporters to the businesses with their expertise as guardians or facilitators (Titchen & Hobson, 2005). Subsequent sections will discuss the background and the need for the elderly to take action against society's challenges. Few studies have discussed the concept of *sampo yoshi* in the context of promoting the participation of older people and the creation of a collaborative society. Most of the research with a focus on *Sanpo-Yoshi* is about the backbone of CSR thinking, or as a mindset within companies as a trigger to drive CSR behavioural principles, and try to reassess and reposition it as a guideline for today's business strategies (Scudder, 2021).

One of the rare studies that attempts to take the spirit of *Sanpo-Yoshi* one step further and re-examine it from a broader theme is that of Yamaoka & Oe (2021). They examined the *Sampo Yoshi* philosophy embedded in corporate culture as a common value that underpins the sustainability of long-lived companies (*shinise*), and found that *shinise businesses*, whether explicitly or not, that have lasted for more than 300 years, have clearly stated and implemented the *Sampo Yoshi* spirit in their corporate philosophy.

Similarly, Oe & Yamaoka (2020) proposed an analytical model for business strategy planning, qualitatively capturing the fact that the code of conduct taught by the spirit of *Sampo Yoshi* and

contribution to society is an important element in the growth strategy of Japanese SMEs as a factor that drives corporate entrepreneurship.

This study seeks to build on these existing findings and to explore the answer to the proposition that the re-employment of older people with skilled skills and experience can help to build a society of collaborative participation, while at the same time passing on their knowledge and educational benefits to the next generation of workers. This process of discussion is now underway. This process of discussion is expected to provide a useful paradigm for debate in the face of the current challenges of an ageing population. In other words, this study is unique in that it re-evaluates the spirit of *Sampo Yoshi* from the perspective of inviting diverse workers into a company, focusing on the aspect of value co-creation among diverse workers, and strengthening the performance of the company.

3.2. Challenges of creating a participatory society that transcends the generational divide

3.2.1. The Burden of the Working Generation

When considering why intergenerational exchange is vital in the context of the declining birth rate and increasing aging population, it is necessary to look at various complex social issues (Muramatsu & Akiyama, 2011). The biggest challenge is the increasing burden of social security. Fifty years ago, it was considered ideal if around nine people worked to support one older adult's medical expenses and pensions. This idea continued for many years. However, according to estimates from 2019, society is shifting in which only 2.4 people now support one elderly person. This trend continues to be seen, and it is said that, in the next few years, a 'one-to-one society' will arrive, in which 1.2 employed people support one elderly person (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, 2020). Using data from 29 European countries, Koster (2018) empirically examined how perceptions and evaluations of welfare systems for older people differ between the young and the elderly and what insights can be gained from this information. It is observed that older people, aged 70 and over, are particularly supportive of state welfare systems for the elderly, while the those in their 20s are also moderately supportive.

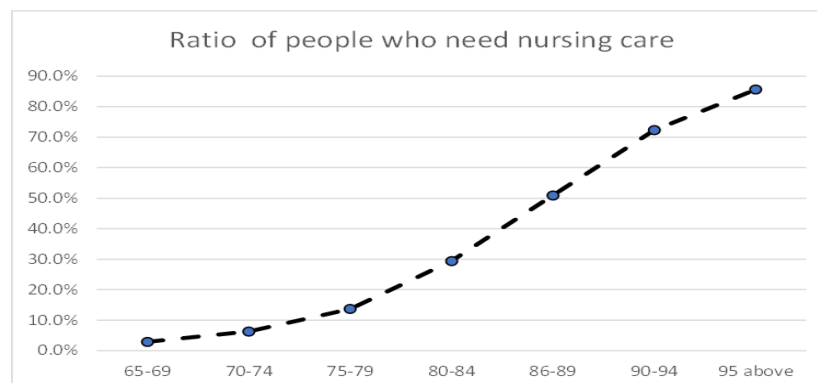


Figure 2: Percentage of people who need nursing care.

3.2.2. Dissatisfaction with Policy Priorities

Despite there not being a generational conflict about the benefits of a welfare system, there is growing resentment from younger generations about bearing the burden of financially supporting older generations, when the nuclear family is becoming more challenging to uphold. These challenges include the uncertainty about the future of the economy and society, the problem of poverty among young people, and anxiety about marriage.

Such anxiety among young people is reflected in prioritising long-term care policies for the elderly, childcare policies for the child-rearing generation and young people's sluggish voting behaviour due to their belief that society cannot be changed. There are many reports of fatal accidents of young mothers and children due to traffic accidents involving older adults are no longer as good at driving as they used to be and are causing accidents. In addition, there are concerns about conflicts between generations among citizens themselves (Ogura & Jakovljević, 2014).

As shown in Figure 3, France's pension rate is the highest in the world. Considering future trends in population composition, it is clear that the burden on young people and the sense of intergenerational unfairness will soon expand.

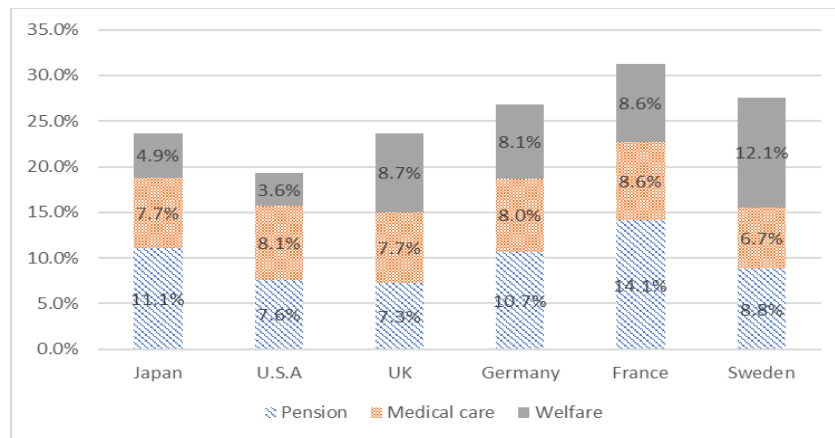


Figure 3: Comparative statistics of intergenerational disparity (adapted from OECD).

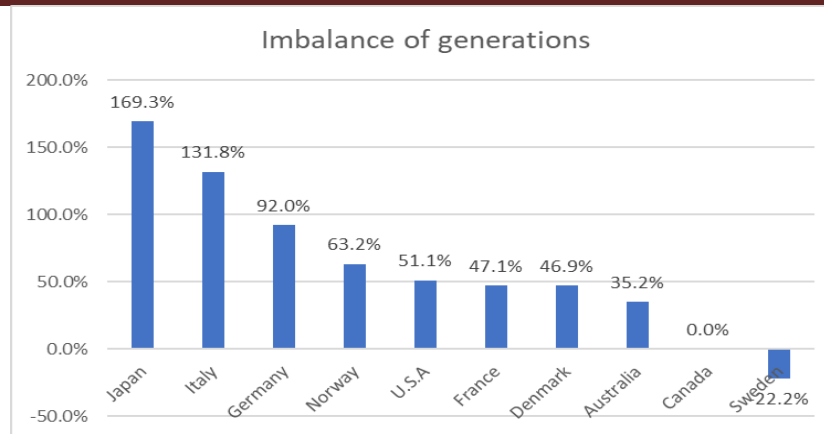


Figure 4: Intergenerational imbalance (adapted from Kotlikoff & Raffelhuschen 1999).

The declining birth rate and the ageing of society itself are making things very complicated, especially locally. The demographic imbalance between generations, the unfairness of the burden, these are no longer problems that only certain groups face, but fundamental issues that must be addressed by society as a whole (Tamiya et al., 2011).

3.3. Repositioning of the Elderly in the business context

It is important for future development to have a role both inside and outside the home. However, in this situation, these roles do not exist anymore because of the aging problem. The increasing aging population could cause problems in daily life; for example, someone may not be able to take care of themselves anymore and therefore will need support and care. Until now, people have not been effectively considering strategies to prevent the need for long-term care.

3.3.1. Social participation and benefits of elderly employment

Although social participation depends on the person, their energy level and their social background, it can involve employment, hobbies or volunteer work. In addition, each person must have a sense of responsibility, or a sense of mission, that slowly moves them towards their goal of social participation as they age. As Cano et al. (2018) discussed, public intervention clarification of the problems faced by those involved are essential for a full understanding of the concept of diversity and the inclusion of people in society. In doing so, as this paper argues, diversity and inclusion should be viewed from a community perspective (Oe & Weeks, 2020). Based on this premise, countries have made great strides in developing programs that cater to functionally diverse populations (Cano et al., 2018). The authors then argue that it is for the federal government, local governments and other relevant public sectors to build national programmes of welfare and development for the elderly, the disabled, single mothers and others. It is argued that programmes that promote such diverse participation will then also contribute to the development of the family.

As highlighted by Oe and Weeks (2020), community participants, encompassing diverse and vulnerable groups, need to cooperate and work together to realise policy goals. However, it is here that the "active elderly", the over 60s who are both aware and skilled, as the forgotten generation,

can be positioned as a valuable potential workforce and could compensate for the shortage of labour caused by the demographic imbalance. It is an important and urgent task to focus on the hidden labour force of older people who are willing to work but lack opportunities, and to build a social dynamism to encourage their participation in society.

3.3.2. Community context and membership

As noted in the previous section, in relation to community diversity and participation, the concept of community membership may provide a useful guide to the discussion (Forenza et al., 2020). The authors focused on five known communities (communities of action, communities of situation, communities of interest, communities of place and communities of practice) and exploratively examined common themes around membership. From this process, they have drawn some interesting conclusions. Community membership, which should be the cornerstone of a diverse and participatory society, involves joining a community to meet personal needs (through hobbies and activities); to deepen existing relationships, build new ones and be included in support networks; or to strengthen their sense of self within the context of the community.

This finding by Forenza et al. (2020) defines community as a system of emergent interactions in which individuals interact to meet their physiological, social and self-actualising needs. This argument is in line with Oe (2006; 2021), who showed that the development of social capital in a community has the ability to contribute to the solution of social problems, increasing the non-economic and invisible value of the people in the network and contributing to people's safety.

3.3.3. Dynamic transformation of social system with professional workforce: Society 5.0

In June 2018, the new guidelines for growth strategies, the Future Investment Strategy 2018, was compiled at the Future Investment Conference. In addition, the Fourth Industrial Revolution's technological innovations, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, AI and robots, are supportive engines for realising Society 5.0 in earnest.

Simultaneously, to implement the measures swiftly and in accordance with the Future Investment Strategy 2018, the Innovative Business Activity Implementation Plan, stipulated in the Act on Special Measures for Productivity Improvement, was formed. However, the primary strategic plan has not yet focused on the elderly's wisdom and expertise, and they are potential driving powers in accelerating society's digital transformation.

Society 5.0 follows the hunter-gatherer society (Society 1.0), agricultural society (Society 2.0), industrial society (Society 3.0) and information society (Society 4.0, Gladden 2019). It was a concept that was initially formed within Japan's scientific and technological policy, but the government, industries and academia should work together to spread this concept worldwide. In line with the philosophy of Society 5.0, some key themes were discussed and shared at Davos in 2019. The Japan Business Federation (*Keidanren*) presented the Japanese outline of a collaborative policy agenda to develop Society 5.0 with the potential to nurture a more sustainable society based on partnership (Kato, 2019).

Currently, innovative digital technologies such as AI, IoT and blockchain are advancing and driving the digital transformation of societies. Japan needs to ride the wave of digital transition and social dynamism to improve its competitiveness, gather wisdom and contribute to constructing a global collaborative society. Furthermore, borrowing wisdom from the experiences of those aged 65 and over, who supported Japan's post-war growth and were the basis for strengthening Japan's industrial power, should also be at the top of the policy agenda (Oe & Yamaoka, 2021).

In the 'Science and Technology Basic Plan', Society 5.0 is a human-centred society that achieves economic development and resolution of social issues through a system that deeply integrates cyberspace (virtual space) and physical spaces (real space). For example, retired experts from ICT-related vendors and business consultants (scientific-industrial organisations) can be asked to return to their businesses and be core supporters of working toward Society 5.0. Sharing these generations' experiences with the next generation and contributing to improving their skills and knowledge is urgent.

3.4 Sanpo Yoshi philosophy embedded in the concept of Society 5.0

In an ageing society with increasingly diverse values, the importance of opportunities to realise one's purpose in life through learning and social participation activities increases. The importance of multi-generational interaction in the community has already been reaffirmed with the increase in the number of elderly people living alone, and the promotion of re-employment of elderly people with skilled skills and rich experience is also effective in terms of passing on skills to the next generation. In the framework of Society 5.0, where people of all ages and both sexes will be able to work and benefit from advanced technology, it will be more important than ever to accept and respect diversity, to create value together and to give back to society (Huang & Glaser, 2021).

The implementation of technology will facilitate the transmission of skills by making the skills of craftsmen visible, and the use of the data gathered will improve production efficiency and the quality of services. The promotion of cooperation between companies and regions will also provide an opportunity for innovative ideas to be realised, and the acceleration of collaboration between stakeholders will contribute greatly to the creation of a sustainable business and society (Wang et al., 2021; Park & Park, 2021). In order to enjoy the benefits of technology and to enhance the sustainability of society, the implementation strategy of implementable technology will become a reality only if there is a *Sanpo Yoshi* philosophy at the root of Society 5.0, i.e. the perspective of contributing to society as well as to business suppliers and consumers.

4. DISCUSSION

In this section, we will discuss and analyse four key themes extracted from various government publications, relevant reports and academic papers. Building on the Society 5.0 framework as a key paradigm for an inclusive society, the next section begins to critically reflect on the main arguments and discussions on the four themes, exploring their contribution to the research questions set in the previous section and signposts for future research.

4.1. RQ1: What are the key elements to build a sustainable ageing society that incorporates all generations into an inclusive social system?

In answering this RQ, it may be useful to learn from the wisdom of our ancestors and refer to some mutual aid systems that are already embedded in society. In fact, there are several interesting mutual aid schemes in Japan that are unique to the region. Let's discuss an example of one of these first.

In Okinawa, there is a word "yui", which means that social ties are based on mutual relations. For social scientists, yui is also attractive from an alternative medicine point of view, as it supports people's mental health and improves their immunity. Activities such as waiting for events, thinking about what to say, meeting friends and having a chat improve quality of life and inspire social engagement (Machaczek et al. 2021; Paige et al. 2017). Socially connected people have been shown to ultimately improve their health through these routes and to actively participate in society and engage in social activities (Shirai, 2020).

A term that expresses similar values to "yui" is the term "mukou sangen ryo-donari". This term refers to the social relationships that are formed as a result of the proximity of residences, especially houses close by that have a large amount of daily contact and exchange. Micro-communities, or the smallest administrative unit such as 'yui' and 'mukou sangen ryo-donari', function as mutual supervision and assistance scheme (neighborhood organisation). The neighbourhood has long served as a basic unit for mutual aid, rooted in the community (Purdue 2001; Blockland, 2002; Rowlands, 2011).

And in this context, not a few studies have focused on intergenerational exchange and assistance to the elderly. Thus, when talking about the concept of community-based support, there is more or less an awareness of the problem of promoting and supporting the participation of the elderly and vulnerable citizens (e.g. Mercken 2003; van Eijk, 2018; Michels & De Graafm 2010).

Thus, as the wisdom and system of our ancestors, the mutual aid system of the community at the micro level is worth considering as a system to rely on in today's society. The intelligent society that Society 5.0 aims to create is a new social system that combines the physical and the virtual, that supports employment opportunities, that connects and interacts with people in both the public and the private spheres, and where citizens who are regularly connected are also sensitive to social issues and willing to contribute. It is a hybrid paradigm supported by attitudes (Oe 2006).

4.2. RQ2: What kind of public interventions can support building an inclusive social system involving active elderly citizens?

The next challenge that emerges is how to stimulate interaction in the community and promote the functioning and social contribution of the abandoned generation = Active elderly. This will require the implementation of mechanisms, programmes and mechanisms to create exchanges, support and connections.

Considering the frame of the program, it makes sense that the secret is to support the spirit of *Sanpo-yoshi* and actively drive the interrelationship among citizens, business and society to realize Society 5. through the concept of *Sanpo-yoshi*. In order for the public sector to stimulate the participation of the active elderly in society in the spirit of *Sampo-yoshi*, it is essential to prepare a scheme to support the active elderly as a social system, as well as to improve the business scheme on the receiving side (e.g. reviewing the retirement age system, short working hours).

4.3. Further discussion points: Innovative eco-system and resilient society

A smooth transition to Society 5.0, which is one of the main themes of this research, also paves the way for balanced intergenerational participation by returning the benefits of cutting-edge technological innovations to society. For example, Society 5.0 advocates a system of ‘agile governance’ as a new government model, which points out the importance of citizens taking the lead in solving local problems through collaboration between the public sector, industry and universities. To achieve this, the challenge is to develop human resources to use, promote local data, and develop and operate the necessary systems.

The concept of Society 5.0 was first proposed by the Japan Business Federation (*Keidanren*) at the Davos Forum in 2019, in which it stressed that agile governance is an essential requirement for realising Society 5.0 (METI, 2021). In other words, when confronting social problems, ICT (e.g., AI, big data analysis, etc.) can be used to promote and utilise local data to address the problems faced by local communities, such as support for safe and secure living, the measures mentioned above to connect the elderly with other generations and also forward-looking measures for disaster prevention. It is required to promote the smooth and speedy implementation of the relevant measures with proactive interventions in the public sector.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Overall Observations

Our aim was to confront the common problem of demographic imbalance in developed countries, which has led to distortions in pension and social welfare systems and a widening gap between generations, and to propose to the world a model for building a society in which all people can play an active role, including the reemployment of the post-retirement generation with specialist skills and knowledge. Our aim was to propose a model to the world for building a society in which all people can play an active role, including the re-employment of the retired generation with specialist skills and knowledge. By introducing the spirit of "sampo yoshi", which is deeply rooted in Japanese corporate culture, we studied Japanese examples in the context of the Society 5.0 framework as a guideline for promoting the participation of all members of society and contributing to society across generations. In addition, as explored in RQ1, it is of great significance to reevaluate the concept of "mukou sangen ryo donari", which means the basic unit based on small-scale actual visible proximity that are rooted in Japanese local communities, and to re-use the social system of mutual aid (Hagisawa, 2021). In other words, resources that are embedded in the forgotten base of society would be of great value for remodeling the new society framework supporting all generations with active motivation towards commitment to their own communities.

As a result of this study, it was confirmed, first of all, that the introduction and implementation of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) is important in order to complement the uneven distribution of knowledge between generations, to eliminate the subjective gap between generations, and to build a framework for a stable participatory society in which diverse citizens can engage in economic and social activities with confidence. As an analytical framework for concrete consideration, it was confirmed that it is important to make effective use of the principles for the construction of the "100 million active society" promoted by the Japanese government, and the potential and possibilities that the implementation of ICT can bring. However, the most important point is not the social philosophy or the catchphrase to be aimed for, but the spirit within the company which should be the backbone of the philosophy, the philosophical philosophy embedded in the company and society, which should be shared and sublimated as a principle of action by the people who operate the business and the stakeholders of the society. In suggesting and discussing this point, we have clearly suggested that the three directions of the "Spirit of Sanpo-Yoshi", which we have introduced as the core value and model of this research, namely, the path of collaboration and value co-creation among consumers, suppliers and society, is the way to become an oil-free city.

In other words, unless the entities that make up a society share the spirit of mutual assistance as the backbone of their organizational culture and draw out the active contributions of relevant stakeholders, the construction of joint-participatory enterprises and societies that embrace a diverse workforce will not be possible. It is hoped that the outputs of this study will provide useful guidance on the implications of the findings for markets outside Japan.

5.2. Contributions to Theories and Practices

Traditional stereotypes divide people by the age of 65 and over, or make it seem as if they always need support. Society can harness the motivations and abilities of a diverse range of older people. This study identifies three issues that are relevant to both theory and practice.

Firstly, older people aged 65 and over who are identified as needing support and who have the motivation and ability to contribute to building Society 5.0 should be supported as much as possible by valuing their achievements, but ensuring and maintaining social balance, i.e. balanced public intervention and clear messages should also play an important role.

Secondly, although there are more pronounced inequalities and mental gaps between older and younger workers than between other age groups, there is a need to clearly recognise that all workers and citizens, wherever possible, regardless of age group, are actors in the co-creation of joint values for society, and as a mental support for this, it makes sense to create mechanisms to embed the 'sampo yoshi' spirit proposed by this study in corporate culture.

Thirdly, this study suggests that Society 5.0, a model of a collaborative and participatory society that can solve socio-economic problems through the introduction of ICT, is worth referring to not only in Japan but also in the global market. However, rather than jumping straight into concrete plans for ICT implementation (e.g. replacing human labour, seamless information management and analysis, monitoring and proposing optimal solutions), it is important to ask:

"Why can ICT implementation contribute to solving the problems of an ageing society? It is important to remember that without discussing what is needed in terms of social foundations and preparations to make ICT adoption more effective, the application and adoption of advanced technologies will become a mere figment of the imagination.

5.3. Further Research Opportunities

In today's financially challenging context, private sector and community-based mutual aid cooperative frameworks are essential interventions that can be an effective way, other than fiscal incentives, to promote the participation of older people in society and to build social capital to support their health and well-being. It is therefore becoming more and more important for policy makers and relevant stakeholders to design comprehensive schemes that support all generations.

In order to do this, we have stressed the importance of embedding the spirit of mutual aid cooperation, or the "sampo yoshi" philosophy, which should be the principle of action, in companies and society. However, this study relies on a desk-based approach based on the analysis of existing secondary data, and the next step is to collect primary data from a diverse range of intergenerational citizens, business executives and public sector policy makers who actually live in local communities, in order to assess the impact of the Sanpo-Yoshi principles on the subjective well-being of citizens and business people. It is necessary to collect primary data from a wide range of citizens, business owners and public sector policy makers to quantify the impact of the Sanpo-yoshi principles on the subjective well-being of citizens and business people, and on their motivation to engage in economic activities.

This research should not only argue for a fairer society by improving social security systems and intergenerational participation, including among the elderly, but should also attempt to examine the economic and social effects of a smooth transition to Society 5.0, which is one of the main themes of this research. It would also be useful to examine the economic and social effects of a smooth transition to Society 5.0. The authors recognize that in order to return the benefits of the most advanced technological innovations to society and to pave the way for balanced intergenerational participation, we must identify the factors that cannot be overlooked, develop more sophisticated models, and propose policies to the public sector.

Based on the conclusions of this study, the authors would like to extend the framework of this collaboration to conduct empirical research on agile governance in response to local challenges, such as the use of local data and AI to counter the ageing of the population, the creation of a collaborative and participatory society, and the early realisation of an AI industry to improve the lives of local citizens.

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