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Field of specialization

School psychology, education consultation/
student guidance, school counseling

Is Satsuki Kusakabe, a character from the movie *My Neighbor Totoro*, a young caregiver? In the Kusakabe family, the mother is hospitalized, and elementary school student Satsuki is solely responsible for the housework and taking care of her younger sister. Lecturer Yamasaki says: "Satsuki, who has the understanding of and support from her school teachers and neighbors, partially fits the definition of a young caregiver but cannot be called a young caregiver. The important point is that the environment is such that children do not suffer from heavy psychological stress from having to provide care."

To describe my research simply, it is "How does adult involvement (education) in schools and society promote children's psychological and social growth?"

The situation surrounding children today is fraught with various challenges, including school refusal, bullying, school violence, child poverty, child abuse, and young caregiving. Modern society is changing rapidly, and relationships between people are becoming more and more diluted, but in order for children to be psychologically stable and allowed to develop appropriate social skills, they need to maintain enriching relationships with the people around them. I am particularly interested in how teachers, school counselors, and other



Contributing to improving support for children through training for teachers and staff in educational and welfare settings.

staff should understand and interact with students in school settings and how children's interactions with each other and with the adults surrounding them affect children's psychology. My research began with a focus on the development of friendships, especially the background of friendships among adolescent girls, which are prone to leading to serious bullying and interpersonal problems. From there, I developed an interest in children's interpersonal relationships and social development, which continues to this day. The basis of interpersonal relationships lies in the appropriate development of attachments established during infancy, but unfortunately, due to the influence of various circumstances, some children are unable to experience attachment



Overseas visits to countries where advanced education consultation and student guidance are being implemented. Exchanges between researchers and practitioners are being facilitated.

relationships appropriately during the critical period of attachment formation. Also, some children are affected by the deteriorated relationship with their caregivers. Both of these situations lead to stressing the children, which is released in forms of problematic behaviors and situations. We have found through practices and research in schools and child welfare facilities in Japan and abroad that we can save children from such difficulties by not only understanding children's minds and engaging with them with an accepting disposition but also structuring educational activities to teach and utilize skills for connecting with others. These findings are being actively applied in educational administration and school settings both within and outside Hiroshima Prefecture. A study on young caregivers conducted in collaboration with Higashihiroshima City in AY 2022 found that situations in which children feel it is difficult for people around them to understand the troubles they are experiencing may be damaging their hopes for the future and their sense of identity. It has also become clear that adults working in education and welfare settings want to help children with their concerns but are at a loss as to how to do so. Based on these results, we are starting a joint effort with Higashihiroshima City to provide actual support in AY 2023.

It is very rewarding for me to be able to explore how we can approach matters that are becoming a social issue like this. My aim is to nurture children through the power of connections and lead them to a bright future through education. I believe that education has the power to change society in any era, and I am convinced that nurturing children's ability to become better members of society is the greatest contribution to society that can be made. Also, it's not just educators and researchers who are involved in education. Local people are also a huge force in supporting education. We hope to continue expanding our university's research and collaboration with the local community.



Actively involved in providing direct and indirect support to children at school and child welfare facilities.

Providing support for children's bright future through education

Creating World Top-level Research Centers

Promising Research Initiatives

HU selects and provides priority support to promising research initiatives, which are researcher groups who have the potential to grow into independent world-class research centers (Centers of Excellence).

- International Network on Polyoxometalate Science
- Core of Research for Organelle Diseases
- Healthy Urban - Rural cycle in Setouchi to Asian catchments, toward SDGs (HURu-SATO)
- MBR Center

Creation of a new academic research field for a healthy urban-rural cycle in Asia

The center for Healthy Urban - Rural cycle in Setouchi to Asian catchments, toward SDGs (HURu-SATO) aims to create a healthy cycle (including people and food) between urban areas and its surroundings in the urbanizing Asian regions. Satoyama/satoumi is an evolving symbiosis in which natural resources are revitalized and used sustainably through the active intervention of humans and is a highly unique environmental creation system in Japan. The efforts of this initiative aim to create a new academic research field that will contribute to solving problems in Asian countries, based on successful cases in the Setouchi catchment, and will also contribute to the SDGs.



*As of February 28, 2023