



Challenges in Implementing Participatory Poverty Research with Children: Methodological and Ethical Reflections for Practice in Japan

Sheng Chen *

Junior College Division, Shokei University, Japan

* Correspondence: chen@shokei-gakuen.ac.jp

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges of implementing participatory poverty research with children. Conventional poverty research has largely been led by adult researchers, and the concept of child poverty has been constructed without clarifying how children perceive poverty. Although Japanese scholars have recently begun calling for the incorporation of children's perspectives into poverty research, little progress has been made in developing empirical methodologies. In this context, participatory poverty research with children offers an important approach. By positioning children not merely as research subjects but as active participants in the research process, this approach enables poverty to be understood more closely from children's own perspectives. However, due to practical difficulties in implementation, participatory poverty research in Japan remains limited, with most efforts focused on adults and little to no involvement of children. This study draws on participatory poverty research with children in the UK, where a body of relevant research has been accumulated. Using a framework developed from participatory poverty research with young adults in Japan, this study conducts a literature-based comparative analysis of three UK studies to examine how the challenges identified in that framework are manifested and addressed with children. The results show that children's meaningful participation requires accessible information, robust consent and assent procedures, supportive environments, child-sensitive methods that reduce power inequalities, and opportunities for children to review and influence research findings. This analysis clarifies specific methodological and ethical considerations for future practice in Japan.

Keywords: poverty, children, participatory poverty research, methodology, research ethics

Introduction

Participatory poverty research has been shaped by social development initiatives in the Global South, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), developed in the 1970s, and the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), introduced by the World Bank in the 1990s. From the late 1990s to the early 21st century, participatory approaches expanded beyond a development-focused context, particularly in advanced economies such as the United Kingdom, leading to the emergence of participatory poverty research (Bennett & Roberts, 2004). Among these, Poverty First Hand (Beresford, Green, Lister, & Woodard, 1999) and the Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power (Carter & Petch, 2000; del Tufo & Gaster, 2002) are representative studies that have been evaluated as effective in understanding poverty from the perspective of people in poverty by ensuring their "participation" in research (Bennett & Roberts, 2004). Following Poverty First Hand and Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power, this research method has been further developed to shift the focus from adults to children. According to Sime (2008), there are two advantages to applying participatory research methods to children. The first is that children can choose the extent of involvement in the research process and be positioned as "experts", allowing their priorities and interests to emerge through this child-appropriate research method and peer discussions, thereby facilitating the development of collective solutions. Second, involving children in poverty research embodies their right to participate, as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). This can be seen as a form of poverty activism for children. These two points are of great significance for research on child poverty. The former is important not only because it allows poverty to be understood from a perspective

closer to children's own subjectivity, but also because it is related to procedural justice in the understanding of poverty. The latter goes beyond the protection and realization of children's rights, enabling children to be viewed not merely as vulnerable subjects in need of protection, but as active agents capable of contributing to social change.

In Japan, participatory poverty research has been explored and implemented by Chen (2021, 2022, 2024). Chen's studies mainly reviewed key participatory poverty research projects previously conducted in the United Kingdom, which, as mentioned above, examined the challenges of implementing such research. Chen (2021) emphasized enabling participants to engage in the research without constraints and to be actively involved throughout the research process—that is, in participant recruitment, research progression, and output of research findings. Drawing on these findings, the issues identified in previous overseas studies were examined through actual research practices in Japanese society to identify specific challenges and the necessary responses (Chen, 2022). Furthermore, Chen (2024, pp.141-173) presented key considerations and proposals for the ongoing improvement and sustained implementation of participatory poverty research in Japan, based on research participants' reflections on their involvement. This series of methodological reviews, practices, interpretations, and re-examinations has introduced participatory poverty research to Japan and provided a framework for its implementation. This framework is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. A framework for implementing participatory poverty research

Methodological examination		Chen (2021)	Chen (2022)	Chen (2024)
Guarantee of participation		A review of previous research conducted abroad and a discussion of the challenges in implementing participatory poverty research.	An analysis of field research conducted in Japan based on suggestions from Chen (2021), focusing on emerging challenges and necessary responses.	Key points for implementation and suggestions for improvement to the research that emerged from participants' reflections on their involvement.
Ensure that participants can engage in the research without constraints and remain actively involved throughout the research process.	Recruitment of participants	It is essential that people in poverty participate without constraints, supported by clear information, adequate assistance, and a well-prepared participatory environment.	Cooperation with intermediary facilitators and anti-poverty organizations, accessible research settings and schedules, and diverse forms of support, including financial assistance, are essential.	➢ Participant recruitment stage • Advance payment of honoraria. • Clear communication of research information to reduce participants' concerns. • Diverse and accessible communication methods that enable participants to make informed decisions with confidence. ➢ Research initiation stage. • Establishing a common starting point. • Warm-up activities before discussions. • Starting with simple and accessible topics. • Creating a comfortable environment to
	Progress of the research	It is important to enable people in poverty to take part in setting the research agenda and shaping its development. In doing so, prudent measures should be taken to minimize the impact of power inequality among participants and between participants and professionals.	• Creating an open discussion platform that presents the purpose, overall aims, and broadly defined, open-ended themes can help ensure that participants engage in discussions on topics that matter to them. • Adopting a group discussion format can help minimize power imbalances among participants and between participants and professionals or researchers. This approach facilitates interactive dialogue and encourages participants to explain, in their own words, the terms and expressions	

Output of research findings		they use during the discussion.	ease participation.
	To ensure the accuracy of the findings, it is essential to obtain feedback and confirmation from the participants.	Participants should be invited to verify the content, provide their views on how they wish the findings were presented, and offer suggestions for improving the research.	➤ Principles underlying the research process. • Organizing practices that promote inclusion and broader participation. • Respect for research participants.

However, Chen's work has primarily focused on adults, and further consideration is needed when extending this framework to involve children, given the "vulnerability" associated with children being minors. Therefore, this study aims to explore the specific challenges associated with implementing participatory poverty research with children. To achieve this aim, the following section outlines the research methods employed.

Methodology and Object of Analysis

This study adopts a literature review method. The following sections of this article draw on prior participatory poverty research with children conducted in other countries (primarily the UK) and use the framework presented in Table 1 as an analytical tool to compare the previous research with the implementation challenges identified at each stage of the framework. These sections also explore how these challenges have specifically emerged and been addressed in previous studies. This analysis aims to clarify the key issues in conducting participatory poverty research with children, especially for further practice in Japanese society. To lay the groundwork for this analysis, the following section first presents representative examples of participatory poverty research with children, which serve as the object of this study.

Although a certain body of participatory poverty research has involved children, few provide detailed explanations of the participatory methods adopted. While the three studies introduced below also lack extensive elaboration on their methodologies, I will explain why they were chosen by referring to Table 2.

The first study, *The Bread is Free* (Willow, 2001; hereafter referred to as [Example 1]), is considered the first participatory poverty research project involving children in the UK, building on the insights of *Poverty First Hand* (1999). This study examines how poverty affects children's daily lives, including educational opportunities and family relationships, aspirations, as well as its connection to youth crime. Children in this study were not treated merely as research subjects but as active agents with their own views. Therefore, this study enabled children to express their views on poverty and communicate them to society.

The second study, *A Child's Eye View of Social Difference* (Sutton, Smith, Dearden, & Middleton, 2007; hereafter referred to as [Example 2]), explores how children from different social backgrounds — those experiencing relative poverty and those from more affluent households — perceive and experience social differences. Building on the concept of "child-centered research" (Ridge, 2002) and following the tradition of "participatory poverty research involving children" (Willow, 2001), this study achieved a more advanced level of participation. Children were allowed to set the research topic and play an active role in shaping the direction of the study. The study presented children's perspectives on social inequality, contributed to raising social awareness of poverty and exclusion, and offered policy recommendations aimed at poverty reduction.

The final study, *What's Wrong with Being Poor?* (Farthing, 2016; hereafter referred to as [Example 3]), examines how young people living in low-income communities problematize their lives. Compared with the previous two studies, this one involved children not only identifying common issues in their lives but also developing policy proposals as part of the research process. A notable feature of this study was the observed "silence" regarding children's individual agency—potentially reflecting a shift toward collective agency and political awareness. By highlighting this form of agency, this study expanded the scope of participatory poverty research with children, positioning it as a form of children's activism.

Table 2. Representative participatory poverty research projects with children in the UK

Research	The bread is free	A child's eye view of social difference	What's wrong with being poor?
Published	2001	2007	2016
Research Area/Target	United Kingdom (England). Children living in nine urban communities with high levels of poverty and social deprivation.	United Kingdom (England). Children living in a disadvantaged housing association estate and children attending an independent, fee-paying school.	United Kingdom (England). Children from five areas with high levels of child poverty.
Age	5-16	8-13	11-21
Children (Number and Grouping)	106 children in 17 groups: 11 groups for those under 11 years old, and six groups for those aged 11 and over.	42 children in eight groups: 19 children in a disadvantaged housing association estate were divided into four groups based on gender and age: two groups for boys and girls aged 11–13, and two groups for boys and girls aged 8–10. Each group met five times. 23 children attending private schools were divided into four gender and age-based groups: two groups for ages 11–13 and two for ages 8–10. Each group met four times.	144 children in five groups: three groups were mixed-gender, and two groups were girls-only. Only one group included participants over the age of 20 (the average age of the six members in the group was 17 years).
Focus	To explore children's and young people's experiences of poverty. Examines twelve themes: • A basic life • Fullest potential • Left out of childhood • Education • Health • Crime • Relationships with parents • Sadness and shame • Hope and dreams • It's not all bad • Making lives better • End child poverty.	By talking about what "poor", "rich", "chavs", and "posh" meant from the perspective of children, and then sharing what they considered important in their lives. Four common agendas were established to compare the lives and attitudes of children from different social backgrounds: • Education • Favorite things (their possessions) • Free time (activities) • Families and friends	Discussing how children view their lives, i.e., "what is a general standard of living" and "what is important in their lives". The following three common issues were examined, with attention to a form of collective and political agency among children: • Housing and neighborhoods • Education • Crime and related issues • Agency

Examining these previous studies—each situated at a different stage in the development of participatory poverty research—allows us to trace the ways in which participatory poverty research with children has been inherited and practiced over time. This continuity in practice makes it possible to examine more comprehensively how children's participation was ensured throughout the research process.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the "Framework for Implementing Participatory Poverty Research" presented in Table 1 will be used to review the studies introduced in the above section. It examines how the challenges in implementing participatory poverty research, as highlighted by Chen, are reflected in and addressed by previous studies that consider children as the research subjects.

Challenge 1 – Recruitment of Participants

At this research stage, the effective communication of information and the preparation of an enabling environment for participation are key issues (Chen, 2021). How research-related information is communicated to participants, whether it is fully understood, and the establishment of an accessible

and inclusive research environment influence participants' decisions to participate (Chen, 2022). The three studies examined in this review adopted the following approaches in response to these challenges:

Information Communication

When conducting research with children, researchers usually need to gain access to participants through adult gatekeepers, such as parents, schoolteachers, or authority officers (Morrow & Richards, 1996). In addition to obtaining informed consent from a legally authorized representative, many ethical guidelines require researchers to make efforts to obtain "informed assent" from children themselves. For example, the Ethical Guidelines for Medical and Biological Research Involving Human Subjects (2021), which are widely referenced in Japan, state that informed consent must be obtained from a legally authorized representative, such as a parent or guardian, and that efforts must also be made to obtain informed assent from the research subject themselves if it is determined that they can express their own intentions.

In all three previous studies examined in this paper, researchers obtained permission and cooperation from gatekeepers, who helped communicate information to parents and children, obtain parental consent, and secure assent from the children themselves. Specifically, in [Example 1], children of different age groups were recruited separately and divided based on younger and older groups. Younger children (under 11 years of age) were recruited by contacting the head teachers and project managers of primary schools and day care settings in disadvantaged areas. Researchers explained the purpose of the project, and asked for letters to be circulated to parents of children receiving free school meals. Once parental consent was obtained, the children were met, and the research was explained to them. The recruitment of older groups (aged 11 and over) was conducted through support organizations (Save the Children's development teams) that contacted children living in areas of high social and economic deprivation (Willow, 2001, p. 78). However, the report does not explain in detail how informed consent from parents and informed assent from children in the older groups were specifically obtained. In [Example 2], children were similarly recruited according to different attributes. "Estate children" were recruited through a local youth center. The private schoolchildren were recruited by their school. As all children were under the age of 13, both parental consent and the children's assent were obtained through the "gatekeeper" and also from the children themselves. Explanations to the children (informed assent) were provided verbally and through easy-to-understand written materials. In [Example 3], recruitment was made possible through cooperation with youth groups in five regions. Children who were interested in participating in the study met in person once or twice for activities organized by the groups, such as cooking clubs and field trips. During these occasions, the study was explained to the children, and informed assent was obtained. However, informed consent from the children's parents is not introduced in [Example 3]. Notably, in all three studies, children were clearly informed that they could withdraw or decline at any time without consequence.

In addition, while all three previous studies examined in this paper contacted children or their guardians to explain the research by relying on the cooperation of schools or organizations, Chen (2022) also recruited potential participants by disseminating posters and short messages on social media. In such cases, Chen (2024) suggests that, in addition to more personal means of contact, such as phone calls or LINE, researchers should provide a variety of contact methods, including email addresses and Google Forms. This enables potential participants to inquire about the research casually and without worrying about the leakage of personal information.

Supportive Environment Creation

In this context, "creating a supportive environment" refers not only to preparing conditions that make participation easier, such as accessible locations and suitable schedules, arrangements for paying honoraria and transportation expenses, support for skills required for participation, including speaking, reading, and writing, and assistance for participants with disabilities or those accompanied by parents or guardians. It also includes creating a setting in which participants can feel comfortable and speak freely and safely during the process of participation. This requires careful consideration of the time allocated to each topic, the number of participants in each group, and the atmosphere of the discussion. When these environmental considerations are also explained to participants during the information communication stage, including guardians in the case of children, participants are better able to decide whether to participate in the research with confidence (Chen, 2022, 2024).

In [Example 1], the group working with children under eight incorporated tools such as a storybook, a hand puppet, and photography to facilitate conversation. For the older group, a group discussion lasting approximately three hours was conducted. Additionally, before the discussion began, a warm-up activity was held, in which the children played a board game about family income and expenditure.

After group discussions, art materials were provided to allow for creative self-expression. Some children felt that the three-hour discussion was insufficient and even invited researchers to spend an entire day with them. In addition to free drinks and snacks, each child received a £5 gift voucher as a token of appreciation. In [Example 2], group discussions with children involved various methods, such as drawing, mapping, writing activities, games, and role-play. Five sessions were held with the “estate children,” each lasting two to four hours (however, the specific locations were not disclosed). Four sessions were held with the private schoolchildren, conducted during lunch breaks lasting less than one hour. At the conclusion of the study, all participating children were given gift vouchers as tokens of appreciation. In [Example 3], various methods were used, including arts and crafts, photo voicing, brainstorming, and drama-based activities. The study consisted of four sequential phases. Phases one to three were conducted over 6–17 meetings, held mostly weekly, while the overall process, including all actions discussed in the study, extended over more than a year. However, details such as the locations where the first three sequential research phases were conducted, the duration of each session, and whether participants received any incentives or honoraria were not disclosed. Although the fourth phase, which involved policy proposals, was reported to have been conducted in Parliament, it is also not specified whether honoraria or other forms of incentives were provided. “Participation” is costly, and this should also be taken into account when creating a supportive research environment. Chen (2021) pointed out that such costs should not be borne by participants. In the first two of the three previous studies examined in this paper, some form of reward or gift voucher was given to the children after the research. However, when participation itself involves costs, post-research rewards may not be sufficient. As a participant in Chen’s (2024, p. 162) study pointed out, providing honoraria in advance is important because “people in poverty might not even be able to afford transportation to participate, and in that case, people might decide not to go from the beginning”. Therefore, to facilitate smooth “participation”, it is desirable to provide honoraria, including transportation costs, in advance. However, implementing this in practice can be challenging, as it often depends on the funding rules of the researcher’s affiliated institution.

In addition to the points discussed above, the three previous studies did not present details regarding children’s participation, particularly that of younger children, in terms of (1) how they arrived at the research site and what kinds of support were available (e.g., accessibility of transportation, accompaniment by parents or guardians, pick-up services, or the company of trusted adults from schools or organizations), and (2) how the research environment was arranged (e.g., whether the sessions were held in ordinary meeting rooms or more child-friendly spaces such as playrooms). All this information affects decision-making about participation for children and their parents and should therefore be emphasized.

Challenge 2 – Progress of the Research

A key challenge in this research phase is to avoid the influence of power inequalities, both among participants and between participants and researchers, while enabling participants to take the initiative in setting research topics and developing discussions (Chen, 2021).

To address this challenge, the three studies generally grouped participants by similar attributes, such as age, gender, and background, and conducted the research not through one-on-one interviews between the researcher and the child, but rather by using group discussions among children with similar attributes. This approach enabled: (1) children to feel secure within the group and decide themselves whether or not to speak; (2) group work to center on conversation among the children, rather than being directed by adult facilitator—allowing them to support and understand each other, build a shared foundation, and express their thoughts and experiences more freely; and (3) a mitigation power imbalance between adult researchers and child participants (Willow, 2001, pp. 79-81; Sutton et al., 2007, pp. 4,6; Farthing, 2016, pp. 108, 110-112).

Building on this foundation, additional methods, such as the “depersonalized” approach and the “reflexive” approach were employed to protect children from the emotional harm that could result from the stigma associated with poverty and to enable children to raise research topics of their own initiative and interest.

For example, [Example 1] used a “depersonalized” approach, conducting the survey in deprived areas and not directly asking questions about the children’s personal living situation. Instead, the researchers prepared a set of core themes related to children’s daily lives. Researchers initiated discussions with younger children using the curious puppet. Through the puppet, questions such as “Are there things that children can’t do if their families don’t have much money?” were posed, allowing the children to express their thoughts more comfortably. For the older groups, a group discussion was conducted to address similar themes.

[Example 2] also used a “depersonalized” approach, in which children were not directly asked about the impact of poverty on their own lives, but instead had group discussions about what was most important to them. Within this approach, a reflexive and comparative approach was also adopted to introduce the notion of “poverty” into the research. For example, children living in housing estates identified street safety as an important topic. When this topic was discussed with private schoolchildren, they highlighted the importance of their houses and personal space but did not mention safety. This response was then presented to the estate children who became aware of the differences between the two groups. The estate children interpreted that the private schoolchildren did not mention safety as a sign that they lived in a “nicer” area and therefore were “posh”. Similarly, when safety appeared on the estate children’s list, private schoolchildren interpreted this as an indication that estate children lived in “rough” areas and were poor. In this way, the terms “poverty” and “poshness” were introduced into the fieldwork by the children. These words were initially used for “others” rather than the children themselves at the beginning of the study, but later in the study, the children began to draw on them in their own lives and explored the topics more deeply (Sutton et al., 2007).

[Example 3], a continuation of [Example 1] and [Example 2], was also conducted in deprived areas and adopted a depersonalized approach, avoided the use of the term “poverty”, instead, children in each group began by discussing what it was like “on average”, and through arts and crafts, a number of “average young” characters were constructed. Using a reflexive approach, the research was developed as children talking back and forth between “me” or “my story” and these “average young” characters (Farthing, 2016, p. 110).

Additionally, it is essential to communicate the purpose and central themes of the research to participants before initiating a participatory poverty study. Without this, participants may be unclear about “what to talk about”, which may restrict their participation (Chen, 2022). The three previous studies discussed in this paper did not specifically show how these details were communicated to the participants. However, in [Example 2], there is a statement that the researchers began each research session by repeating the purpose of the research (Sutton et al., 2007). Due to the interactive nature of participatory poverty research (Chen, 2022), the research process is inherently developmental and evolving. Providing an explanation of the research at the beginning of each session allowed for a repeated presentation of the study’s purpose and themes to the children while also ensuring “ongoing consent” by checking that the children were still willing to continue to take part (Sutton et al., 2007, p. 6). Here, “ongoing consent” is very important. As the British Psychological Society’s BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021, pp. 16, 20) notes, seeking consent from a child is “not just a paper exercise.” Researchers must pay careful attention to how unequal power relations between adults and children may affect the voluntariness of children’s consent, and be sensitive to children’s nonverbal signs of unwillingness to consent or to continue participating, including “looking away, not making eye contact, becoming silent or monosyllabic in replies, withdrawing into self or nervous fidgeting”. These signs should be treated as possible indications that “a child is unwilling to consent or to continue participation”.

Challenge 3 – Output of Research Findings

Participants should not just be “tools” from which researchers extract sad poverty stories. Instead, a fundamental principle of participatory poverty research is that participants are empowered to have more control over the research process, to review the findings organized by the researchers (Chen, 2021), and to influence how those findings are used (Chen, 2022).

In response, all three previous studies discussed in this study were implemented in ways suitable for children, allowing the research findings to be fed back to them. Then, the children had the opportunity to review and confirm the content. For example, in [Example 1], two months after completing the survey, a letter and a leaflet summarizing the main messages were sent to the children. For the younger children, letters were sent to their adult “gatekeepers”, and feedback was provided to the children through these gatekeepers (Willow, 2001, p. 79). Regarding this practice in [Example 1], it should be emphasized that this feedback method may also raise ethical concerns. For example, in the case of children being raised in institutional care, if research topics concerning the institution or its staff are discussed and unfavorable comments are made about either party, there is a risk that the children may be exposed to disadvantages. Alternatively, if children themselves believe that there is such a risk, they may not be able to speak their minds in the first place. Such a dilemma is not limited to participatory poverty research. In certain situations, it may also constitute a challenge in other qualitative research methods, such as interviews and observational studies. In response to this issue, the Ethical Guidelines 2021 for Good Research Practice by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK (ASA) emphasize that researchers “should be wary of inadvertently disturbing the relationship between subjects and gatekeepers since that will continue long after the researcher has left the field” (ASA, p.

4). Returning to the examples of feedback practices, in [Example 2], after the survey was completed, the children were brought together again, and the researcher presented them with a set of preliminary findings summarized in three concise PowerPoint slides. Therefore, the children were able to confirm whether the researcher's interpretation of the findings was correct. This facilitated further discussion of the topics raised by the children and enabled them to challenge the researcher's analysis. The children's feedback and comments from this part were incorporated into the final research report.

In [Example 3], particularly in the later stages of the study when policy proposals were discussed, all groups expressed their desire to present the policies they had developed to politicians. As a result, with arrangements made by the researchers, the children were able to meet with 16 Members of Parliament and five local councilors and hold a policy proposal presentation at Parliament. There, the politicians were not allowed to leave the meeting unless they committed to taking some form of action on the children's proposals. In this way, enabling children to present the policy proposals they developed during the research sessions to national and local politicians has extended the potential of participatory poverty research from "understanding poverty" to becoming part of an "anti-poverty movement" and has also had an empowering effect on children (Farthing, 2016, pp. 110–111). This example also shows that such a high level of "participation is difficult to achieve without the support and cooperation of the adults involved, such as the researchers and national and local legislators. How the "degree of participation" changes with such collaborative relationships between "adults" and "children", and which degree of "participation" can be described as "genuine participation", is examined in detail in R. A. Hart's (1992) "The Ladder of Children's Participation". However, as Hart (2008) himself later notes, simply aiming for "higher levels of participation" and forcing children to participate may raise ethical issues. Instead, what is considered more meaningful is "appropriate participation" that aligns with the child's developmental stage and social position.

As described above, the output stage of research findings played an important role in ensuring children's participation. By sharing findings with children, the three studies enabled them to review, confirm, and sometimes challenge the researchers' interpretations, thereby allowing the accuracy and validity of the results to be examined from children's perspectives. Reviewing and commenting on the findings also generated new insights and requests from the children, supporting the continuation and further development of the ongoing research process. At the same time, this stage requires careful ethical consideration, particularly when feedback is mediated through adults or gatekeepers or when children are encouraged to take part in higher levels of participation. Thus, the output of findings in participatory poverty research should be understood not simply as the dissemination of results, but as a continuing process of participation, confirmation, and ethical negotiation.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study examined the challenges of implementing participatory poverty research with children by analyzing overseas studies using Chen's implementation framework for participatory poverty research as an analytical tool to explore how children's participation was ensured throughout the research process. This section summarizes the previous discussion and then elaborates on two additional issues that emerged from it.

First, in recruiting participants, effective communication and arrangement of a supportive environment were key issues. In the prior research discussed in this study, researchers conveyed information to children by obtaining the assistance of intermediaries trusted by the child participants or by the schools, institutions, or group organizations with which the children had interacted previously and obtained consent and assent from both children's guardians and children themselves. In particular, it was examined that by taking into account the circumstances in which the children are placed and utilizing methods appropriate to their attributes, a safe and comfortable environmental setting, such as selecting an accessible location and arranging a suitable schedule that made participation easier for children, and also by clearly explaining these arrangements to both the children and their guardians, this helped to obtain informed consent and assent successfully.

Second, regarding the progress of the research, the main issue is how to avoid power inequalities between the children themselves and between the child participants and the adult researchers during the research process, and to enable children to raise topics on their own initiative. To address this challenge, previous studies grouped children with similar attributes and employed group discussion methods. Using "depersonalized" and "reflexive" approaches, the children could raise topics of shared interest and develop discussions accordingly. Ethical considerations were addressed by explaining the survey again at the beginning of each session, especially when the survey was divided into stages over a longer period of time; confirming consent or assent for continued participation in the survey as it progressed; and being aware of any changes in the child's intentions.

Third, the output of research findings was considered. In previous studies, research findings were fed back to the children in some form to check the content before dissemination. In addition, as seen in [Example 3], the children's requests and preferences were also listened to in relation to how the research findings should be handled. This approach not only ensured that the findings reflected the children's perspective and agency but also enabled the research to be further developed into a movement with broader and deeper impact.

The above section examined the main challenges in conducting participatory poverty research with children, focusing on three main stages of the research process: "recruitment of participants", "progress of the research", and "output of research findings". However, at the practical level, when multiple elements, such as "poverty", "research", "children", and "participation" intersect, challenges cannot always be neatly divided into distinct stages of the research process, as many of them may span multiple stages. The following are two additional points that emerged through the examination of the above-mentioned challenges in this paper, which I would like to discuss as supplementary considerations.

The first point concerns the issue of "Who is considered as poor?". This issue spans both the "recruitment of participants" and the "progress of the research" stage. First, when recruiting participants, one question often asked by cooperating individuals or organizations and by potential participants is who qualifies as "poor". Moreover, from an ethical standpoint, it is also necessary to clearly explain to the participants when they actually come to participate in the survey for the first time what the survey is about, what the subject matter is to be discussed, and again what role the children who participated are expected to play in the survey. In this regard, Chen (2022) did not set a poverty criterion for participation, instead allowing participation from those who felt they were "economically struggling" or "experiencing poverty" in their daily lives. The reason is to avoid a situation where a preconceived notion of poverty constructed by the researchers themselves defines poverty from the outset. However, when conducting research with children, inviting them to participate under the label of "poverty" carries the risk of emotional harm due to the stigma associated with poverty. To avoid this, previous studies have recruited children in deprived areas and conducted the research there. This is certainly one way research can be achieved with a high proportion of "children in poverty" participating. However, researchers must recognize that not all participants identify themselves as poor (Sime, 2008, p. 66). Silently treating children as poor may lead to unwanted self-perceptions and may cause them to feel that they are being treated unfairly.

The second point concerns the issue of double power inequality within the research between adults and children, and between researchers and participants (who are the people in poverty). This issue exists not only in the "progress of research" phase as mentioned above, but also in the "recruitment of participants" and "output of research findings" stages. First, at the participant recruitment stage, researchers usually need to obtain consent from adult gatekeepers before approaching their children. However, under these circumstances, ethical issues arise when gatekeepers do not allow (or push) children to participate in research, even if the children themselves are willing to (or not) participate. To address this issue, it is essential for researchers to make appropriate arrangements such as providing fully accessible information and presenting themes in ways that children can understand. At the same time, children should be supported in understanding the nature of the research and their role within it, so that they can make their own decisions, express themselves, and act autonomously (RA Thompson, 1992, p. 60). Then, in the stage of outputting the survey's findings, especially during the interpretation of survey data, the power inequality between children and adults and between people living in poverty and professional researchers becomes particularly pronounced (James, 1995). The ethical principles of participatory research call for avoiding excessive intervention by researchers and instead encourage children to interpret their own words. In order to achieve the "support" and "avoidance of excessive intervention" described here, as pointed out by Chen (2024), efforts to organize inclusion and broader participation must be accompanied by the recognition that children are experts in the child world and people in poverty are experts in poverty, as well as by awareness of and respect for children as autonomous individuals capable of forming and expressing their own views. This awareness is considered a key approach to mitigating the ethical issues brought about by the aforementioned "double power inequality" (Morrow & Richards 1996:99–100).

As discussed above, if the challenges are addressed with appropriate awareness, children can be protected from adverse effects while engaging with the sensitive topic of "poverty," and the research can become a positive and empowering participatory experience for them. However, two further issues, often mentioned in the ethical guidelines of academic associations, require continued attention. For example, the Code of Ethics and Conduct (the Japanese Psychological Association, 2009, pp. 38–39) stipulates that (1) when conducting research involving a support relationship, researchers must not use that relationship to pressure adults or children into cooperating with the research. Since participants,

particularly those receiving welfare services, are often in a vulnerable position relative to the researcher, sufficient information and time must be provided to enable them to make voluntary decisions. The Code also states that (2) when a research participant is assessed as being in a situation requiring special assistance, priority must be given to providing that assistance over the research, and the research should be resumed only after adequate support measures are in place. Particularly with regard to the latter issue (2), researchers may face a dilemma over whether to keep confidential what the participant, especially when the participant is a child, has disclosed, or to report it to relevant individuals or agencies. In response to this dilemma, Morrow and Richards (1996, p. 98) suggest that “One of the most effective responses in such situations is for the researcher to discuss the matter with the child and work together to determine what course of action the child prefers”. None of the previous studies discussed in this paper included these relevant situations. Therefore, these two issues should be continuously explored in future research practice.

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Author Brief Bio

Sheng CHEN is an assistant professor at Junior College Division, Shokei University, Japan. He obtained his Ph.D. from Hokkaido University. His research interests include poverty, social policy, and social justice. He is an Advanced Social Researcher accredited by the Japanese Association for Social Research and a certified Social Worker.

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