

<教育報告>

Problems That Married Filipino Women in Saitama City Encountered From the Perspective of Coping Experiences and Social Network

<Team No.3>

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さいたま市在住のフィリピン人既婚女性が直面している問題 —対処経験とソーシャルネットワークの視点から—

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I . INTRODUCTION

1. Foreign residents in Japan

A drastic surge of inflow of people across the borders has been observed in Japan in recent years¹⁾. The inflow of people from Southeast Asia started in late 1970s and has increased since then. On the basis of the statistical data from immigration bureau, the number of foreign residents has reached 1.97 million and accounts for 1.6 percent of total Japanese population in 2005. Most of the immigrants (66.2%) came from Asian countries and the proportion of immigrants from the Philippines to the total immigrant population from Asia reached 11.6%²⁾. In Saitama city, the population of the Filipino was 1,841 (12.1% of the foreign residents)³⁾.

2. Problems which foreign residents faced

Being in a foreign country, it is imaginable that foreign residents have difficulties/problems in their life during their survival ranging from acclimatization to acculturation⁴⁾. In Saitama prefecture, 39 foreign residents who participated in online monitoring system for foreign residents, 14, 12 and 10 of them had troubles in child's

education and raising, jobs and living conditions, respectively. Even though foreign residents in Saitama prefecture had problems, 73% of them didn't utilize the consultation service counter of Saitama prefecture government because of inaccessibility and lack of information about the services. Most of them relied on family or friends when they had problems⁵⁾.

3. International marriage

Accompanied by increasing the number of foreign residents, international marriages have dramatically increased in Japan⁶⁾. The second biggest group among them is Filipino-Japanese couples after Chinese-Japanese couples⁷⁾. Those who were married to Japanese men and resided in Japan are expected to adapt to the Japanese culture and customs by the family members and Japanese society⁶⁾. Some Filipino women married to Japanese men who were initially working at night pubs as talents suffered discrimination because of their background⁷⁾. Hence, it was presumed that they have many more difficulties compared to other registered foreigners married to Japanese men.

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4. Objectives

We needed to tackle the problems which foreign residents have faced or are facing in their married life and make effort to improve their life in Japan as well as to aim at creation of a society which Japanese and foreigners can live together well. The specific objectives were; (1) To find out the problems which Filipino women married to Japanese men have faced/ are facing since they got married, (2) To find out their coping behaviors in solving their problems, (3) To find out the social network they utilized in mitigating their problems, (4) To add some practical suggestions to improve their living status.

In this study we defined the social network as a social structure between actors mostly individuals or organizations that Filipino women married to Japanese men utilize to cope with their difficulties in life in Japan.

II . METHODOLOGY

1. Target group

Target group was Filipino woman married to Japanese men in Saitama city. We interviewed Filipino women who attended Tanpopo-no-kai Japanese language class (7 persons), Urawa catholic church (7 persons) and who worked at the catering company (6 persons) and as a counselor of the city (1 person). Finally, a total number of 18 Filipino women were included in our study.

2. Study design

A descriptive study was conducted.

3. Data collection

We conducted a descriptive study by means of face-to-face interview using a set of questions. The questions included the life profile of the Filipino women, the major problems she had faced or was facing in her married life in Japan, her coping mechanism and the social network she utilized in mitigating her problems and the desired support that she thought was necessary from the prefecture government and other organizations to facilitate her coping.

These questions were pre-tested on three Filipino women married to Japanese men.

4. Data analysis

Data categorization, coding was done and a master sheet was made. Edited data were entered into Microsoft Excels and imported to SPSS statistical software for analysis.

III . RESULT

1. Background characteristics

A total of 18 Filipino women married to Japanese men were interviewed. The age of the respondents ranged between 25-46 years with average of 36.3 ± 6.2 . Two thirds of the respondents had secondary education, while one third had higher education. Out of 18 respondents, ten were employed and eight were unemployed. Regarding duration of stay, two thirds of the respondents had stayed in Japan for over 10 years (Table 1).

Table 1 Distribution of respondents by background characteristics

	Background characteristics	Number of respondents (N=18)	%
Education	High school	11	(61.0)
	University/College	7	(39.0)
Occupation	Part time employed	8	(44.5)
	Full time employed	2	(11.0)
	Unemployed	8	(44.5)
Duration of stay	0-4 years	4	(22.0)
	5-9 years	2	(11.0)
	10-14 years	7	(39.0)
	15-19 years	5	(28.0)
Number of children	One	3	(17.0)
	Two	9	(50.0)
	Three	1	(5.5)
	None	5	(27.7)
Family structure	Living with husband	5	(28.0)
	Living with husband and children	9	(50.0)
	Living husband, children and in laws	2	(11.0)
	Living with others	2	(11.0)

Age difference between husband and wife ranged between 2-20 years. For ten respondents, the age difference was greater than 10 years. Husbands of all respondents were employed, mainly as company employees (13 out of 18) and only five people were self-employed.

2. Problems encountered

Table 2 shows the problems that the respondents encountered during their stay in Japan since they got married. The major problems that the study population had experienced were language and communication (n=15), relation with family (n=8), loneliness and homesick (n=7), difference of value and custom (n=6), and health service related/ health conditions/ financial problems/cold weather (n=3), in descending order.

Among the problems mentioned by respondents, the numbers of unsolved problems (n=37) were more than that of solved problems (n=24). Regarding language and communication problems and relation with family, the

percentage of respondents who could not solve the problems was higher than those who could solve them. All the problems related to health services, discrimination and cold weather, which were not manageable, remained unsolved. From the problems that were manageable only financial problem remained unsolved.

Table 2 Summary of problems that are solved and unsolved (multiple answers)

Category of problems	Number of respondents (N=18)	Is it still a problem?		
		Yes	No	% of un-solved
Language and communication	15	12	8	(60.0)
Relation with family	8	5	4	(55.5)
Loneliness and homesickness	7	2	2	(28.5)
Difference in value and custom	6	3	5	(12.5)
Health service related problem	3	4	0	(100)
Health conditions	3	2	2	(50.0)
Financial problem	3	2	0	(50.0)
Cold weather	3	2	0	(100)
Discrimination	2	2	0	(100)
Child raising	2	1	1	(50.0)
Others*	4	2	2	(100)
Total		37	24	(56.1)

*Others refer to visa system, too much workload, getting a job, estrangement of Japanese society.

Note: In case of loneliness and homesickness and financial problem there were 3 and 2 missing values respectively.

3. Coping mechanisms

Table 3 shows the corresponding actions taken by respondents those who solved the problem in comparison with those who could not solve. As shown in the table, for language and communication problem, the type of coping actions between those who could and could not solve the problem were similar. The only difference was that most of the respondents who currently had language problems were more likely to join Japanese language class and do self study.

Among the respondents who had problems related to difference in values and customs, who tried to understand and adjust to Japanese customs were more likely to solve their problems when compared with those who continued to do it in their own way.

Concerning the problems related to the relationship with family, loneliness and homesickness, and Health service related problems, there was no difference in type and frequency of coping actions between those who could and could not solve the problem.

Table 3 Major coping actions for problem solving (multiple answers)

Category of problems	Is it still a problem?		Number of coping actions
	Yes	No	
Language and communication (n=15)			
Asked for help	5	4	9
Joined Japanese class	7	2	9
Self study	6	2	8
Initiated communication	0	2	2
Organized Japanese language	1	0	1
Did nothing	1	1	2
Relation with family (n=8)			
Talked with someone	4	0	4
Pray to God	1	1	2
Be patient/Tried to get along with	2	0	2
Invited sister from the Philippines	0	1	1
Loneliness and Home sick (n=7)			
Called family in Philippine	1	1	2
Sing song and dance/Karaoke	1	1	2
Saw friends/Moved to where Filipinos were	1	1	2
Watched TV	0	1	1
Communicated with neighbors	1	0	1
Difference of value and custom (n=6)			
Tried to adjust to different custom	0	2	2
Learned Japanese customs/cooking	0	2	2
Talked with someone	1	0	1
Used Philippine ways (child raising and cooking)	1	1	2
Health service related problems (n=3)			
Looked for female obstetrician/gynecologist	2	0	2
Tried to understand the health system	1	0	1

Table 4 shows the comparison of the number of helpers between those who could and could not solve the problems for the three most frequently mentioned problems. The table shows that, those that could not solve the problem had more helpers on average than those who could solve.

Table 4 Number of helpers and solved/unsolved problems

Factor	Is it still problem?		
	Yes	No	
Number of helpers	None	0	0
	One	4	3
	Two	3	3
	Three	8	15
	Four	12	0
	Five	6	3
	Six	4	0
Total	37	24	*

*p<0.05 Kendall's tau

4. Social network

Data in Table 5 addresses social network of respondents and what kind of supports they got for solving their problems. As shown in the table, the three most important helpers were husbands (n=19) followed by Filipino friends (n=18) and Japanese friends (n=9). "Nobody helped me" or "I solved the problem by myself" were rather frequently mentioned by respondents (n=16).

Table 5 Social network of Filipina

Who helped you	Problems							Number of help
	Language & communication	Relation with family in law	Loneliness & homesick	Difference of values & custom	Health services	Health condition	Financial	
Husband	11	1		3	1	2	1	19
Filipino Friend	7	4	3	1	2		1	18
Japanese Friend	4	3	1	1				9
Family in law		2		1				3
Family in the Philippines		2	3					5
Children	3	1						4
Volunteer in Tanpopo	4	1		1				6
Japanese class	3							3
Mother at school	2							2
Boss	1							1
Neighbors	1		1					2
Health workers	1				1	1		3
Priest		1						1
Karaoke class			1					1
Myself/nobody	5	2	1	4	1	2	1	16
Total	42	17	10	11	5	5	3	93

Table 6 shows that husbands, Filipino friends and Japanese friends were involved in providing almost all kinds of help mentioned by respondents. Volunteers in Tanpopo-no-kai were also other important helpers who provided information, emotional support and other assistance in addition to teaching Japanese language. However, we could not find other Japanese classes fulfilled functions other than teaching Japanese.

Table 6 Type of support vs. helpers

Helper	Type of help					
	Information	Advice	Emotional	Language	Teaching	Others
Husband	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Filipino Friend	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Japanese Friend		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family in law		✓				✓
Family in the Philippines		✓	✓			✓
Children				✓	✓	
Volunteer in Tanpopo-no-kai	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Other Japanese class					✓	
Others*	✓	✓		✓	✓	

*Others refer to health workers, priest, neighbors etc.

5. Factors related with satisfaction

With regard to respondents' overall satisfaction level in their marriage life, majority of the respondents (72.3%) were satisfied with their life in Japan. Only 16.6% of the respondents were not satisfied, while the remaining 11.1% of the respondents could not tell whether they were satisfied or not.

Table 7 shows the level of satisfaction of the respondents in relation to language problems with the husband at the time of marriage and the number of problems they had. The trend in the table shows that most of the respondents were satisfied in their life although they mentioned many problems.

Table 7 Problems and level of satisfaction (N=18)

Problems		Level of satisfaction				
		Very much satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Not satisfied at all	Cannot tell
Language problem at the time of marriage	Yes	1	8	1	2	1
	No	2	2	0	0	1
Number of problems	None	1	0	0	0	0
	Two	0	0	0	1	0
	Three	0	2	0	1	2
	Four	1	3	1	0	0
	Five	1	5	0	0	0

IV . DISCUSSION

1. Problems

The major problems that the study population had experienced were language and communication, relation with family, loneliness and homesick, difference of value and custom, and health service related/ health conditions/ financial problems/cold weather, in descending order.

Among the major problems identified, language and communication by far posed the most formidable challenge to the Filipino women as they had experienced difficulties in communicating with husbands, mothers-in-law and neighbors, at health facilities and schools, which surely made their daily life rather hard.

In general, problems still unsolved outnumbered problems solved. As for the language and communication, two thirds of respondents have stayed was more than 10 years, however 15 respondents out of 18 said they had the problem. This indicates that their longer duration of stay could not necessarily eliminate language problem, which was also observed by another study⁹⁾. It is probably due to some reasons; first, it usually takes a considerable time to master Japanese, a language totally different from both English and Philippine; and second, some of respondents, who can handle a daily conversation without problems, said that they still have difficulties in talking to their senior in honorific words, reading and writing Kanji in formal documents, understanding technical terms and expressing emotion and feelings.

2. Coping

According to type of problems they had faced with, coping behavior which Filipino women took varied from trying to solve them by herself to asking help from somebody. Concerning the problems of difference in values and customs, some of the respondents could solve problems by coping actions such as learning and trying to adjust herself to Japanese customs but others those who tried their own ways could not.

Some problems were still unsolved because they either needed time to be mitigated their causes (for example, fostering language proficiency) or were hard to be changed by individual efforts (for example, health services and discrimination). It is presumed that these problems require outside assistance, since they are not likely to be solved by individual actions alone.

3. Social network

Overall, in terms of frequency of support offered to the study population, husbands ranked first, followed by Filipino friends, myself/nobody, Japanese friends, and Japanese language classes (Tanpopo-no-kai and others). Husbands, Filipino friends and Japanese friends are considered the most important actors, providing almost all kinds of support (information, advice, emotional support, language-related assistance, teaching Japanese and custom and others). Volunteers of language class Tanpopo-no-kai were other important helpers offering information,

emotional support and other assistance in addition to teaching Japanese. However, we could not find other Japanese classes fulfilled functions other than teaching Japanese.

It is observed that those who have unsolved problems tend to have more helpers, but the majority of people who need help receive it from their family and friends circles, and with the exception of Japanese language classes, their connection with persons/organizations outside the families and friends circle were limited. It is expected that expanding their social network play a critical role in eliminating the risk factors that may negatively affect their current satisfaction with life in Japan.

4. Life satisfaction

Contrary to our assumption, the majority (72%) of the Filipino women were satisfied with their life in Japan although they have experienced some difficulties. However, the question on life satisfaction was asked in comparison with their expectation before their arrival to Japan and not in relation with specific problems, and therefore the satisfaction measured in the study may not be truly reflective of the Filipino women's actual well-being. Thus it is expected that studies will be conducted to reveal the relationship between problems and satisfaction of the study population.

5. Limitations of the study

1. The sample of the study may not be representative of the total population of Filipino women married to Japanese men in the Saitama city because random sampling was unable to be employed due to the nature of the study. Therefore the study results cannot be generalized.
2. Contrary to our expectation, the majority of the interviewees preferred Japanese as means of communication. This made our interview a little difficult because we prepared our questions in English and five foreign researchers out of the nine team members were unable to conduct interview in Japanese.

Despite the limitations, we believe the pioneering value of the study by shedding light on Filipino women's married life in Japan with focus on their coping mechanism and social networks.

V . CONCLUSION

1. For the study population the major problems encountered were language and communication, relation with family, loneliness and homesick, difference of value and custom, and health service related/health conditions/financial problems/cold weather, in descending order.

2. Outside assistance may be necessary to tackle the problems which Filipino women's coping actions have been unable to solve such as language and communication, financial problems, health service-related problems, and discrimination.
3. It is observed that those who have more problems tend to have more helpers. The majority of people who need help receive it from their family and friends circles, and with the exception of Japanese language classes, their connection with persons or organizations outside the circles is limited. It is expected that expanding their social networks plays a critical role in eliminating the risk factors that may negatively affect their current satisfaction with life in Japan.
4. The majority of the Filipino women were satisfied with their life in Japan although they have experienced difficulties. However, this fails to be conclusive because the measurement of satisfaction may not reflect their actual level of satisfaction. Thus it is expected that studies will be conducted to reveal the relationship between problems and satisfaction of the study population.

Ⅵ . RECOMMENDATION

1. It is important to increase awareness that language and communication is the most important and unsolved problem that warrants the attention of the related organizations and groups (the city of Saitama, Non-Government Organization and health authorities, community, etc.)
2. Japanese language classes were recognized as important social network besides family and friends, thus these intermediates enhance information exchange in both ways to make bridge between the city government and Filipino women.
3. Foreigners who are currently attending Tanpopo-no-kai should advocate the importance of these social networks to friends such as cultural exchange, information provision, emotional support and advice aside from learning Japanese language.
4. There should be effective information dissemination about available services for foreigners, and provision

of hot line service, which can provide information and counseling.

5. These intermediates (Tanpopo-no-kai, other Japanese language classes, Public Health Nurse) need to develop mutual network to exchange their experiences and information.
6. Access to translation and interpretation services and provision of forms and documents written in English or in Hiragana should be increased in medical facilities, schools, city government offices and other institutions.

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