



Survey on COVID-19 Crisis and Filipinos in Kansai

SUMMARY REPORT

June
2020

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Overview of Filipinos in Kansai

As of June 2019, there are more than 20,000 Filipinos residing in Kansai. They started arriving in Kansai in big number from 1970s as migrant workers, students and spouses; started to raise Japanese-Filipino families from late 1980s; and started to establish communities and organizations from 1980s.

Data published by the Japanese government show that in 2019, Osaka prefecture had 8,896 Filipino residents, Hyogo prefecture with 4,979, while the prefectures of Shiga and Kyoto had

* The contents of this report were presented in a webinar entitled “COVID-19 Crisis and Foreign Residents in Japan – Impacts on Filipinos in Kansai,” held on 12 June 2020 and sponsored by Ryukoku University Global Affairs Research Center (GARC). A total of more than 70 people participated in the webinar using zoom. The authors are grateful to the officers of the Philippine Community Coordinating Council (PCCC) for their assistance in administering the survey.

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almost the same number (2,571 and 2,441 respectively). Nara and Wakayama prefectures had the least number of Filipino residents (802 and 721 respectively).

There have been notable changes in the character of the Filipino population in Kansai in the past 30 years, as an offshoot of both Japan's immigration policies and economic circumstances. The number of widowed, separated and divorced Filipinos started to rise likely from the 1990s. Also, many Filipinos of Japanese descent (*Nikkeijin*) began to arrive around that time with long-term status of residence. By late 1990s and in 2000s, the children of the *Nikkeijins* started to enter the workforce and raise their own families.

On the other hand, the inflow of young Filipino workers started from around mid- to late 1990s, first as technical intern trainees, then as Japanese language students from late 1990s, and also as caregivers under the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) from 2009. Subsequently, more young Filipinos arrived to study Japanese language and caregiving from mid-2010s.

Based on data from Japanese institutions providing support to non-Japanese residents and on research reports,¹ Filipinos in Kansai and in Japan in general, have been facing a number of issues such as divorce (including fraudulent divorce), child custody, domestic violence, Japanese citizenship, unpaid wages, other labor problems, and human rights concerns. These issues are likely exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus the need to urgently provide, particularly the following groups - the widowed, separated and divorced Filipinos and their children; the very young children who arrived in Japan because of their Japanese citizenship or qualification to become Japanese citizen; the OFWs and students; and also the Filipinos who reached the age of retirement - with various support programs tailored to their needs and circumstances.

Description of the Survey

In order to capture the trends on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Filipino residents, particularly those living in Kansai, a survey was conducted via google form through snowball sampling method. The survey results were meant to be disseminated to stakeholders both in

¹ See for example, the Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis website "*Gaikokujin Soudan Are-Kore*" (in Japanese) (http://www.a-atoms.info/exchange/column_category.php?c=2) featuring articles on issues faced by Filipino residents and Takahata, Sachi (2012), 「在日フィリピン人研究の課題：結婚移民の高齢化を控えて」 (in Japanese) "Issues for the Future Study on Filipino Migrants in Japan towards the Aging of the First Generation: A Review of Literature since the 2000's" 『理論と動態』 (*Social Theory and Dynamics*), Vol. 5, pp. 60-78.

Japan and the Philippines to hopefully provide the hints and bases in formulating steps and support to alleviate the conditions of the affected Filipino residents. The survey was administered in May 2020.

The survey comprised of questions on the following topics:

- Sources of information regarding COVID-19 crisis (top 3);
- Problems/concerns related to the COVID-19 crisis (multiple answers);
- Effects of COVID-19 crisis on employment conditions (multiple answers);
- Support in dealing with problems and concerns related to the COVID-19 crisis (top 3);
- Planned use of the 100,000 Yen government cash hand-out (top 3).

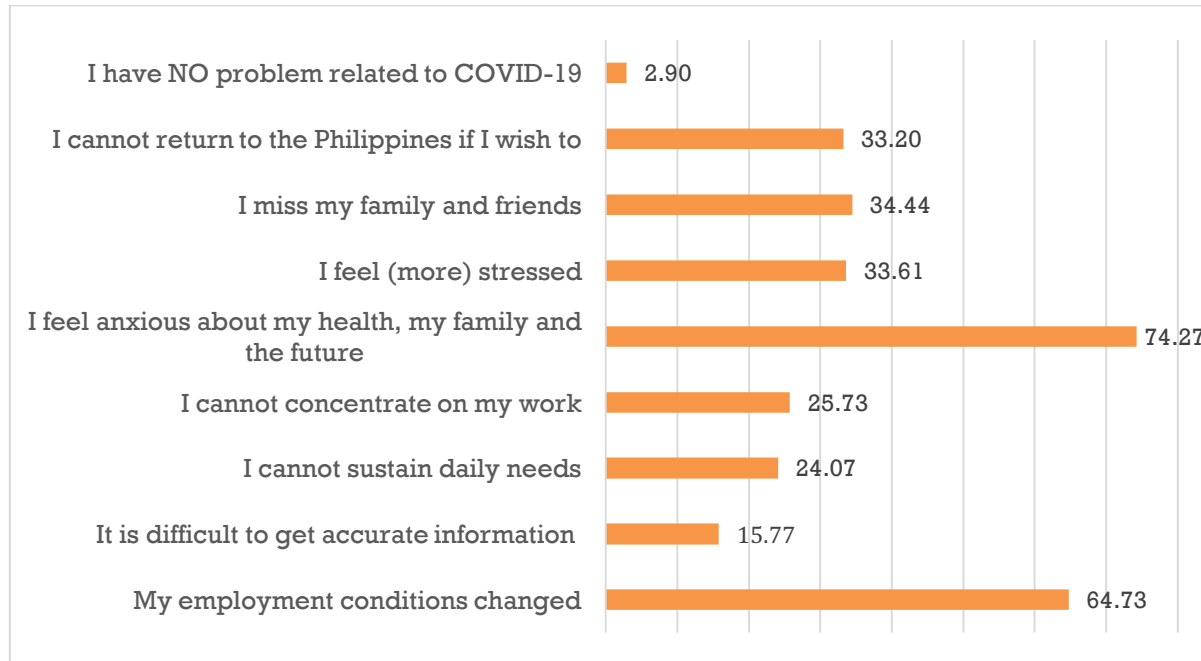
The 241 respondents included in this report have the following general profile:

1. In terms of place of residence: Osaka – 35%; Kyoto – 23%; Shiga – 21%; Nara – 11%; Hyogo – 6%; others and no answers – 4%;
2. In terms of status of residence (visa): permanent residents – 51%; long-term residents – 14%; working visa (not including technical intern trainees and designated activities) – 14%; technical intern trainees – 8%; and dependents of Japanese or foreign permanent residents – 9%;
3. In terms of employment – hospitality – 14%; care workers – 13%; English teachers – 10%; education/research development/ information technology – 9%; manufacturing – 8%; other sectors (full-time) – 18%; other sectors (part-time) – 21%; not employed/no answer – 7%.

Results of the Survey

The results reveal that the problems arising from COVID-19 crisis are not only economic but also psychological (see Figure 1 below). In terms of economic impact, 64.73% and 24.07% of the respondents identified change in employment conditions and inability to sustain daily needs respectively. On the other hand, psychological impacts were reflected in the choices of anxiety about health, family and future, as well as stress and lack of concentration at work which scored 74.27%, 33.61% and 25.73% of all respondents respectively. With regards to the other concerns, the respondents pointed out missing family (34.44%), problem of returning to the Philippines (33.20%), and lack of information about the pandemic (15.77%).

Figure 1: Problems/concerns related to COVID-19 Crisis (n=241, multiple answers)

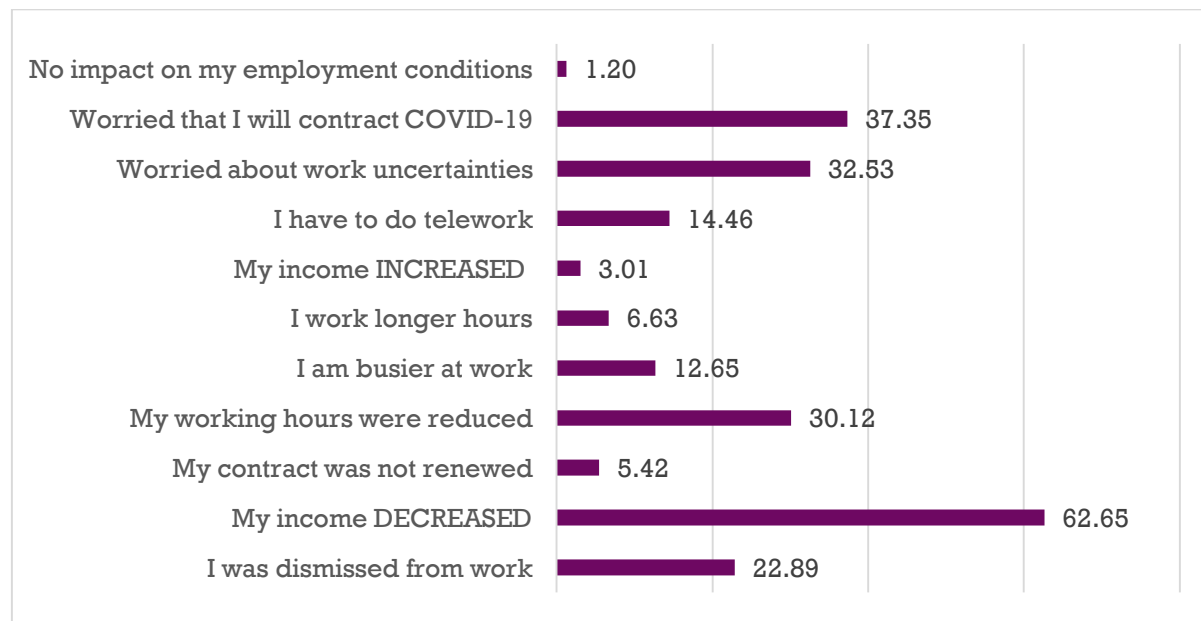


Source: Compiled by the authors.

Furthermore, when the respondents were classified based on their status of residence, it was revealed that long-term residents and dependents of Japanese nationals or permanent residents were most hardly hit economically in terms of changes in employment conditions (74.55%) and inability to sustain daily needs (34.55%), as compared to those with permanent residents and naturalized citizens and those in possession of working visas. Meanwhile, in terms of marital status, while married and never married Filipino residents registered the highest percentage of anxiety due to fear of COVID-19 infection (81.2% and 69.3% respectively), the divorced/widowed/separated Filipinos have the highest percentage of anxiety due to change in employment status (76%). These results emphasize the need to provide immediate assistance to those who belong to these marital and visa categories.

The adverse economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is clearly shown by the following responses: 62.65% had decreased income, 30.12% had reduced hours of work and 22.89% had been dismissed from work. Those who were not economically adversely affected are in much smaller percentages: 14.46% had to do telework; 12.65% got busier at work; 6.63% had longer work hours; and 3.01% had increased income.

Figure 2: Economic impact of COVID-19 crisis (n=166, multiple answers)



Note: The respondents include only those who chose “my employment status changed” or “I cannot sustain daily needs” in Figure 1.

Source: Compiled by the authors

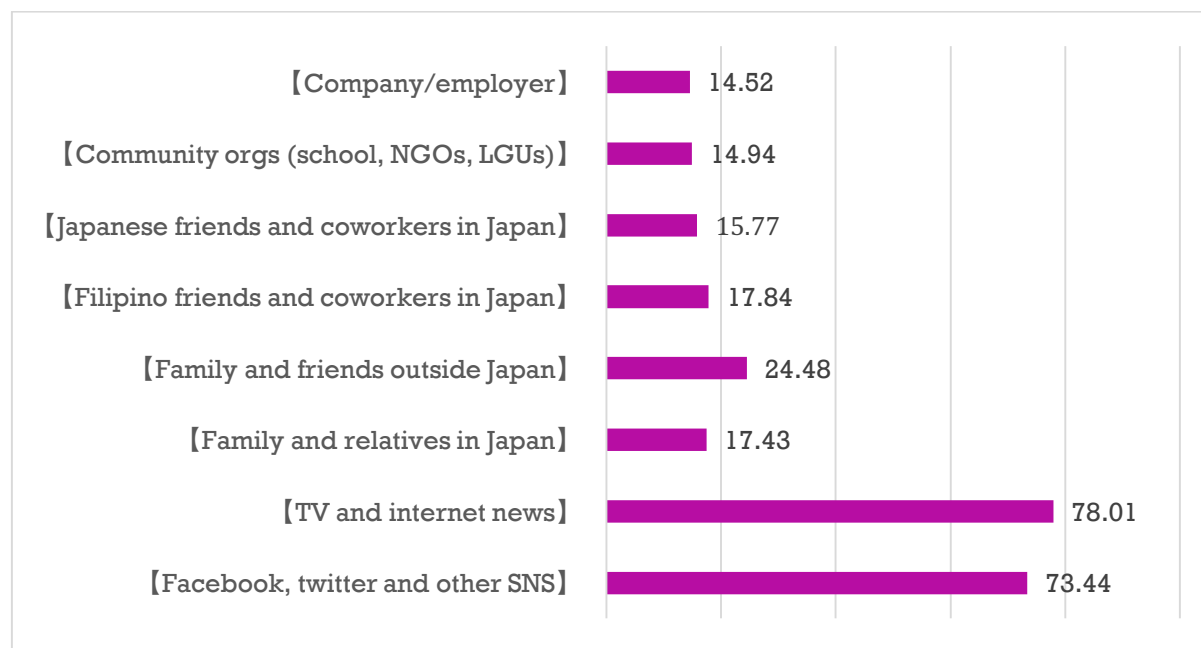
The extent of the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Filipino workers was confirmed in a survey undertaken by Dr Wako Asato of Kyoto University,² in which the respondents noted a decrease in their monthly income by 54% from an average of 137,000 Yen prior to COVID-19 to 63,000 Yen during the crisis. This rate of decrease is reported to be greater than the Chinese and Indonesian respondents in his survey. Furthermore, in general, part time workers and dispatched workers also experienced greater decrease in income compared to fulltime workers. In times of economic crisis, the type of work engaged in determines the extent of the amount of income lost, with those who are self-employed affected the most, followed by those in the services sector, particularly food and beverage, hotel and entertainment. Age and gender also seem to contribute to the extent of the effect, with older people and women experiencing greater income loss. In general, women migrants in the survey experience greater decrease in income due to COVID-19. Since many of the Filipino migrants are women, it can be inferred that the impact of the pandemic on Filipinos as a migrant group is strong.

Identifying the sources of anxiety and stress is an important first step in addressing them. In addition to economic uncertainties, we cite three interrelated issues – the lack of Japanese language proficiency, lack of support outside the family and limited information about the

² Source: Presentation by Dr. Wako Asato in the webinar entitled “COVID-19 Crisis and Foreign Residents in Japan – Impacts on Filipinos in Kansai,” held on 12 June 2020 and sponsored by Ryukoku University Global Affairs Research Center (GARC).

situation in the host country as contributing factors. The low proficiency in the Japanese language, especially reading and writing, can considerably limit not only their capacity to gather information written in the Japanese language but also their ability to apply for the Japanese government's financial and other support related to COVID-19 since application forms are in the Japanese language and the requirements are complicated even for the locals. The survey results revealed that television, internet and the social media are the main sources of information for the respondents (73.44% to 78.01%) (Figure 3). However, television would only apply to Japanese television stations, which are in Japanese language and likely not helpful to those who cannot understand the Japanese language well. Much more information in English and Filipino languages is derived from the internet and social media. Many respondents also get information from their family in the Philippines (24.48%). These suggest that the information that they have are about the situation in other countries rather than in Japan.

Figure 3: Major sources of information regarding COVID-19 crisis (n=241, top three sources)

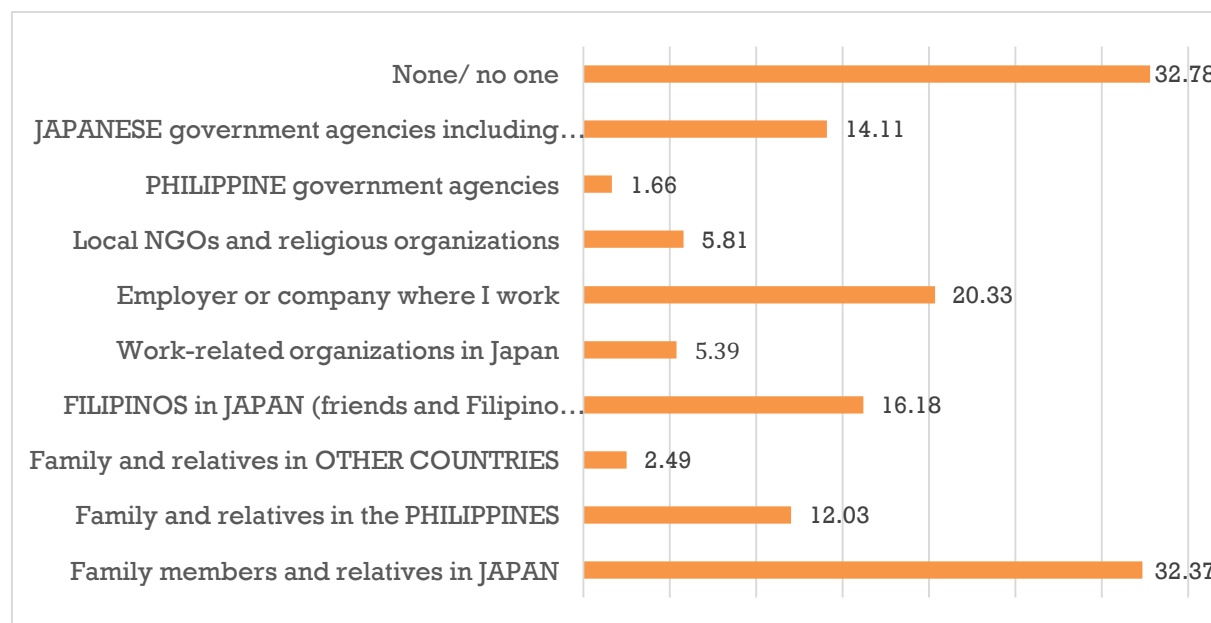


Source: Compiled by the authors

That in times of need there will be no one to depend on other than family members also contribute to their anxiety and stress. It was revealed in the survey that the respondents' main sources of support are not from domestic (Japanese) sources (except own family in Japan) (Figure 4). When asked about the major sources of support, the respondents' top answers (of almost equal percentage) were "the family and relatives in Japan" or "no one/none at all". By further categorizing them based on residence status, it appeared that the sources of support varied. Permanent and long-term residents would rely more on their family in Japan; while those with working visa depend on their employers (46.30%) and Filipino friends and organizations in Japan (33.33%). However, there is also a significant percentage covering all categories of

respondents who lack any source of support (permanent residents - 37.88%; long-term residents - 25.45%; working visa - 27.78%).

Figure 4: Major sources of support to address concerns related to COVID-19 crisis (n=241, top three)



Source: Compiled by the authors

While in general, local NGOs and religious organizations did not appear to be a source of support for the Filipinos during the first few months of the crisis, the *Minami Kodomo Kyoshitsu*, a local NGO, has become the pillar of support for Filipino and other foreigners in Shimanouchi, Chuo Ward in the city of Osaka. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, this group regularly held volunteer after-school classes for the children of Filipino descent, many of whom are from single-parent households, in the area.

In the presentation³ by Dr Megumi Hara of National Institute of Technology (Wakayama College) regarding the group's survey of foreign residents who attended the NGO's consultation event held on 30-31 May 2020, she highlighted the intense economic impact as parents lost their job in March 2020 and have been without any income since then. This led to their difficulty in paying house rent and supporting living expenses. Also, since the schools were closed, the children became frustrated, some even displayed violent behavior. She also noted that about 42% of

³ Source: Presentation by Dr Megumi Hara in the webinar entitled "COVID-19 Crisis and Foreign Residents in Japan – Impacts on Filipinos in Kansai," held on 12 June 2020 and sponsored by Ryukoku University Global Affairs Research Center (GARC).

the respondents were either very worried or worried about their livelihood; while 39% were not concerned about their health.

To avoid infection and heeding the call of the city government, the regular Tuesday classes had to be cancelled, but the group continued to look after the children and their families by providing free consultations, assistance in applying for financial support and subsidies from the government and NGOs, food support and online classes for the children.

Based on interviews with Filipino residents who participated in the consultation and other support programs, it can be seen how the NGO has been very helpful especially during the pandemic. Many of them were appreciative of the NGO staff who not only assisted them in providing online classes for the children and helped them alleviate their economic conditions by filling out the application forms for the subsidies and filing applications with the city government on their behalf and giving them food relief, but also assured them that they have an/a NGO to turn to in times of need. *Minami Kodomo Kyoshitsu* is a good example of how non-government entities in the host country can contribute in reducing the anxiety of migrants, especially in times of emergency.

Our results emphasize the need for economic AND psychological support, including the provision of helpful and timely information, for Filipino residents during the COVID-19 crisis, most especially for the most vulnerable groups identified in the survey. Addressing these needs is best done at the local community level where local governments and private institutions and organizations operate. Though resources are limited, access to these local services would help relieve to some extent the difficulties faced by Filipinos in Kansai, particularly the vulnerable ones. Support from the Philippine government is equally valuable and can very well complement the programs of the government of Japan in addressing the difficulties especially of the vulnerable groups.

The immediate task is to organize and disseminate accurate and timely information, especially regarding the available support services offered by the government (local and national) and other institutions in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, to the Filipino residents. Doing so will be the first step in mitigating not only the economic but also the psychological impacts of the current crisis.

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Ryukoku University
Global Affairs Research Centre (GARC)
WEBINAR

COVID-19 Crisis and Foreign Residents in Japan: Impacts on Filipinos in Kansai

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In this webinar, we examine the case of Filipino residents in Kansai region who are seriously affected by the COVID-19 crisis, especially the workers, and the single mothers and their children; and explore ways to provide and strengthen support to alleviate their conditions.

12 June 2020 (Fri.) 17:30-19:00 (JST)
Join us via Zoom (with Japanese/English interpretation)

Speakers:

Dr. Megumi Hara (National Institute of
Technology, Wakayama College)

Dr. Wako Asato (Kyoto University)

Atty. Jeff Plantilla (HURIGHTS Osaka)

Dr. Ma. Reinaruth Carlos
(Ryukoku University)

Pre-registration Required

Please register using the QR code
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