

## The Lifestyle and Daily Stresses of Filipino Migrant Workers : A Survey on Church Attendants in Greater Tokyo and Greater Seoul Area

Ohara-Hirano, Yuko  
Department of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Kyushu University

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## The Lifestyle and Daily Stresses of Filipino Migrant Workers : A Survey on Church Attendants in Greater Tokyo and Greater Seoul Area

Yuko Ohara-HIRANO<sup>1)</sup>

### Abstract

A cross-national survey was made in both Japan and Korea to find the basic data of the lifestyle and daily stress of Filipino workers. The respondents were the mass attendants of Tokyo (n=265) and Seoul Area (n=401). The characteristics of Filipino differed in some social economic status, such as gender distribution, age, and length of stay. More males are in Japan (69.6%) than in Korea (59.5%). Their average age is higher in Japan (33.8(± 7.0) years old) than in Korea (29.3(± 6.0) years old), and their average length of stay is longer in Japan (50.4(± 31.6) months) than in Korea (33.1(± 21.7) months).

On the other hand, as for conversational ability and economical condition of families in the Philippines, the latter is one of the biggest reasons for them to work overseas; there was no difference between the two host countries. Regarding the social support networks in the host countries, Filipinos in Korea are easier to find emotional and informational support than those in Japan. Concerning the daily stress experienced by Filipinos in both Japan and Korea, no significant difference was found except for the dissatisfaction with housing condition.

The survey indicated that despite the fact that most of the subjective daily stresses did not differ between two countries, there are some differences in the social circumstances between Japanese and Korean society, in terms of accepting foreign workers. This may reflect the fact that per capita based number of foreign residents in Korea is two times higher than in Japan; therefore, the co-habitation with foreigners in Korea is advanced than in Japan.

Key words : Filipino, lifestyle, stress, Korea, Japan

### 和文抄録

本研究は、日本と韓国におけるフィリピン人労働者のライフスタイルおよび日常生活ストレスを比較することを目的で行われた国際比較調査である。本調査の研究対象者は、東京およびソウルにおけるカトリック教会のミサに参加するフィリピン人で、それぞれ東京は265名、ソウルは401名である。二カ国間では、フィリピン人の社会経済的属性のいくつかにおいて違いが見られた。例えば、性別の分布、平均年齢、平均滞在期間である。具体的には、男性の割合は、韓国(59.5%)よりも日本(69.6%)の方で有意に多かった。また、フィリピン人の平均年齢は韓国(29.3(± 6.0)歳)よりも日本(33.8(± 7.0)歳)で有意に高く、平均滞在期間は、韓国(33.1(± 21.7)ヶ月)よりも日本(50.4(± 31.6)ヶ月)で有意に長かった。

日常生活会話や在比家族の経済的状況については、有意な差はみられなかった。ホス

ト国における社会的支援に関しては、在韓フィリピン人の方で、在日フィリピン人よりも情緒的、情動的支援を得やすい傾向があった。一方、日常生活ストレスについては、「住環境に関する不満」の項目を除き、有意な差がある項目はみられなかった。

本研究は、日韓におけるフィリピン人の認識する日常生活ストレスのほとんどにおいては、二カ国で差を見なかったが、外国人労働者を受け入れる側としての社会の態勢としては、若干の差があることが考えられた。このことは、人口あたりの外国人労働者数が日本の2倍である韓国において、より外国人との共生が進んでいることを表しているものと思われる。

キーワード：フィリピン人，ライフスタイル，ストレス，韓国，日本

## I. Introduction

A drastic capacity of inflow of people across the borders has been observed around the world in recent years. Such inflow of people is observed between the labor-exporting countries and the labor-importing countries. This phenomenon is known as ‘push-pull theory’<sup>(1)</sup> of labor migration, with the inflow of people from the developing world to the industrialized and the newly-industrialized countries.

The Philippines, Japan and Korea, which will be focused in the later part of this study, are also included in such push-pull mechanisms of international labor migration. The Philippines is one of the labor-exporting countries in international economics. Economic weakening is pointed out as one of the greatest factors encouraging labor migration<sup>(2, 3)</sup>, with over seven million Filipinos working overseas. In 1999, overseas workers remitted a total of US \$ 6.8 billion which is a major source of foreign currency in Philippine society. North American countries have received Filipino workers after World War II, namely doctors, nurses, and other professionals<sup>(4)</sup>. Meanwhile, the acceptance of Filipino workers in Asian countries started in late 1970s, and most of the workers were generally unskilled, for example, domestic workers and factory workers. In Japan, the inflow of Filipino workers started in late 1970s, while in Korea, it started in late 1980s.

Japan and Korea are labor-importing countries, where there are fewer so-called 3D (dirty, difficult, and dangerous) jobs<sup>(5-11)</sup> in their domestic labor market. Furthermore, Japan and Korea have a lot in common when it comes to the systems that bring foreign labor in. For instance, there is no official visa for unskilled workers, and in principle there is no legal way for anyone to enter either country for the purpose of finding employment as unskilled workers<sup><1></sup>.

However, as native unskilled labor is declining, both countries are in fact allowing people to work under the pretext of practical training<sup>(12-15)</sup>. This trend of bringing large numbers of “trainees” is particularly conspicuous in Korea. In 2002, Korea granted entry to 33, 227 trainees. That same year, Japan admitted 58, 534. Given that the total South Korean population is 47 million, Korea admitted two times as many trainees as Japan on a per capita basis. This is partly attributable to the policies of the Korea Federation of Small Business (KFSB)<sup>(16)</sup>. Regarding the Filipino population, which will be discussed later in this study, 2,335 Filipinos entered Korea in 2002 on training visas, 7% of all trainees. In Japan, 3,222 Filipinos (5% of all trainees) entered in the same period. As a result, the co-habitation with foreigners in Korea has been occurred much more drastically than in Japan. As previous studies indicate, Koreans are in much closer contact

1) Department of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Kyushu University

with foreigners, and while cross cultural friction has increased <sup>(17, 18)</sup>, it has also been possible to establish many different kinds of social assistance systems <sup>< 2 ></sup>.

In this study, the author look into Japan and Korea as countries that accept foreign workers, and look into the differences between the two societies and what exist behind those differences, by comparing the characteristics, the lifestyles, and daily stress of Filipino migrant workers in these countries. Filipino migrants are one of the biggest ethnic groups in both Japan and Korea, thus they are considered to be one of the most typical ethnic groups they may reflect the vulnerability of migrants in homogeneous countries such as Japan and Korea.

## II. Subject and Methods

The following procedure was implemented to conduct the Japan-Korea comparative study. The questionnaire used in this study <sup>(19)</sup> was developed through careful discussion with Filipino community members <sup>(20)</sup> in both Tokyo and Seoul area. The questionnaire includes socio-economic characteristics, and Life Stress Scale developed through Focus Group Discussion, which was conducted prior to the survey. The Life Stress contains Work domain (6 items), Family domain (5 items), Life domain (4 items) and Future domain (3 items). Each question were measured by six-rated Likert Scale.

In both countries, Church was chosen as a survey site due to the following reason. Philippines is a Christian country in Asia. They go to church even in outside of the countries. Catholic Churches are the core centers of Filipino overseas, where they can provide informational, tangible, and emotional support. To get such social supports, many Filipinos gather at Church, even if they are not Christians. <sup>(20)</sup> Therefore, conducting survey at church site is the best and the only way to collect the sampling for quantitative study, assuming that various types of Filipinos gather. Taking this survey method is per-

suadable, particularly where there are no databases on complete foreign registrations such as Japan and Korea.

The ethical issue including methods of conducting survey was carefully discussed with the leaders of the Filipino community, namely, priests, lay-missionaries and community organizers, prior to conduct the survey. The informed consent was made at the survey site, before distributing questionnaires, and explaining them that they had a right to deny to participate the survey.

The respondents of this study were Filipinos in attendance at twelve churches in Greater Tokyo Area, and five churches in Greater Seoul Area, catering masses to Filipinos. The survey was conducted in 1996 and Tokyo, and 1997 in Seoul.

Questionnaires were collected on site upon completion. A total of 346 people answered the questionnaire (respondent rate : 62.8%), and of these 265 who had come to Japan to work were chosen as subjects. In South Korea, a total of 434 people answered the questionnaire (respondent rate : 88.0%), and of these 401 who had come to Korea to work were chosen as subjects. The SPSS10.1J was used to analyze the data to conduct Chi-square test, T-Test, and one way ANOVA.

## III. Results

### 1. Characteristics of Filipino Migrant Workers

The gender distribution is significantly different between two countries; 69.6% of the Filipinos in Japan were male, to 59.5% in Korea. The average age in Japan was 33.8( $\pm 7.0$ ) years old, while in Korea it was 29.3( $\pm 6.0$ ) years old. The average length of stay in Japan was 50.4( $\pm 31.6$ ) months, compared to 33.1 ( $\pm 21.7$ ) months in Korea. In comparing the highest educational level completed 47.2% of the Filipinos in Japan were college graduates, against 34.8% in Korea. Meanwhile, 72.0% in Japan were married, while only 51.4% of those in Korea were.

However, there was no significant statistical difference observed between the two countries in terms of family economic circumstances back in the Philippines, or daily conversational ability.

## 2. Work and Lifestyle of Filipino Migrant Workers

Filipinos in Japan were employed as construction workers (105 people, 43.6 %), factory workers (91 people, 37.8%), and entertainers (12 people, 5.0%). In Korea, an overwhelming 92.5% of the Filipinos were employed as factory workers.

Monthly income in Japan averaged ¥205,200 ( $\pm 77,048$ ), versus ¥89,067 ( $\pm 20,828$ ) in Korea. However, 99.2% of survey participants in Korea said they regularly sent money to the Philippines, to 86.8% of those in Japan.

Asked about the support networks that might be

necessary when living in Japan or Korea, 91.5% of Korean respondents indicated that there was “one or more person (s) to comfort me when I feel lonely,” and 92.3% indicated that there was “one or more person (s) I could ask for information on hospitals,” significantly higher percentages than in Japan. However, there was no significant difference observed in the number of responses indicating the presence of someone willing to act as a guarantor (Table 1).

## 3. Daily Stress Experienced by Filipino Migrant Workers

Asked about the frequency with which the subjects experienced stress in their daily lives, respondents in both Japan and Korea indicated that they “sometimes/ often/ always worry about health of my family” (Japan : 77.5%, Korea : 77.0%) and that “some-

Table 1: Filipino Characteristics of Migrant Workers in Japan and Korea

		Japan	(N=265)	Korea	(N=401)	
Gender	Male	183	(69.6%)	238	(59.5%)	**
	Female	80	(30.4%)	162	(40.5%)	
Average Age		33.8	( $\pm 7.0$ )	29.3	( $\pm 6.0$ )	***
Family Economic Circumstances	Very difficult	24	(11.0%)	29	(7.9%)	n.s.
	Difficult but able to survive	158	(72.1%)	284	(77.6%)	
	Not difficult	37	(16.9%)	53	(14.5%)	
Educational Level	College under graduate	131	(52.8%)	244	(65.2%)	**
	College graduate	117	(47.2%)	130	(34.8%)	
Marriage Status	Married	185	(72.0%)	203	(51.4%)	***
	Single	72	(28.0%)	192	(48.6%)	
Length of Stay	(Average, in months)	50.4	( $\pm 31.6$ )	33.1	( $\pm 21.7$ )	***
Reason for Working Overseas (Agree / Mostly / Partly agree)						
	To support my filipino family	220	(96.5%)	334	(92.3%)	*
	To earn money for may future	183	(92.4%)	288	(86.2%)	*
	To experience life in Japan	125	(75.3%)	199	(61.6%)	**
Conversational Ability						
	Poor (not able to survive without an interpreter)	46	(17.7%)	50	(13.1%)	n.s.
	Fair to fluent (able to survive without an interpreter)	214	(82.3%)	331	(86.9%)	
Work						
	Factory or construction work	196	(81.4%)	359	(92.8%)	***
Income	(Monthly average)	¥205,200	( $\pm ¥77,048$ )	¥89,067	( $\pm ¥20,828$ )	***
Regularly Sending Money Home		203	(86.8%)	390	(99.2%)	***
Support Networks						
	One or more person(s) to comfort me when I am lonely	197	(84.9%)	332	(91.5%)	*
	One or more person(s) I could ask for information on hospitals	217	(85.8%)	360	(92.3%)	**
	One or more person(s) I could ask to be my guarantor	216	(85.0%)	337	(88.5%)	n.s.

\*\*\*p<0.001 \*\*p<0.01 \*p<0.05 n.s. = difference is statistically not significant

¥1 = W7.45 (as of end-September 1997)

The Japan survey was conducted in 1996, the Korean survey in 1997.

times/ often/ always feel too much financial expectation from my family” (Japan : 74.2%, Korea : 77.1%). These two were the most common daily stresses indicated. The pattern in both countries also experienced “sometimes/ often/ always worry about my work after I go back home” (Japan : 62.6%, Korea : 65.1%), and “sometimes/ often/ always concern about how long I will be away from my family” (Japan : 62.8%, Korea : 65.6%). However, respondents in Korea indicated a significantly higher frequency with which they felt “sometimes/ often/ always dissatisfied with housing condition” (Figure 1).

#### IV. Discussion

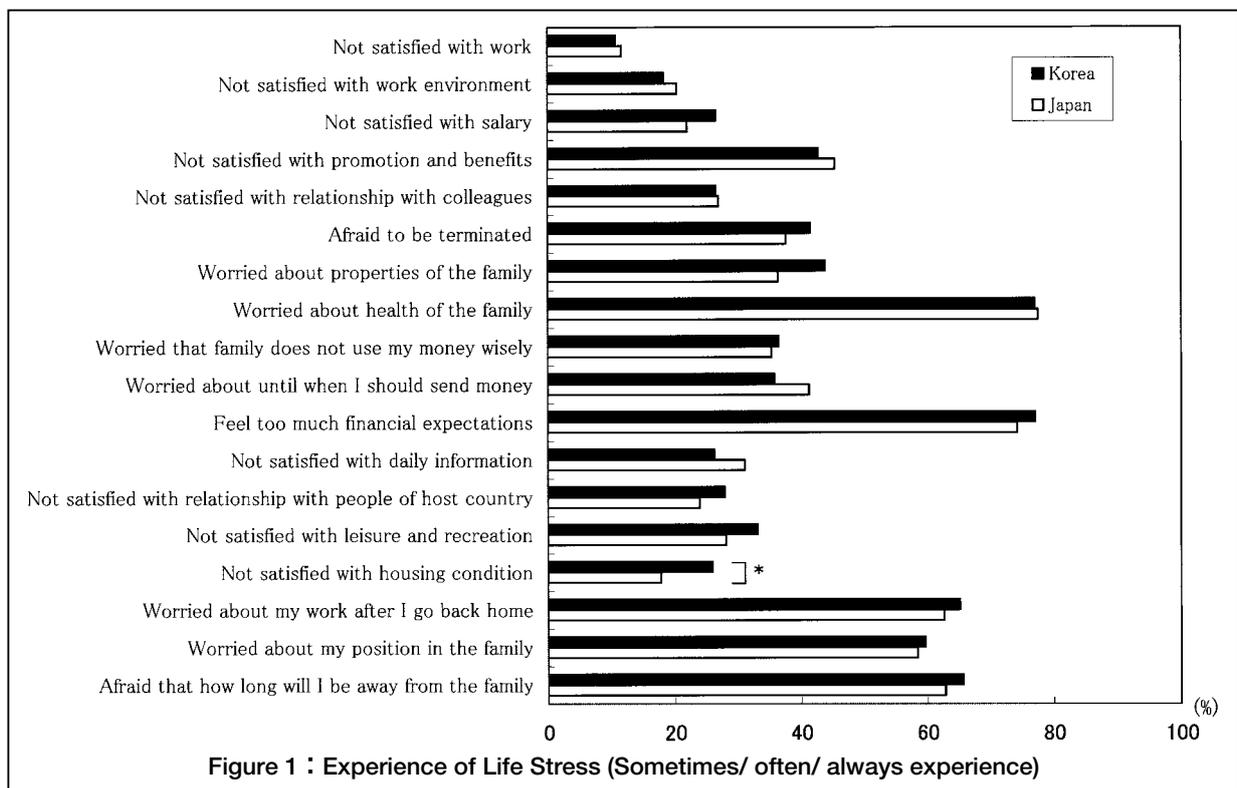
##### 1. Common Characteristics of Filipino Workers in Japan and Korea

Regarding the economic situation of their families in the Philippines, 72 % of respondents in Japan indicated that it was “difficult but able to survive” to 77% in Korea. This shows the characteristics of a labor-exporting country, as defined in the push-pull theory. It has been pointed out for some time

that the Philippines is a source of migrant workers, a country that shows a strong tendency for people to leave the country for a better life overseas<sup>(21-23)</sup>. The result of this study also indicates the phenomenon.

A high percentage of subjects in both countries indicated that they were fluent enough to survive without an interpreter, and there was no significant statistical difference between the two populations (82% and 86%). Daily conversational ability was evaluated on the basis of the respondents’ own subjective judgment, and consequently no comparison could be made of which population spoke the local language (Japanese or Korean) with greater fluency. However, as more than 80% of both groups indicated no conversational difficulty in daily life, it would be possible to say that there is no real difference between the two countries.

Excepting for an item, “sometimes/ often/ always dissatisfied with housing condition” there was no significant difference observed between the two countries in terms of the patterns in daily stress experienced by Filipino workers. The difference seen in “sometimes/ often/ always dissatisfied with



the housing condition” is likely the result of Korea’s harsher winter, not an easy thing for Filipinos who grew up in a tropical climate. Although this research uncovers a significant difference in the actual working circumstances of Filipinos in Japan and Korea, for example in ages, this did not manifest itself as a difference in perceptions of daily stress. The Filipino migrant workers of this study primarily had overseas living experience in only Korea or Japan, and so had no means of comparing the situations in different countries.

## 2. Differences in the Social Circumstances of Japan and Korea and their Effects on the Lives of Filipino Migrant Workers

### 1) Differences in the acceptance of foreign workers in host countries

In this research, the percentage of males in the Filipino laborer population in Japan was greater than that in Korea. However, Japanese immigration statistics show that the overwhelming majority of Filipinos entering the country are female.

Many Filipinas enter the country on entertainer visas, and then work as entertainers in the entertainment industry <sup>< 3 ></sup>. These businesses often run late even during the weekends, and some of the Filipinas working at such establishments cannot freely go out <sup>(24, 25)</sup>, making it quite difficult for them to attend church on Sunday mornings. Consequently, at the sampling stage in Japan, Filipina women were underrepresented, and the figures were skewed to show a higher proportion of men.

The results of the questionnaire showed the average age of Filipinos in Korea (29.3 years old) to be lower than that in Japan (33.8 years old), as was also the case for the average educational level. This is likely due to differences in how individuals arrive in the country and begin work as unskilled workers, Unskilled Filipino workers in Japan tend to enter the country on tourist visas, and then stay in country after the visas have expired. Another trend is for

Filipinos to find employment after entering on a student visa <sup>(26)</sup>, made much easier by the ‘100,000 Exchange Students’ policy enacted by the Nakasone administration, intended to boost attendance at Japanese language schools. Another vector is by stowing away on ships bound for Japan from Korea. There are many different means by which subjects of this study entered the country. However, in Korea, the most common scenario was for the subject to acquire a training visa only to leave the companies at which they were to be training and find employment as a factory worker. This trend also seems to be increasing <sup>(27)</sup>. The fact that most Filipino workers in Korea are previously trainees is also indicated to some extent by their educational level. As trainees in Korea are put to work as part of the labor force, it is common for those so employed to be comparatively young, around the age of high school students. This is reflected in the questionnaire replies, where 65.2 % of the Korean group listed themselves as having dropped out of school in college or earlier, a significantly higher proportion than the 52.8% of the Japanese group.

### 2) Differences in Japan and Korea in the trends of Filipino Workers to become permanent residents

In both Japanese and Korean groups, age stood in direct correlation to the length of stay (Japan:  $r=.248$ , Korea:  $r=.298$ ). The older they were, the greater the likelihood that they would stay in the host country for a longer length of time. The results of this study pointed to a longer length of stay and older average age for the Filipinos in Japan, reflecting the fact that Japan has a longer history of allowing foreign workers entry. The data suggest that, as the subjects remain longer in the host country, there is a tendency for them to seek for more stable life that comes of having one’s own family, leading to the higher observed marriage rate of the Japanese group. The lower rate of permanent residency in Korea has

been pointed out in other research <sup>(28)</sup>, but it is likely that the marriage rate of immigrant populations in Korea will increase in the future, and this difference between the two countries will disappear.

Permanent residency may also be affected by the freedom to work. 75.3% of the Filipinos in Japan indicated that they agree or partly agree with “I am working to be able to experience life in Japan”. The proportion of the Korean group who answered was a lower of 61.6%. This seems to reflect the emergence of a new trend among overseas workers. While in the past the primary reasons for living and working overseas were to financially support one’s family or to save money to be able to start one’s own business after returning to the home country <sup>(29, 30)</sup>. However, the new trend for workers is to continue working overseas in order to be able to enjoy life in the host country.

### 3) Background behind the Differences in Average Income

The average wage of Filipinos working in Japan was significantly higher than that of the group in Korea, at ¥205,000 versus ¥89,067. It must be noted that this is not simply due to higher wages in Japan, but rather to different employment trends in the Filipino populations in Japan and Korea, reflected in the average wage. For example, most Filipinos in Korea are factory workers <sup><4></sup>, as reflected also in the data. 358 people or 92.5% of the subjects listed themselves as factory workers, compared to one person or 0.3% who indicated that they worked in construction. In Japan, however, construction workers were the majority, with 105 people or 43.6%, compared to 91 people or 37.8% who were factory workers. Construction work is often dangerous, and pays relatively more than factory work (construction workers in Japan, for instance, earn an average monthly wage of ¥232,550 (± 78,651), compared to an average of ¥165,602 (± 62,548) for factory workers). As a result, the higher average

wage of the Filipinos in Japan is attributable to the higher proportion of construction workers.

### 4) Activities of Religious Groups

The data also indicated the differences in the acceptance of the host societies of foreign workers in Japan and Korea, through the self-evaluative answers of the Filipinos. In response to questions about informational support networks, a higher proportion of respondents in Korea answered that there was “one or more person (s) to comfort me when I am lonely,” indicating 91.5%, while 84.9% in Japan. This suggests that Filipino migrant workers’ informational support networks in Korea are more developed. The questionnaire did not include any items specifically inquiring about the supporters or sponsors of these networks, but as it has been pointed out that Filipino networks are very important to overseas Filipino populations <sup>(20)</sup>, it can be inferred that the number and quality of such networks is better in Korea than in Japan.

In Korea, Seoul area has the highest concentration of Filipino residents. H Catholic church, locate in the middle of Seoul, 800 to 1,000 Filipinos attending services every Sunday. Many mass attendants come by bus or train from the surrounding areas, and the church provides well as a place for Filipinos to meet and exchange information.

Therefore, it call be said that churches may provide informational support in Korea. While many Filipinos in Japan also live in and around the capital area, there are no big churches in Tokyo like H Catholic Church in Seoul, so opportunities for ex-changing information limited, makes it more difficult to establish support networks.

92.3% of respondents in the Korea answered that there was “one or more person (s) I could ask for information on hospitals,” significantly higher than the 85.8% of those who answered in the Japan. This also reflects the greater opportunities for meeting and exchange information is provided to the Filipino

population in Korea. The data in terms of social acceptance of foreign workers in Japan and Korea shows that the effect of religious groups, particularly Catholic churches for labor accident, is greater in Korea than in Japan. For example, a group of foreign workers hold a sit-in strike in front of the Myeondong Cathedral to demand workers compensation. This attracted the attention of media so much that the issue was picked up to be legislated <sup>(31)</sup>. Furthermore, as part of welfare for foreign workers, religious groups play an active role in the operation of hospitals, clinics, and medical consultation groups providing free or low-cost medical services <sup>< 5 ></sup>. Consequently, for those people who have contact with the Catholic Church, information on hospitals or other medical issues is relatively easy to find. However, Japan has its own non-profit organizations, community groups, or other philanthropically-minded individuals offering no-cost medical advice, so the situation is much less comprehensive than that in Korea. The strong social foundation of a religious group is difficult to build in Japan, and as such it is harder to develop the kinds of social activities based on such a foundation <sup>< 6 ></sup>.

## V. Conclusion

The respondents of this study were limited to the church attendance in the metropolitan area in both Japan and Korea. As Hirano mentioned <sup>(32)</sup>, the qualitative characteristics of the Filipino Community were common in both countries. Therefore, to get the brief characteristics of Filipino migrants in each country, it is possible to compare the socio-economic characteristics and Life Stress of the Filipino workers in both countries unless the survey conducted at church sites.

However, due to the limitation of random sampling, it is difficult to generalize the study result to every Filipino worker in Japan and Korea. Further study must be made to find the difference in characteristics of those who are church attendants and those

who are not.

As the globalization continues, cultural diversion develops norm. As stated in the Migrant Workers' Declaration of Rights <sup>(33)</sup>, societies accepting foreign workers need to accept them as legalized members of society, and work to ensure that their fundamental human rights are protected. As such, it is vital that labor-importing countries bringing in the international labor force cooperate with other labor-importing countries facing similar social challenges in order to construct a society where locals and foreign workers can live together, based on the circumstances of each particular society. This research, focused on Filipino workers, may provide the basic data with which to begin reshaping social attitudes in the labor-importing countries of Japan and Korea.

## Notes

- <1> Korea started to import unskilled labor from overseas permitting working visa started from July 2004.
- <2> Korean society is characterized by the large role played by religious groups in the social support of foreign migrant workers.
- <3> According to 2000 Japanese immigration statistics, of the 144,305 Filipinos in the country, 116,456 or 80.7% of those were women. Furthermore, 31.9% or 46,000 of the Filipinos in Japan had entered on an entertainer visa.
- <4> According to the priests working in Gyeonggido Province churches offering services for Filipinos, the priests recommend the Filipinos not to take construction employment as the work is so dangerous.
- <5> A free medical clinic next to the H Catholic Church is opened every Sunday.
- <6> As religious groups have difficulty engaging in volunteer activities in Japan, new medical systems are being established to fill the gap in providing services for foreign workers. MF-MASH (Minatomachi Foreign Migrant Workers Aid

Scheme for Health) is one such instance. This system provides basic medical coverage to foreign workers, often ineligible for national or social insurance, for a fee of 3,000 yen per month. Members are responsible for a 30 % co-pay, the same as with national insurance, for all medical services rendered at participating clinics. A similar system has been implemented in Korea, but it was based on MF-MASH.

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