

Completion Report

Migration and Women's Health: Stories, Notions and Philippines: Networks, Engagement and the Production of Urban Space

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In-depth interviews were used to analyze the health conditions and challenges of female migrants from the Philippines, whereas key informant interviews were employed to explore the meanings of health, solutions to illness and disease, awareness of health programs and policies, participation to non-governmental health initiatives and tactics used to communicate health by organizations. In addition, we reviewed policy documents related to migration and health and written field notes as observers/participant observers in formal programs and informal gatherings.

We conducted two periods of field work in Japan. The first field work happened during late summer and early autumn of 2018, whereas the second field work occurred in late winter of 2019. In both periods we conducted in-depth interviews with Filipina migrants and key informant interviews with organizational leaders/ officers. While the first field work allowed us to attend formal programs for Filipinos (e.g., an event sponsored by the Philippine government and an orientation by an organization), the second field work allowed us to participate in informal gatherings (e.g., holiday parties) organized by migrants and organizations.

Through interviews and participation in those activities, we were able to obtain interesting findings of this research. Filipino migrants are prone to physical and mental illnesses and health issues due to their workload, working environment, stress, lack of social support, and absence of family members. These conditions weaken the physical and mental capacities of migrant workers, ultimately affecting their productivity and output. The research affirmed the hypothesis that migration is “a structural determinant of women’s health”, such that, health concerns of Filipina migrants are shaped by “feminized” migration in and migration policies of Japan (Piper, 2004, p. 723). The intersectionality of sex, migrant status, occupation, marital conditions, and educational background impacts on how migrants address their health concerns. Beyond the gender dimension, there are also interesting findings that reveal a more complex dynamics of health communication infrastructure.

The role of organizations is crucial in framing migrant health negotiations. For this part of the research, we found that NGOs and faith-based organizations in Japan have holistic definitions of health. They offer multiple services to promote health not just among Filipina migrants but Filipinos in general. Moreover, they use different media to discuss issues among stakeholders.

This study also reveals that Filipino women in Japan derive their sense of wellbeing from state-provided instruments of social protection. This sense of wellness is guaranteed by the possession of a health insurance which qualifies them to minimum payment for hospitalization and treatment. However, social protection is also contingent to their marriage bonds, as most Filipino women possess good health insurance schemes from their husband’s employment status. Narratives also reveal how husbands play a crucial role in processing and using health insurance, translating during hospital consultations and treatments, and assisting their stressful routines within the household. Furthermore, the project reveals the crucial role of migrant organizations and religious groups in ensuring wellbeing and assisting sick

migrants. These organizations are also the supporting agents for the irregular migrants who do not possess proper visas and government-issued health insurance cards. It is therefore important to note that irregular migrants severely suffer during times of sickness since the government refuse to grant them accessible medical services due to their status. Reflecting on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) principle of “no one should be left behind,” the government should rethink its policies and regulations on health governance. Irregular migrants should also be given humane treatment of their diseases. Overall, the research contributed to migration health literature.

We hope to communicate the importance of migration as social determinant of women’s health, such that, programmatic and policy efforts should be initiated by both sending and receiving countries to improve the well-being of women migrants. At the theoretical level, the next possible step is to conduct further research to explore how health, illness, and disease are reported in Filipino community/ ethnic media in Japan. In addition, future research may focus on children with Filipino parent/s who were born and raised in Japan and their health challenges. At the programmatic level, strengthening the capacity of organizations working with Filipina migrants to mobilize resources and enhancing their efficient and ethical use of social media are much needed.

We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the Sumitomo Foundation for allowing us to do our fieldwork and potentially contribute to continued theoretical, programmatic, and policy discussions about understanding the varied and complex state of health among Filipina migrants in Japan.

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Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Date: May 24-28, 2019

Venue: Washington Hilton, Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D.C., USA

Name of Conference: The 69th Annual International Communication Association Conference
(Communication Beyond Boundaries)

Title of Presentation: Communicative Processes for Health Activism: The Case of Organizations
Working with Filipina Migrants in Japan

Presenter: Jan Michael Alexandre C Bernadas, PhD (Co-investigator)

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Date: February 1-2, 2019

Venue: Casa Real, Iloilo, Philippines

Name of conference: Japan: Age in a Time of Precariousness by Japanese Studies Ateneo de Manila
University

Title of Presentation: Exploring Health Issues of Filipino Women in Japan in Japan: Migrant
Narratives and Policy Implications

Presenter: Ron Bridget T Vilog, PhD (Principal investigator)

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