

# **A Comparative Study of Filipino and Indonesian Candidates for Registered Nurse and Certified Care Worker Coming to Japan under Economic Partnership Agreements: An Analysis of the Results of Questionnaire Surveys on the Socioeconomic Attribution of the Respondents and Their Motivation to Work in Japan**

HIRANO O. Yuko,\* OGAWA Reiko\*\* and OHNO Shun\*\*\*

## **Abstract**

The widely disputed issue over foreign nurse and certified care-worker candidates under the Economic Partnership Agreements in Japan seems endless. To establish more sustainable Economic Partnership Agreements, we should discuss the issue from a holistic perspective through cross-sectional and longitudinal approaches.

This article addresses the socioeconomic characteristics and motivations of nurse and certified care-worker candidates who enter Japan under the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) and the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA). The correlation between the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and their motivations to work in Japan were examined based on a cross-sectional analysis. In addition, the transition of nurse and certified care-worker candidates is discussed using a longitudinal approach, by comparing the data of previous groups obtained by our research team.

The results of this study indicate that the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents differed by country, as well as by occupation. Filipino candidates are more likely to cite economic condition as the reason they chose to go to Japan than the Indonesian candidates. While Filipino nurse and certified care-worker candidates and Indonesian nurse candidates are still predominantly females, a “masculinization of migration” is being observed among Indonesian certified care-worker candidates.

**Keywords:** EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement), Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, nurse, certified care worker, migration

## **I Introduction**

Since August 2008 when Japan began to accept foreign nurse and care-worker candidates under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) program, many discussions among those with various social

---

\* 平野裕子, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Nagasaki University, 1-7-1 Sakamoto, Nagasaki 852-8520, Japan

Corresponding author's e-mail: hirano@nagasaki-u.ac.jp

\*\* 小川玲子, Faculty of Law, Kyushu University, 6-10-1 Hakozaki, Higashi-ku, Fukuoka 812-8581, Japan

\*\*\* 大野 俊, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

and political backgrounds, including the mass media, researchers, stakeholders and even those without any direct connection with foreign nurses and care workers have pertained to the regulations for introducing foreign nurses and care workers under the EPA program. Some of these arguments seem to miss the main point of this issue, which can lead to misunderstandings, which further confuse the problem.

Observing the discussions from a medical sociological perspective, one can say that the discussants are likely to represent their political status and benefits, but less likely to point out the issues from a holistic approach.

For example, members of Reform Mass Media which endorses “opening the country” are likely to point out that “offering the national board examination only in Japanese is too much of a burden to these foreign candidates. . . . We should therefore make the exam easier so that we can accept more foreign candidates” [*Asahi Shimbun*, November 29, 2009]. However, they do not refer to the fact that the foreign nurses and care workers who can only pass the “easy” examination are more likely to cause medical accidents. Downgrading the exam might also encourage a stereotype of foreign nurses and care workers as low-skilled laborers.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare adheres to the position that “In Japan, a potential nursing force of more than 900,000 exists. The government should utilize such a potential work force first. Accepting foreign nurse and care-worker candidates under the EPA program is therefore a special case. We open the domestic market to foreigners not due to the lack of a work force in Japan, but as a matter of trade” [Japan, Minister’s Secretariat, International Division, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2010]. The ministry does not address the fundamental issue of why the number of potential Japanese nurses who choose not to work in the nursing field is increasing nor does it offer any decisive policy to utilize the potential work force. It is therefore essential to discuss ways to improve the work environment for nurses in Japan, regardless of their nationality; otherwise, even foreign nurses who pass the board examination will choose not to work in Japan.

Other issues regarding the domestic market for care workers have not been thoroughly discussed either. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has also failed to enact any clear policies that would prevent the continual decrease in the number of Japanese care workers, nor have any concrete suggestions been made to improve the work environment for care workers in Japan.

Such narrow, one-sided perspectives may stifle any effective advocacy related to this issue. A holistic approach, generated by obtaining data from the sending countries and the host country, is required to analyze the needs and demands of migrants and the host country accurately and objectively.

The authors of this study have worked as a research team since 2007 attempting to develop a more sustainable EPA program. The authors employ a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the two major sending countries, Indonesia and the Philippines, and the receiving country (Japan) to establish a cross-sectional and longitudinal framework.

The objectives of this article are as follows:

- 1) To describe the socioeconomic characteristics and motivations of the nurse and certified care-worker candidates coming to Japan under IJEPA and JPEPA.

- 2) To determine the correlation between the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and their motivations to work in Japan.
- 3) To compare those figures with the data obtained by our research team from previous groups of candidates.

## II Methodology

We developed a four-page questionnaire after carefully examining the previous studies by our research team [Hirano *et al.* 2010: 153–162; Adachi *et al.* 2010: 163–174]. It was translated into English and pretested by Filipinos living in Japan. With the cooperation of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the questionnaire was distributed to all candidates who attended the predeparture orientation in May 2010. They answered and returned the questionnaires before the end of the orientation. The response rate was 100%.

For Indonesian candidates, the questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesian and pretested by Indonesians who lived in Japan. In cooperation with The Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS), the questionnaire was distributed to all candidates who attended the language-intensive course in August 2010. The response rate was 100%.

For this article, 118 Filipino candidates (46 nurse and 72 certified care-worker candidates) plus 114 Indonesian candidates (40 nurse and 74 certified care-worker candidates) were included in the analysis. The author of this study divided the data by occupation as well as by country of origin because nurses and certified care workers have different job descriptions.

Chi-square tests, Fisher's exact tests and *t*-tests were performed to compare each group, using the SPSS 19.J software program. The Institutional Research Board of Nagasaki University approved this study.

## III The Results

The distribution of females among the Filipino certified care-worker candidates was 98.6%, significantly higher than that of Indonesian certified care-worker candidates ( $p < 0.001$ ). The average age of Filipino nurse candidates was 31.8 years (SD4.7), significantly older than Indonesians' at 26.7 (SD2.2), ( $p < 0.001$ ). The average age of Filipino certified care-worker candidates at 26.8 years (SD4.1) was also significantly older than that of Indonesian certified care-worker candidates at 23.7 (SD2.6), ( $p < 0.001$ ). Indonesian nurse candidates were more likely to be the oldest sibling than Filipino nurse candidates ( $p < 0.01$ ).

More of the Filipino nurse candidates (26.7%) and certified care-worker candidates (21.4%) were married than the Indonesian nurses candidates (7.7%) and certified care-worker candidates (5.6%), ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$  respectively). Filipino nurse candidates were also more likely to have a child/children (52.2%) than Indonesian nurse candidates (27.5%), ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Of the Filipino nurse candidates, 34.8% had prior experience working abroad as a nurse before participating in the EPA program. This was a significantly higher percentage than for Indonesian nurse

**Table 1** Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (Filipinos/Indonesians)

	Filipino Nurse	Indonesian Nurse	p value	Filipino Certified Care Worker	Indonesian Certified Care Worker	p value
Female (%)	95.7	87.2	n.s.	98.6	68.9	p<0.001
Age (SD)	31.8 (4.7)	26.7 (2.2)	p<0.001	26.8 (4.1)	23.7 (2.6)	p<0.001
Married (%)	26.7	7.7	p<0.05	21.4	5.6	p<0.01
Have child/children (%)	52.2	27.5	p<0.05	45.8	45.9	n.s.
Oldest sibling (%)	20	47.4	p<0.01	31.9	45.9	n.s.
Economic condition at difficult to survive (%)	2.2	2.5	n.s.	4.2	1.4	n.s.
Have experience to work abroad as a nurse (care worker) prior to entry to Japan (%)	34.8	7.5	p<0.01	10.3	16.7	n.s.
Have lived in Japan before (%)	4.3	0	n.s.	12.5	1.4	p<0.01
Know well/fairly well about Japanese society and culture (%)	23.9	25	n.s.	43.1	47.2	n.s.

candidates ( $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, 12.5% of the Filipino certified care-worker candidates had experienced living in Japan previously. Again, it was significantly higher than the percentage of Indonesian certified care-worker candidates, who had previously lived in Japan ( $p < 0.01$ ) (Table 1).

Table 2 shows the differences by country of origin in the distribution of reasons candidates chose to go to Japan. Filipino nurse and certified care-worker candidates were more likely to select "I was jobless at the time when I applied for this program" ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.01$  respectively) than their Indonesian counterparts. This tendency also held true for "I can earn a higher salary in Japan than in other countries" ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.01$  respectively) and "I was frustrated with my salary in the Philippines/Indonesia" ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.001$  respectively).

Indonesian nurse candidates tended to select "I have some family/relative(s) who has (have) already lived in Japan" ( $p < 0.05$ ) and "I want to marry a Japanese partner" ( $p < 0.001$ ) than Filipino nurse candidates. Indonesian certified care-worker candidates were also more likely to choose "My family recommended me to go to Japan" ( $p < 0.001$ ) than Filipino certified care-worker candidates. The Filipino nurse candidates were more likely to answer, "I wish to support my family economically" ( $p < 0.05$ ) than Indonesian nurse candidates.

Table 3 notes the distribution of reasons a candidate wanted to go to Japan by gender. Among the Indonesian nurse candidates, females tended to answer "I want to utilize my experiences in Japan for my future work at the hospital/elder home in other countries" ( $p < 0.05$ ) than male nurse candidates. Among Indonesian certified care-worker candidates, males were more likely to answer "I was jobless at the time when I applied for this program," ( $p < 0.05$ ) than females. The female Indonesian certified care-worker candidates were more likely to answer "I am not required to pay commission fees for overseas placement" ( $p < 0.05$ ) than males.

Table 4 summarizes the distribution of reasons the participants wanted to go to Japan by marital status. Among the Filipino certified care-worker candidates, those who were unmarried were more

**Table 2** Reason to Go to Japan by Country (Filipinos/Indonesians)

	Filipino Nurse	Indonesian Nurse	p value	Filipino Certified Care Worker	Indonesian Certified Care Worker	p value
I was jobless at the time I applied for this program.	45.7	12.5	p<0.01	73.6	50	p<0.01
I have some family/relative(s) who has (have) already lived in Japan.	28.3	52.5	p<0.05	20.8	28.4	n.s.
I wish to develop my professional career.	100	100	–	100	98.6	n.s.
My family recommended me to go to Japan.	45.7	42.5	n.s.	16.7	51.4	p<0.001
I can have a chance to work in Japan with this program sooner than work in another country.	89.1	92.5	n.s.	93.1	86.5	n.s.
I am interested in Japanese culture such as animation and comics.	97.8	92.5	n.s.	90.1	90.5	n.s.
I wish to support my family economically.	100	87.2	p<0.05	100	94.6	n.s.
I wish to learn advanced Japanese technology.	100	100	–	100	97.2	n.s.
I wish to realize my dream to live abroad.	93.5	92.3	n.s.	90.3	86.3	n.s.
I wish to contribute to the government-to-government program.	97.8	95	n.s.	100	95.8	n.s.
I can earn a higher salary in Japan than in other countries.	93.5	62.2	p<0.01	94.4	74	p<0.01
I want to utilize my experiences in Japan for my future work at the hospital/elderly home in other countries.	82.2	92.5	n.s.	88.9	89.2	n.s.
I want to marry a Japanese partner.	2.2	33.3	p<0.001	11.3	11	n.s.
I am not required to pay commission fees for overseas placement.	93.5	44.9	n.s.	94.4	86.5	n.s.
I wish to show the caring nature of the Filipinos/Indonesians to the Japanese people.	100	100	–	98.6	100	n.s.
I was frustrated with my salary in the Philippines/Indonesia.	69.6	10.3	p<0.001	50	9.6	p<0.001

likely to answer “I am interested in Japanese culture such as animation and comics” than the married candidates (p<0.05).

Table 5 illustrates the distribution of reasons the candidates chose to go to Japan based on the present economic conditions. Among the Indonesian certified care-worker candidates, those who did not find it difficult to survive and those who found it difficult, but manageable, were more likely to answer “I wish to learn advanced Japanese technology” (p<0.05) than those who found it very difficult to survive.

Fig. 1 shows the frequencies of the primary reasons that motivated Filipino nurse candidates to go to Japan. Twenty-two candidates (47.8%) chose “I wish to develop my professional career,” followed

**Table 3** Reason to Go to Japan by Gender (Filipinos/Indonesians)

	Filipino Nurse			Indonesian Nurse			Filipino Certified Care Worker			Indonesian Certified Care Worker		
	male (n=2)	female (n=44)	p value	male (n=5)	female (n=34)	p value	male (n=1)	female (n=71)	p value	male (n=23)	female (n=51)	p value
I was jobless at the time I applied for this program.	0	47.7	n.s.	0	14.7	n.s.	0	74.6	n.s.	69.6	41.2	p<0.05
I have some family/relative(s) who has (have) already lived in Japan.	0	29.5	n.s.	80	50	n.s.	0	21.1	n.s.	21.7	31.4	n.s.
I wish to develop my professional career.	100	100	-	100	100	-	100	100	-	100	98	n.s.
My family recommended me to go to Japan.	100	43.2	n.s.	40	41.2	n.s.	0	16.9	n.s.	60.9	47.1	n.s.
I can have a chance to work in Japan with this program sooner than work in another country.	50	90.9	n.s.	100	91.2	n.s.	0	94.4	n.s.	87	86.3	n.s.
I am interested in Japanese culture such as animation and comics.	100	97.7	n.s.	80	94.1	n.s.	100	90	n.s.	95.7	88.2	n.s.
I wish to support my family economically.	100	100	-	100	84.8	n.s.	100	100	-	95.7	94.1	n.s.
I wish to learn advanced Japanese technology.	100	100	-	100	100	-	100	100	-	95.7	98	n.s.
I wish to realize my dream to live abroad.	50	95.5	n.s.	100	90.9	n.s.	100	90.1	n.s.	95.7	82	n.s.
I wish to contribute to the government-to-government program.	100	97.7	n.s.	100	94.1	n.s.	100	100	-	100	93.9	n.s.
I can earn a higher salary in Japan than in other countries.	50	95.5	n.s.	100	54.8	n.s.	0	95.7	n.s.	72.7	74.5	n.s.
I want to utilize my experiences in Japan for my future work at the hospital/elderly home in other countries.	50	83.7	n.s.	60	97.1	p<0.05	0	90.1	n.s.	91.3	88.2	n.s.
I want to marry a Japanese partner.	0	2.3	n.s.	60	30.3	n.s.	0	11.4	n.s.	8.7	12	n.s.
I am not required to pay commission fees for overseas placement.	50	95.5	n.s.	100	93.5	n.s.	0	95.8	n.s.	73.9	92.2	p<0.05
I wish to show the caring nature of the Filipinos/Indonesians to the Japanese people.	100	100	-	100	100	-	100	98.6	n.s.	100	100	-
I was frustrated with my salary in the Philippines/Indonesia.	0	72.7	n.s.	0	12.1	n.s.	0	50.7	n.s.	17.4	6	n.s.

**Table 4** Reason to Go to Japan by Marital Status (Filipinos/Indonesians)

	Filipino Nurse			Indonesian Nurse			Filipino Certified Care Worker			Indonesian Certified Care Worker		
	unmarried (n=33)	married (n=12)	p value	unmarried (n=36)	married (n=3)	p value	unmarried (n=55)	married (n=15)	p value	unmarried (n=67)	married (n=4)	p value
I was jobless at the time I applied for this program.	42.4	58.3	n.s.	11.1	0	n.s.	76.4	60	n.s.	49.3	25	n.s.
I have some family/relative(s) who has (have) already lived in Japan.	27.3	25	n.s.	52.8	33.3	n.s.	23.6	13.3	n.s.	28.4	25	n.s.
I wish to develop my professional career.	100	100	–	100	100	–	100	100	n.s.	98.5	100	n.s.
My family recommended me to go to Japan.	45.5	41.7	n.s.	38.9	66.7	n.s.	16.4	13.3	n.s.	49.3	75	n.s.
I can have a chance to work in Japan with this program sooner than work in another country.	84.8	100	n.s.	91.7	100	n.s.	92.7	93.3	n.s.	86.6	75	n.s.
I am interested in Japanese culture such as animation and comics.	97	100	n.s.	91.7	100	n.s.	94.4	73.3	p<0.05	89.6	100	n.s.
I wish to support my family economically.	100	100	–	85.7	100	n.s.	100	100	–	95.5	75	n.s.
I wish to learn advanced Japanese technology.	100	100	–	100	100	n.s.	100	100	–	96.9	100	n.s.
I wish to realize my dream to live abroad.	97	83.3	n.s.	91.4	100	n.s.	90.9	86.7	n.s.	84.8	100	n.s.
I wish to contribute to the government-to-government program.	97	100	n.s.	94.4	100	n.s.	100	100	–	95.4	100	n.s.
I can earn a higher salary in Japan than in other countries.	90.9	100	n.s.	57.6	100	n.s.	96.3	86.7	n.s.	74.2	75	n.s.
I want to utilize my experiences in Japan for my future work at the hospital/elderly home in other countries.	84.4	75	n.s.	91.7	100	n.s.	90.9	80	n.s.	88.1	100	n.s.
I want to marry a Japanese partner.	3	0	n.s.	37.1	0	n.s.	14.8	0	n.s.	12.1	0	n.s.
I am not required to pay commission fees for overseas placement.	93.9	91.7	n.s.	94.1	100	n.s.	94.5	93.3	n.s.	86.6	100	n.s.
I wish to show the caring nature of the Filipinos/Indonesians to the Japanese people.	100	100	–	100	100	–	98.2	100	n.s.	100	100	n.s.
I was frustrated with my salary in the Philippines/Indonesia.	69.7	66.7	n.s.	8.6	33.3	n.s.	50.9	40	n.s.	10.6	0	n.s.

**Table 5** Reason to Go to Japan Based on Economic Condition (Filipinos/Indonesians)

	Filipino Nurse			Indonesian Nurse			Filipino Certified Care Worker			Indonesian Certified Care Worker		
	Not difficult to survive/able to survive (n=45)	Very difficult to survive (n=1)	p value	Not difficult to survive/able to survive (n=39)	Very difficult to survive (n=1)	p value	Not difficult to survive/able to survive (n=69)	Very difficult to survive (n=3)	p value	Not difficult to survive/able to survive (n=70)	Very difficult to survive (n=1)	p value
I was jobless at the time I applied for this program.	46.7	0	n.s.	12.8	0	n.s.	72.5	100	n.s.	48.6	100	n.s.
I have some family/relative(s) who has (have) already lived in Japan.	26.7	100	n.s.	51.3	100	n.s.	21.7	0	n.s.	27.1	100	n.s.
I wish to develop my professional career.	100	100	–	100	100	n.s.	100	100	–	98.6	100	n.s.
My family recommended me to go to Japan.	44.4	100	n.s.	41	100	n.s.	15.9	33.3	n.s.	48.6	100	n.s.
I can have a chance to work in Japan with this program sooner than work in another country.	88.9	100	n.s.	92.3	100	n.s.	94.2	66.7	n.s.	85.7	100	n.s.
I am interested in Japanese culture such as animation and comics.	97.8	100	n.s.	92.3	100	n.s.	89.7	100	n.s.	90	100	n.s.
I wish to support my family economically.	100	100	–	86.8	100	n.s.	100	100	–	94.3	100	n.s.
I wish to learn advanced Japanese technology.	100	100	–	100	100	–	100	100	n.s.	98.5	0	p<0.05
I wish to realize my dream to live abroad.	93.3	100	n.s.	92.1	100	n.s.	89.9	100	n.s.	85.5	100	n.s.
I wish to contribute to the government-to-government program.	97.8	100	n.s.	94.9	100	n.s.	100	100	n.s.	95.6	100	n.s.
I can earn a higher salary in Japan than in other countries.	93.3	100	n.s.	63.9	0	n.s.	94.1	100	n.s.	75.4	0	n.s.
I want to utilize my experiences in Japan for my future work at the hospital/elderly home in other countries.	81.8	100	n.s.	92.3	100	n.s.	89.9	66.7	n.s.	90	0	n.s.
I want to marry a Japanese partner.	2.2	0	n.s.	34.2	0	n.s.	10.3	33.3	n.s.	11.6	0	n.s.
I am not required to pay commission fees for overseas placement.	93.3	100	n.s.	94.4	100	n.s.	94.2	100	n.s.	87.1	100	n.s.
I wish to show the caring nature of the Filipinos/Indonesians to the Japanese people.	100	100	–	100	100	–	98.6	100	n.s.	100	100	–
I was frustrated with my salary in the Philippines/Indonesia.	68.9	100	n.s.	7.9	100	n.s.	50.7	33.3	n.s.	10	0	n.s.



by 17 (37.0%), who selected “I wish to support my family economically.”

Fig. 2 displays the frequencies of the primary reasons Indonesian nurse candidates cited for going to Japan. Sixteen (40.0%) of the respondents selected “I wish to develop my professional career” followed by 10 (25.0%) who picked “I wish to support my family economically.”

Fig. 3 illustrates the frequencies of the primary reasons Filipino certified care-worker candidates named for going to Japan. Twenty-four (33.3%) of the respondents chose “I wish to support my family economically,” followed by 23 (31.9%) “I wish to develop my professional career.”

Fig. 4 shows the frequencies of the primary reasons Indonesian certified care-worker candidates identified for their going to Japan. Twenty-eight (37.8%) of the respondents picked “I wish to develop my professional career,” followed by 20 (27.0%) “I wish to support my family economically.”

## IV Discussions

### (a) *Characteristics by Country of Origin*

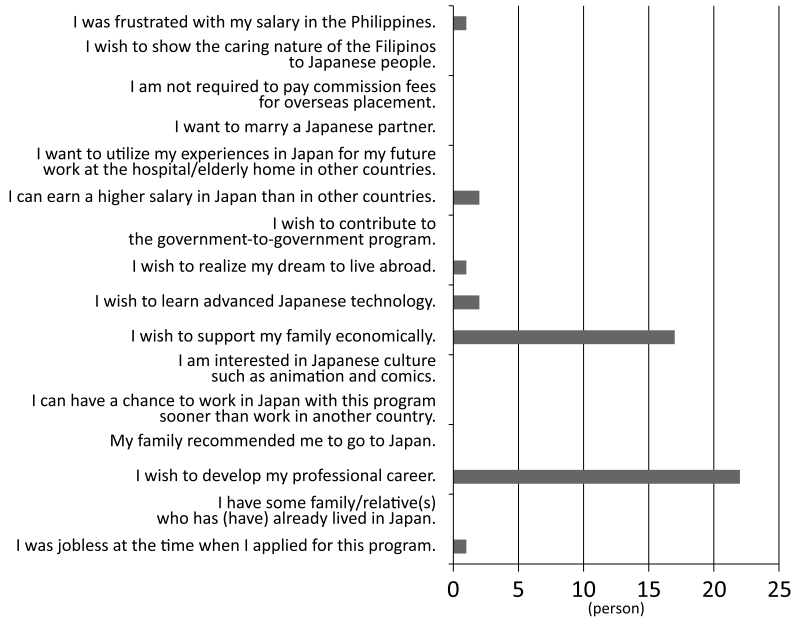
Because there are a limited number of respondents in this study, it is necessary to interpret the statistics cautiously. Nevertheless, this study provides sufficient information for a better understanding of the EPA candidates.

Our study indicated that sociodemographic characteristics differ by country of origin. Regardless of their intended occupation, the Filipino candidates, especially the nurse candidates, were generally older and married with a child/children than their Indonesian counterparts (Table 1). This phenomenon was also observed in the previous studies [Hirano *et al.* 2010: 153–162; Adachi *et al.* 2010: 163–174].

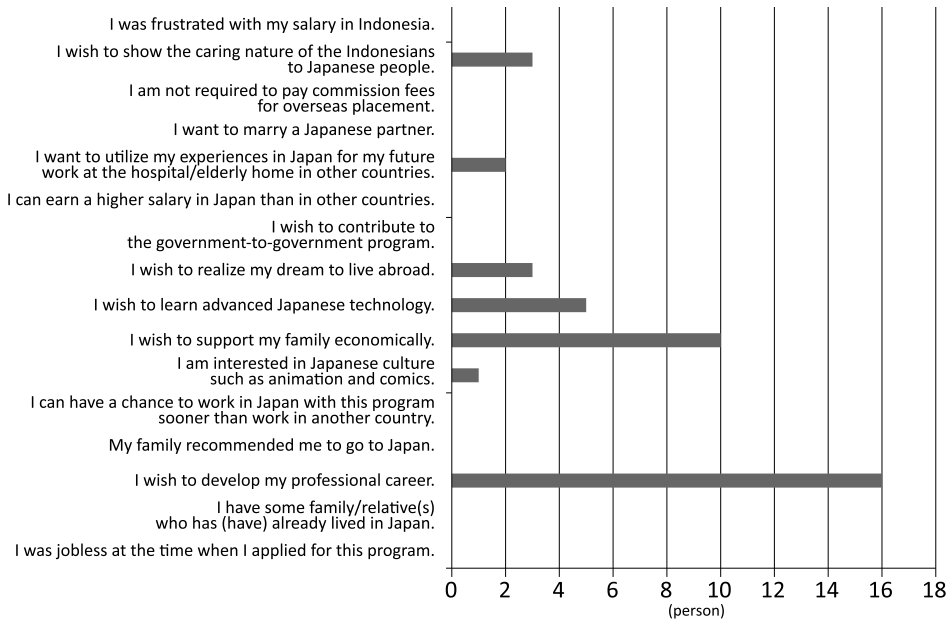
The authors assume that one of the reasons for such differences between the Filipinos and Indonesians may be due to the respondents' prior experiences of going abroad before they applied to this program. As Table 1 indicates, Filipino nurse candidates were more likely to have previous experience working abroad ( $p < 0.01$ ) than Indonesian nurse candidates. Most countries that accept foreign nurses require at least one year of clinical experience in the country of origin [Venzon 2003: 51–62], therefore, one can assume that the Filipino nurse candidates, including a large number of returnees, are likely to be older than Indonesians.

With regard to certified care-worker candidates, many repeat applicants to Japan were included (Table 1), and it was clear that Filipino certified care-worker candidates were more likely than Indonesians to have previously experienced living in Japan. According to the authors' interviews of Filipino certified care-worker candidates, some candidates who had formerly been entertainers in Japan were included. One former entertainer in Japan, returned after the expiration of her entertainment visa, said that she was “too old” to work in Japan as an entertainer, so she decided to return as a care-worker candidate the next time. She needed to go back to Japan because she was married and had children to feed. She hoped her six-month experience working in Japan would enable her to manage average daily Japanese conversation fluently. She anticipated that her proficiency in Japanese would help her adjust to her new life in Japan as a care-worker candidate.<sup>1)</sup> As represented by the above episode, many

1) An interview with a former entertainer in Japan in May 2009.



**Fig. 1** Primary Reason to Go to Japan (Filipino Nurse)



**Fig. 2** Primary Reason to Go to Japan (Indonesian Nurse)

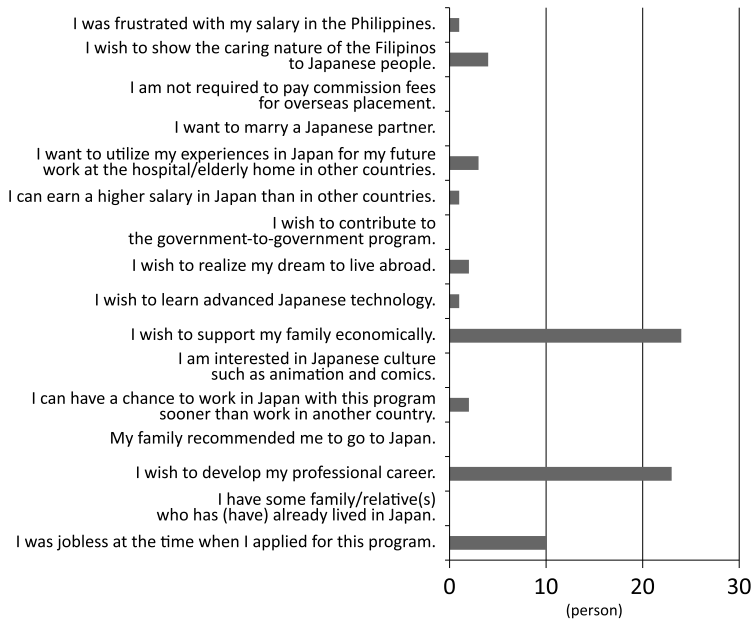


Fig. 3 Primary Reason to Go to Japan (Filipino Certified Care Worker)

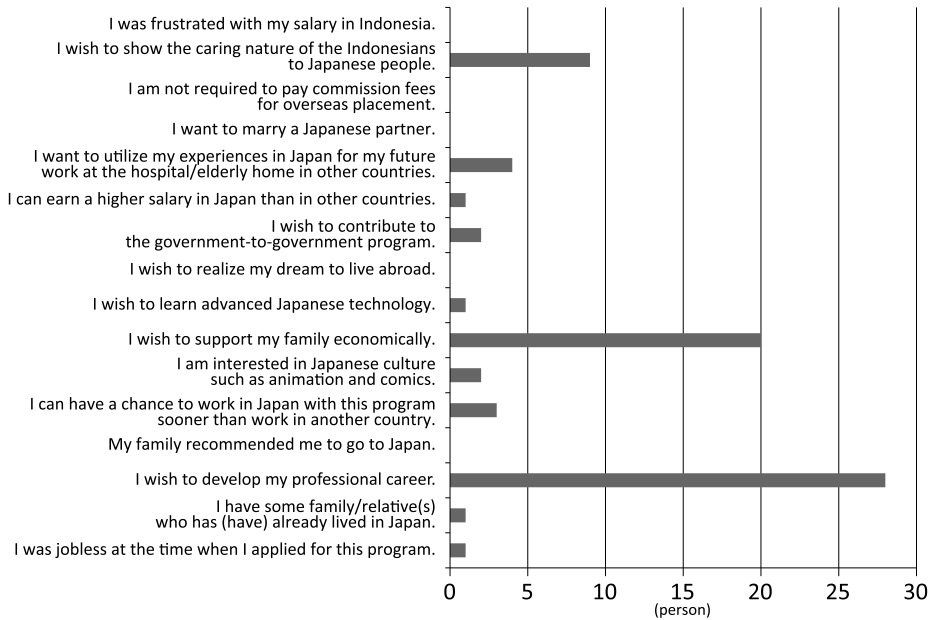


Fig. 4 Primary Reason to Go to Japan (Indonesian Certified Care Worker)

Filipinos have prior experience living and working abroad, and therefore, they are more likely to be older, married, and have a family.

Table 2 demonstrates another characteristic of the Filipino candidates. Although no statistically significant difference was found for the perceived economic condition of the families between Filipino candidates and Indonesian candidates, by comparing each category based on their reason for going to Japan, it became clear that reasons related to the economic condition were more likely to be cited by Filipino candidates than Indonesian candidates. Reasons such as being jobless at the time of their applications for the EPA program, having a need to support family economically, expecting a higher salary in Japan than in other countries, and being frustrated with their salary in the Philippines influenced Filipino candidates more than Indonesian candidates with regard to being recruited to Japan for work.

The interpretation of these results was consistent with the findings of previous studies. For example, Hirano [2009a: 44–47] noticed that Filipino migrants were more likely to be financially supporting families, in the name of “*utang na loob*” (reciprocity), a cultural value of the Filipinos [Hollunsteiner 1979: 38–43]. Based on this principle, one of the easiest ways to show love for their families is by sending money from abroad so to enable the family to enjoy a better life. Therefore, Filipinos are more likely to go to Japan to uphold this tradition.

#### (b) *Transitions of Nurse and Certified Care-Worker Candidates*

The results of this study indicate that there are several points currently in transition for nurse and certified care-worker candidates. The characteristics of the candidates differ by occupation as well as by country of origin. The authors of this article will focus on two main points currently under transition: gender distribution and the primary reason(s) for going to Japan.

Regarding the gender distribution, as Piper [2003: 21–48] recorded, a feminization of migration is commonly observed in transnational migration. In this study, the phenomenon is clearly observed among the Filipino candidates. The feminization of migration of Filipino candidates is even stronger now than was true for the previous groups of candidates. For example, the proportion of female Filipino nurse candidates has increased from 88.9% to 95.7%, and that of Filipino certified care-worker candidates has increased from 88.6% to 98.6%.

On the other hand, for Indonesian candidates, the gender distribution varies by occupation. For nurse candidates, the ratio of females has increased from 82.0% to 87.2%, while for certified care-worker candidates, the ratio of females has decreased from 77.0% to 68.9%. This may be because male Indonesian certified care-worker candidates are more likely to choose the option to go abroad than females when they are jobless, even if they are required to pay commission fees for overseas placement (Table 3). A statistically significant correlation between gender and “I am not required to pay commission fees from overseas placement” as a reason for going to Japan was not shown in the previous studies [Adachi *et al.* 2010: 163–174], so this must be a new phenomenon affecting Indonesian care-worker migration.

There may be several reasons for the irregular gender distribution by occupation among Indonesian candidates. One can assume that it may be caused by the different characteristics between nurses and

care workers. Asakura [2005: 1120–1125] suggested that nursing is considered a female job in Japan. For this reason, many of the first Indonesians were not able to match the requirements of the Japanese hospitals and they were not able to become candidates for work in Japan [*Yomiuri Shimbun*, July 29, 2008].<sup>2)</sup>

On the other hand, certified care-worker candidates are less likely to experience gender biases. A staff member at a Japanese long-term care facility said that he preferred male certified care-worker candidates, because males were stronger than females, so they could easily hold and lift the patients. Additionally, Indonesian males tended to be shorter than Japanese males in height, so physically they did not intimidate the patients. Possibly for these reasons, more Japanese institutions have begun to prefer male Indonesian care-worker candidates.<sup>3)</sup> This is one of the reasons responsible for accelerating the increased migration of male Indonesian certified care-worker candidates, which has been proven statistically. The female distribution was 68.9% for Indonesian certified care-worker candidates, significantly lower than that of Filipino candidates ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 1). Further investigation is needed to determine why this masculinization of migration appears only among the Indonesian candidates.

Regarding the changes in the primary reasons for going to Japan, there were clear differences by country, as was also true in our previous studies [Hirano *et al.* 2010: 153–162; Adachi *et al.* 2010: 163–174]. When asked their primary reason for going to Japan, the answers of the second group of Indonesian candidates, especially nurse candidates, showed a monopolar distribution: 66.7% of the respondents answered “I wish to develop my professional career.” In contrast, the Filipino candidate constituted a bipolar distribution. For the Filipino nurses, “I wish to support my family economically” (42.7%), was closely followed by “I wish to develop my professional career” (36.5%) [Hirano *et al.* 2010: 153–162]. Adachi *et al.* [2010: 163–174] mentioned that the bipolar distribution was found also among the first group of Filipino certified care-worker candidates.

In this study, Indonesian nurse candidates’ answers showed a more bipolar distribution than the previous group (Fig. 2). One can assume that the differences in the economic backgrounds of the family resulted in the differences in their responses between Filipino and Indonesian nurse candidates. This does not contradict the premise that no statistical differences in the economic conditions of the families were established between the two groups.

More interestingly, the primary reason Filipino nurse candidates gave for emigrating to Japan differed from that of the last group of candidates. In the last group, “I wish to support my family economically” was the primary reason, but in this group, the major reason had changed to “I wish to develop my professional career” (Fig. 1). This may indicate a transition for Filipino nurse candidates in choosing Japan as a way to increase their career development. Asato [2010: 53–64] previously mentioned that EPA nursing candidates were not developing their careers; in fact they had often been degraded and deskilled by not being allowed to perform nursing interventions. Similar complaints were derived

2) This article reported that those who were not able to become candidates were all male. The first author of this study found that majority of them were male, but some females were also included.

3) An interview with a care-worker staff member working for an institution in the Kyushu Region in November 2008.

from the authors' interviews. An Indonesian candidate complained "I am not coming here to clean windows! I was an ICU nurse in Indonesia and I come here to learn advanced Japanese technology!"<sup>4)</sup>

That opinion was not reported during interviews with Filipino nurse candidates. Their main complaints concerned the salary and the high cost of living that makes it more difficult to send a sufficient remittance to their families in the Philippines.<sup>5)</sup>

The authors of this study interpreted this phenomenon as follows: The act of nursing depends on the culture where it is being performed. This was clearly indicated in the authors' interview [Hirano 2009a: 44–47]. If a nurse works in another culture, she/he may encounter different types of nursing care under the different cultural contexts. Therefore, the experience of working abroad as nurses would allow them to evaluate the nursing practices in their own countries more objectively. Indonesian nurse candidates, with less experience going abroad than Filipino nurse candidates, may have fewer opportunities to be exposed to new nursing skills developed in other countries, thus they may tend to adhere to their ethnocentrism. In other words, they believe that the standards of nursing care in Indonesia are universal, which is not true.

For example, if an ICU nurse believes that her/his work in Indonesian hospitals managing high-tech medical equipment, is typical, it might be difficult for such a candidate to work in the field of occupational therapy, which in psychiatric nursing, can include cleaning windows with patients. This interpretation of conflicting expectations is consistent with the findings of Alam and Wulansari [2010: 183–192]. From their interviews with Indonesian nurse candidates in Western Japan, they found that the initial friction encountered by Indonesian nurse candidates later developed into innovative attitudes toward nursing, namely physical intimacy, empathetic nursing, and punctuality as a work ethic. But such "creative friction" can be experienced only after they go abroad.

With their prior experiences working abroad as nurses, Filipino nurse candidates are more likely to anticipate "something to learn" from the Japanese in terms of their career development, because they understand nursing in Japan is different from that in the Philippines. Further studies on this issue are needed to follow the transition of why Filipino nurse candidates choose to go to Japan.

### (c) *New Findings on the Migration Patterns of Indonesian Candidates*

The focus of this study was to obtain quantitative data so that the authors could present a cross-sectional, as well as a longitudinal, analysis. By utilizing a quantitative procedure, the authors can objectively clarify some myths about the migration pattern exhibited by the past studies. For instance, the belief that "the oldest siblings must go abroad to help the younger siblings go to school" is widely accepted in Filipino society. However, this was not quantitatively proven in Hirano's previous study of the first group of Filipino candidates [Hirano *et al.* 2010: 153–162] nor in this study. On the contrary, respondents who were the oldest siblings were more likely to be found among the Indonesian nurse candidates. This fact should alert researchers, who obtain information through qualitative data analysis that they must test their hypothesis carefully against a quantitative analysis to prevent interpreting the facts incorrectly.

---

4) An interview with an Indonesian nurse candidate in the Kyushu Region in May 2009.

5) An interview with Filipino nurse candidates in the Kansai Region in February 2011.

This study also applies to migration studies because it provides quantitative data about the Indonesian candidates. Because of the large gap in the number of nurses recruited from the Philippines and those from Indonesia,<sup>6)</sup> the migration pattern of Indonesian nurses has not been investigated as extensively due to the lack of data. By analyzing the Indonesian data in comparison with the Filipino data, this study has uncovered some new findings about Indonesian migration patterns.

First, the chain migration pattern of Indonesian nurse candidates became clear. Hirano's survey results did not address differences between the second group of Indonesian nurse candidates and the first group of Filipino nurse candidates who answered that "I have some family/relative(s) who has (have) already lived in Japan" [*ibid.*]. But a year later, the third group of Indonesian nurse candidates were more likely to answer that they came to Japan because they had some family/relative(s) who has (have) already lived in Japan than the second group of Filipino nurse candidates ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 2).

One can assume that the experience of having previous workers in Japan may lead to an increase in family members electing to work in Japan. This is particularly true of Indonesians, who started to send nurse candidates to Japan a year earlier than Filipinos. Such chain migration is expected to increase, particularly in Indonesians, since more Indonesian candidates answered that "I want to marry a Japanese partner" in the previous studies [*ibid.*; Adachi *et al.* 2010: 163–174] and this proved true also for this study. Marrying a Japanese partner is a key factor that allows them to become a permanent resident of Japan [Murphy-Shigematsu 2000: 198–216]. That may result in their bringing their families or siblings from Indonesia to Japan in the future.

Second, the family dynamics of Indonesian candidates must be discussed. In this study, Indonesian certified care-worker candidates were more likely to answer "My family recommended me to go to Japan" than Filipino certified care workers ( $p < 0.001$ ). This phenomenon can also be observed in Adachi's findings ( $p < 0.01$ ) [Adachi *et al.* 2010: 163–174].

When interpreting this phenomenon, one can assume that family approval is especially important for Indonesian candidates. Hirano [2010: 48–50] reported that family's opinion is very influential on the candidates and Indonesian candidates have even terminated their contacts halfway through to return home at the request of their families. The National Board for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (BNP2TKI) of Indonesia, responsible for the placement of Indonesian candidates to become care workers in Japan, has also experienced a high degree of frustration because some candidates decide to withdraw from this program even after they have been officially matched to Japanese hospitals and/or care facilities. Therefore, the BNP2TKI is now considering whether the applicants should be required to submit a letter of agreement signed by their families. For the above reasons, Indonesian candidates appear to be obligated to have their family's approval before going to Japan.

#### (d) *Factors Required for the Development of Sustainable EPA Programs*

According to the current EPA regulations, certified care-worker candidates may qualify with experience

6) According to the POEA statistics of 2010, more than 13,014 nurses departed to work abroad. For Indonesians, between 1989 and 2007, only 5,566 nurses left to work abroad before the IJEPAs started [Panchaweda 2008: 46–51].

other than a nursing background [Japan, Minister's Secretariat, International Division, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2010]. To become a Filipino certified care-worker candidate, she/he must be a college graduate (with any major). Those, who graduated with a non-nursing major, however, must complete a six-month caregiver course provided by the TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority). A similar 105-day intensive training course was offered for Indonesian certified care-worker candidates at designated training centers in Indonesia in 2009. Such scheme may attract more people with various backgrounds, including those who are interested in not only caring for the elderly, but also in learning about Japanese culture or Japanese technology. The economic condition of the family may also affect their attitudes about working in Japan. For example, unmarried Filipino certified care-worker candidates are more likely to come to Japan than married workers, in order to satisfy their interest in Japanese culture, such as animation and comics (Table 4). Some Indonesian certified care-worker candidates who are not economically burdened at home might come to Japan because they are interested in learning Japanese technology (Table 5) rather than because they can earn a better salary in Japan.

For this reason, one can postulate that certified care-worker candidates are not always suited for and enthusiastic about caring for the elderly. The authors of this study found that some Japanese staff at care facilities were embarrassed by the Indonesian certified care-worker candidates who had graduated from a Japanese language course in universities in Indonesia. A staff member said that the candidates had little motivation to care for people, since their primary purpose in coming to Japan was to improve their Japanese proficiency.<sup>7)</sup> This attitude demonstrates the importance of maintaining benchmarks for the selection of certified care-worker candidates. Not only nursing, but also care work, is an emotional labor, which requires a commitment to deal with patients and provide them with humane care. Therefore, the careful selection of candidates, based not only on their Japanese proficiency, but also on their personality and attitude towards caring, is essential.

The review of the JPEPA will start by the end of 2011, and for the IJPEPA by the end of 2012. Therefore, in order to establish improved and more sustainable EPA programs, the recommendations suggested by this study should be taken into consideration.

### Acknowledgements

This work is a part of "A Global Sociological Study on Japan's Opening of Its Labor Market Particularly in the Field of Care and Nursing" (Representative: Dr. Shun Ohno) funded by Kyushu University Program and Project on Education and Research as well as a part of "A Study on Support System for Foreign Nurses Introduced by Economic Partnership Agreement" (Representative: Dr. Yuko Ohara-Hirano) funded by KAKENHI (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) 21390166).

### References

Adachi, Kiyoshi; Ohno, Shun; Hirano, Yuko O.; Ogawa, Reiko; and Kreasita. 2010. Rainichi Indonesia-jin, Firipin-

---

7) An interview with a care-facility worker in Shikoku in July 2011.



- jin Kaigo Fukushima Kohosha no Jitsuzo [Real Images and Realities of Indonesian and Filipino Certified Care-Worker Candidates under the EPA Program]. *Kyushu Daigaku Ajia Sogo Seisaku Senta Kiyo* [Bulletin of Kyushu University Asia Center] 5: 163–174.
- Alam, Bachtiar; and Wulansari, Sri Ayu. 2010. Creative Friction: Come Preliminary Consideration on the Socio-Cultural Issues Encountered by Indonesian Nurses in Japan. *Kyushu Daigaku Ajia Sogo Seisaku Senta Kiyo* [Bulletin of Kyushu University Asia Center] 5: 183–192.
- Asahi Shimbun* Editor. 2009. Gaikoku-jin Kea Shikaku: Tobira o Hiraita karaniwa [Once We Open the Door to the Health Care Workers from Abroad]. *Asahi Shimbun*, November 29, 2009.
- Asakura, Kyoko. 2005. Jenda no Shiten kara Yomitoku Kea-Kearingu Gainen [Concept of Care and Caring through Gender Perspectives]. *Kango Kanri* [Nursing Management] 69(11): 1120–1125.
- Asato, Wako. 2010. Kango-Kaigo Bumon ni okeru Jinzai Ikuseigata Ukeire no Mondaiten: Keizai Renkei Kyotei no Jirei kara [Issued on Receiving Foreign Nurses/Care Workers: From a Case of Economic Partnership Agreement]. *Hoken Iryo Shakai Gakkaishi* [Japanese Journal of Health and Medical Sociology] 21(2): 53–64.
- Hirano, Yuko. 2009a. Gaikokujin Kangoshi–Kaigoshi no Donyu [Introduction of Foreign Nurse and Certified Care Workers] 5: Byoin Haizoku kara 4 kagetsu: Genba no Koe kara [Four Months after the Placement to the Hospitals: Hospitals Have a Say]. *Bunkaren Joho* 376: 44–47.
- . 2009b. Gaikokujin Kangoshi–Kaigoshi no Donyu [Introduction of Foreign Nurse and Certified Care Workers] 6: “Kokusai Shohin” to shite no Firipin-jin Kaigai Dekasegi Rodosha: Hanayakana Sokokai to Sono Kage de [Filipino Overseas Workers as “International Commodity”: Another Story behind the Curtain of Farewell Party]. *Bunkaren Joho* 377: 56–59.
- . 2010. Gaikokujin Kangoshi–Kaigoshi no Donyu [Introduction of Foreign Nurse and Certified Care Workers] 17: Indonesia-jin Kangoshi Senpatsu Kikokusha wa Ima [Interview with Indonesian Returnees]. *Bunkaren Joho* 390: 48–50.
- Hirano, Yuko Ohara-; Ogawa, Reiko; and Ohno, Shun. 2010. Nikokukan Keizai Renkei Kyotei ni Motozuite Rainichi suru Indonesia-jin oyobi Firipin-jin Kangoshi Kohosha ni taisuru Hikaku Chosa: Shakai Keizaiteki Zokusei to Rainichi Doki ni Kansuru Haifuhyo Chosa Kekka o Chushin ni [A Comparative Survey on Indonesian and Filipino Nurse Candidates Coming to Japan under the Economic Partnership Agreements: An Analysis of the Results of Questionnaire Surveys on Socio-economic Attribution of the Respondents and Their Motivations to Go to Japan]. *Kyushu Daigaku Ajia Sogo Seisaku Senta Kiyo* [Bulletin of Kyushu University Asia Center] 5: 153–162.
- Hollunsteiner, Mary R. 1979. Reciprocity as a Filipino Value. In *Society, Culture and the Filipino: A Textbook of Readings in Anthropology and Society*, edited by Mary R. Hollunsteiner, pp.38–43. Quezon City, Metro Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University.
- Japan, Minister’s Secretariat, International Division, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. 2010. Zenkoku Koseirodo Kankei Bukyoku-cho Kaigi Shiryo [Meeting Documents for Ministry of Director General, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare]. Tokyo: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Accessed August 15, 2011. <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/2010/01/dl/tp0121-1ab.pdf>
- Murphy-Shigematsu, Stephen. 2000. Identities of Multiethnic People in Japan. In *Japan and Global Migration: Foreign Workers and the Advent of a Multicultural Society*, edited by Mike Douglass and Glenda S. Roberts, pp. 198–216. London, New York: Routledge.
- Panchaweda, Fifi A. 2008. The Present Situation and Prospect of Overseas Indonesian Care Workers. In *Globalizing Nursing and Care: Discussions over Foreign Workers’ Entry into Japan’s Labor Market*, edited by Shun Ohno and Reiko Ogawa, pp.46–51. Kyushu University Asia Center.
- Piper, Nicola. 2003. Bridging Gender, Migration and Governance: Theoretical Possibilities in Asian Context. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 12(1–2): 21–48.
- Venzon, Lydia M. 2003. *Professional Nursing in the Philippines*. Quezon City: C&E Publishing, Inc.
- Yomiuri Shimbun*. 2008. Nihon-Indonesia EPA: Dansei Kangoshi o Nihon gawa Keien [JIEPA: Japan Unwelcomed Male Nurses]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, July 29, 2008.