

A Gender-Aware Analysis on the Feminization of Entertainment Industry in Japan

Anderson V. Villa

Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology
Mindanao State University – General Santos
Center for Global Studies, University of Shizuoka – Japan
avvilla@msugensan.edu.ph

Abstract

This manuscript reexamines the institutionalization of the feminization of migration industry in the Philippine-Japan migration stream through a gender-aware approach. It interrogates on the reasons why Filipina migrants made their way out of the Philippines, through regular and illicit channels, to a host country like Japan despite its restrictive immigration policies. The study unpacks on the common notion that along with active state facilitation, Filipino women migrants' mobility or those who are engaged in "nightwork" is basically mediated through the entertainment industry. This research is a product of long engagements with the respondents and various key-informants of NGOs and club owners from 2010 to 2015. The findings reveal that women migrants are able to exploit the migration industry as their personal network in alleviating their precarious status. The researcher agrees that the institutionalization of the migration through the entertainment industry from the Philippines to Japan perpetuates an exploitative woman-dominated migration stream. However, in most instances, Filipina migrants capably exploit their personal or community network formation which could also be found in the nightwork industry.

Keywords: *gender-aware approach, entertainment, feminization, Filipino migration, Japan*

Introduction

This study covers the famous "Sakae-Higashi" (eastern side) in Nagoya, and Beppu in Oita prefecture. In this specific vignette, the researcher does not merely locate the respondents with interesting backgrounds or life stories but also explore the social landscape of an entertainment district. This setting is archetypal of most Japanese cities – as early in the morning, and seemingly one's first impression was that it is like a "ghost town" – which only comes alive at night-time. Such observation is not surprising for people around who got used to the local landscape. When people think about the Japanese red-light district, the big cities come to mind, especially the major districts of Tokyo such as Ginza, Kabuki-cho and Roppongi, as well as those in Osaka (Namba), Nagoya (Sakae) and even in Fukuoka (see also Allison, 1994; Parreñas, 2011; Chung, 2012).

Filipinos have been major players in the so-called "entertainment" or nightwork industry, and the red-light districts of the small towns and cities are no exception. Even small towns and cities as far as Beppu and Oita in Kyushu have their fair share of the so-called "Philippine pubs" wherein

Filipino hostesses entertain their Japanese clientele. Eventually, some of these Filipino "entertainers" found their Japanese spouses and settle in Japan. With these new residency rights, many undertake various occupations and activities. However, there are a few who remain in or return to the red-light districts to either work part-time as hostesses or even become proprietors of their establishments (Faier, 2007; Suzuki, 2008).

In the study of Abe (2009, 2011), Sakae district is a depiction of the economic, political and socio-cultural embodiment of what a city Nagoya is. The northeastern part of Sakae is where most of the government branch (Naka-ward) offices are located along with elegant restaurants. Located in Nishiki 3 Chome (northwestern part) are the high-end clubs, bars, and bars – considered as the top of the nightlife industry in Nagoya. Sakae 3 Chome (southwestern part) is the central shopping area which is famous for the location of the large department stores, boutiques, and high-class brand shops. A local newspaper once described Sakaehigashi area, otherwise known as "Sakae Walk Streets" (Sakae 4 or 5 Chome) as "little Manila" in 2004. Most of the Philippine pubs, snack bars, and even Filipino restaurants are

situated here. It has since been dubbed as the “hottest place with an ethnic, exotic and sexual nightscape and club economy” (Abe, 2011, p. 10) until 2005 when the Japanese immigration policy got stricter coupled with the economic crisis three years later (see also Takahata, 2007, 2021).

On the other hand, if Nagoya represents one of the major cosmopolitan city centers of Japan, Beppu – a medium size city in Southwestern

region of Japan – can still be considered a provincial town in the context of the main industrial countries like the US and Canada. Beppu is widely known as a hot spring tourist destination for Japan, particularly its natural *onsen* (bath resort) around Kyushu Island. In the past ten years, Beppu is becoming a known destination for international students from Asia and across the globe. Aside from its hot spring, Beppu is also



Figure 1. Entertainment District in Sakae, Nagoya (2015).

known for its discreet entertainment and red light district at the heart of the city. If there is a Sakae district in Nagoya, Beppu has a Motomachi district too – surrounded by shopping centers, restaurants, and bathhouse. Any traveler can easily discern numerous Philippine pubs, clubs, and bars located in the area if they walk through its small roads and alleys.

Assumptions

This research seeks to address the question about the perpetuation of the feminization of migration via the entertainment or sex industries beyond the structural or individual factors, that are, at the meso-level or semi-structural dimensions. As a corollary argument to Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2014) that migration is not simply a matter that solely concerns the destination countries, the researcher points out that the migrants’ mobility was only made possible through the active involvement of the non-state actors in the migration industries of both corridors, the Philippines and Japan. Initially, the researcher only address the question of feminization on how the Filipina entertainers activated their agency in achieving their life’s purpose, addressing the fundamental complexities and irregularities they are into (Villa & Mani, 2013; Villa, 2016). In this paper, the author subscribes to the proposition of migration scholars and experts that in this global age, the

“awareness of women’s role in migration has grown” and that women workers of today “form the majority in movements” across time and space (Castles et al., 2014, p. 16).

The conventional narratives on why migrants leave their country of origin rest on the argument that they are mere victims of an exploitative system and by taking risks in a distant host country, migrants are able to emancipate themselves (see also Nuqui et al., 2003). Thus, as in the case of Filipino migrants in Japan, it appears that they had the full “locus of control” at the onset of their journey through the migration stream, capitalizing on their network in the Philippines and abroad. In the same vein, their mobility was only made possible through the active involvement of the migration industry in the migration process. It is in this context that the researcher posits that the proposition of Massey et al. (1993) would make reasonable argument in the whole migration process and would only become possible with the mutual collaboration of the state, private sector (migration industry) and the individual migrants.

Materials and Methods

This study is a product of years of encounter of the researcher with key-informants, as well as NGOs and club owners for his dissertation

fieldwork between 2010 and 2015. Aside from direct and participant observation in identified entertainment districts, informal interviews of Filipina bar owners, workers and entertainers were also conducted between 2012 and 2015. Participant observation was made possible with the consent of the bar owners and some entertainers since many of them have become uneasy when informed of the research objectives. Ethical considerations were carefully carried out in ensuring the confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity of the key-informants, participants, and customers in the conduct of this study. Prior consent was always sought before commencing the interviews. Most of the informants were informed beforehand of the researcher's purpose and the reasons behind the visit to the locale of the study.

The study sites were the selected red-light districts of two cities in Japan (particularly in Beppu and Nagoya). Beppu and Nagoya were purposively selected as the researcher spent most of his time in these cities in the conduct of his dissertation. Beppu is considered a relatively small town in Kyushu, the *onsen* (hot spring and summer) capital in south-western Japan which is in stark contrast with Nagoya as the industry capital of Japan. Both cities have active and lively entertainment centers and a vibrant Filipino community located nearby. Moreover, data analysis covers the case study and personal narratives of the respondents in relation to the hypothesis of Massey et al. in the following sequence: 1) personal troubles leading to departure to Japan, 2) licit/illicit migration and experiences of abuse, and 3) repatriation from Japan or return migration to the Philippines.

Theoretical Framework

This paper subscribes to the gender dimension of the institutionalization of the Philippine-Japan migration stream. In particular, a "gender-aware approach" (Samers and Collyer, 2017) infers questions of perpetuation of the feminization of migration both at the macro and micro-level dimensions. Scholars such as James Tyner (1994), Saskia Sassen (2002), Catherine Ceniza Choy (2003) and Nicola Piper (2006) suggest compelling reasons that necessitate such paradigm in a global system that perpetuates a historically women-dominated migration stream brought by a highly gendered-labor demand from formerly colonized, poorer regions of the world to capital-rich, core areas in the Americas, Europe and Asia (for colonial discourse on gender and migration, see also Choy & Wu, 2017; Sarker & Niyogi De, 2002).

For instance, James Tyner (1994, pp. 609-610) points out that the "current migration research reflects an uncritical acceptance of the sexual

division of labor of overseas contract work..." There is also a need to reexamine "how the social construction of gender and gendered migration channel women toward selected occupations within the international division of labor: domestic workers and entertainers. These occupational niches, in turn, place women in far more vulnerable positions, thus exacerbating exploitative practices." Trafficking of women is another dimension that lends credence for a gender discourse on this migratory pattern. The works of Sassen and Piper highlighted the need to reexamine global policies and economic structure that configures the feminization of migration, which, to some extent, inadvertently facilitates abuse and exploitation of women than men.

In contrast, Parreñas (2011, p. 5) offers a counterargument on recognizing the migrant's autonomy that "when we take a closer look at the migration of Filipina hostesses, we see that they generally migrate on their own volition." Parreñas concludes that while these women migrants are vulnerable to sex trafficking or to forced labor, she begs to question the prevailing discourse that Filipinas are helpless victims and need rescuing. She argues that "vulnerability, however, does not automatically make them trafficked person..." In fact, her study found out that among the women-migrants the infamous *Yakuza* were not seen as criminals but as potential boyfriends, husbands and fathers of their children (Parreñas, 2011, pp. 6-8). Nevertheless, in this study, the researcher affirms a dimension of the literature on gender studies approaches such as those cited by Samers and Collyer (2017, pp. 103-104) that States play an enormous role in making the system that perpetuates a women-dominated migration stream thrive. The researcher also subscribes to the proposition of Nana Oishi (2005) on the need for an integrative multilevel analysis to the study of female migration which could be examined at four levels: 1) supra-state (global), 2) macro (state), 3) meso (society), and 4) micro (individual).

Gender-aware approach interrogates the fundamental role of governments and states in mediating and encouraging "differential types of migration among men and women. It also does the same in controlling men and women's unequal right to migrate," as well as "how gender relations inside and outside the family in the country of emigration combined with gender relations in the country of immigration." In weaving all of these assertions, the researcher's position is that the feminization is impacted by the proliferation of the entertainment industry within the Philippines-Japan migration stream. Massey et al. (1993, p. 448) argued that, "...the conditions that initiate international movement may be quite different from those that perpetuate it across time and

space... new conditions that arise in the course of migration come to function as independent causes themselves: migrant network spread, institutions supporting transnational movement develop, and the social meaning of work changes in receiving societies.” It is in this context that the study highlights the appropriation of the following hypotheses as posited by Massey et al. (1993, pp. 450-451):

1. As international migration becomes institutionalized through the formation and elaboration of networks and organizations that support, sustain and promote international movement, it becomes progressively *independent of the factors that originally caused it*, be they structural or individual.
2. *Governments can expect to have great difficulty controlling and regulating the migration flows once they have begun,*

because the process of network formation lies largely outside their control and occurs no matter what policy regime is pursued. Given the profits to be made by meeting the demand for immigrant entry, *police efforts only serve to create a black market in international movement*, and stricter immigration policies are met with resistance from humanitarian groups.

3. The disparities between the supply of and demand for entry visas into core receiving societies create a *lucrative niche for entrepreneurs to provide licit and illicit entry services*, and that the exploitation that results from this disparity will also prompt humanitarian organizations to intervene on immigrants’ behalf.

In this paper, entrepreneurs refer to the investors and capitalists in the entertainment industry who are working within the “semi-

Table 1: “Migration Industry” in the Philippine-Japan Migration Stream.

Type of Organizations	Japan	Philippines
State Entities (Legitimate)	1) Regional Immigration Bureaus (Osaka, Nagoya and Nagasaki) 2) Philippine Consulate-Osaka.	1) National and Regional Government Agencies (Migration-related) 2) Local government: Davao City-based initiative for OFWs
Non-State Entities (Legitimate)	1) Church-based network 2) Non-Church based	1) Church-based network 2) Non-Church based
Semi-Legitimate “Migration Industry” (<i>Licit and Illicit</i>)	1) Clubs (bar owners) 2) Entrepreneurs (restaurant/snack bars)	1) Clubs (bar owners) 2) Entrepreneurs (recruiters, talent scouts, promoter)

legitimate” migration industry who employ both licit and illicit profit-oriented “services” to Filipino women migrants. The said actors include the bar owners, brokers and recruiters (i.e. talent scouts, promoter) (see table above). Reflections from the key informants and/or respondents focus on how these actors impacted on their lives and personal idiosyncrasies outside the usual bounds of government reach. The role of non-state humanitarian organizations is also pointed out as they have become ever present in the lives of the migrants in the provision of their advocacy work and welfare services, especially when they intervene on their behalf and carry their issues and concerns to the authorities.

In fact, many of the respondents were able to utilize their personal network and informal linkages in realizing their desired ends. As cited, “personal community networks” are supportive ties with friends, relatives, neighbors and workmates – such ties supply network capital (in the form of social capital) that make resources available

through interpersonal ties (Wellman & Frank, 2008, pp. 233). Personal networks may also include people of similar race, class, ethnicity and other types of social background. Nevertheless, it is interesting to take note that these networks may somehow address migrants’ precarious status and relatively alleviate their difficult circumstances (Bakewell, 2010; Giddens & Sutton, 2013; Wolfel, 2005). Massey et al. (1993, p. 448) pointed out that migrant networks “increase the likelihood of international movement because they lower the costs and risks of movement and increase the expected net returns to migration” (see also Fawcett, 1989).

Nature of Filipina-Dominated Entertainment Industry

Up until 2005, Japan is still arguably one of the preferred destination countries of Filipinos in Asia; mostly for female migrants who either enter Japan as temporary workers or through spouse visa (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2014). In fact,

Lydia Yu Jose's (2002, 2007) work hinted on the historical roots of Filipino migration to Japan from late 1800s which were largely predominated by male musicians. In the post-war era, Japan has turned out to be a top destination for Filipina migrants who are entertainers who could be traced back as early as the 1970s when entertainer's visa was introduced primarily for cultural performers (see also Anderson, 2000; Ballescas, 1992, 2003; David, 1991; Takeda, 2005; Tyner, 1994). Similarly, Castles et al. (2014, p. 154) extensively hinted that "there was little female labor migration in Asia before the late 1970s." Their works conclude that most jobs involving migrant women who are considered "typically female" are concentrated in domestic work, entertainment, hotel and restaurant, and in the assembly-line for clothing and electronics factory. Feminization of migration is also observed in the form of marriage. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO, 2013) report shows that of the total percentage of Filipino emigrants who have alien spouses abroad, nearly 26 percent reside in Japan and more than 40 percent are based in the USA.

Such roles and responsibilities mentioned above are as real as the experiences of the Japanese hostesses themselves. In a pejorative sense, hostesses are someone "paid to flirt" with men at bars or clubs and once looked down for associating them with sex workers. Many of the entertainers though claim they never sleep with their customers. According to the National Police Agency of Japan, as cited by Shiho Fukuda (2014), there are at least 70,000 hostess bars and clubs in Japan. The video documentary concludes that the job's newfound popularity reflects, at least in part, a lack of professional opportunities for Japanese women. As Shiho Fukuda concluded in her video documentary, citing the World Economic Forum in 2013, Japan's economy is the third largest in the world. However, it ranks among the worst when it comes to economic opportunities for women (Fukuda, 2014).

The documentary of Fukuda explores the thriving entertainment industry in Japan which draws financially poor young women (even as young as sixteen years old) to work for them as hostesses. One of the respondents of the said documentary was an owner of a popular hostess bar in Tokyo who talks about the rationale behind their industry. He also confirmed that there are very few high paying jobs for women in Japan. Top-end hostesses make over \$20,000 a month while most hostesses make \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month. Also in the documentary, the entertainer explains that what they are doing is contributing positively to the society as a whole such that men who are not very attractive or sheepishly shy could be given a chance to express their feelings or flirtatiously converse with the hostesses, but not necessarily

sleep (have sexual intercourse) with them. Similarly, the informant in Fukuda's video documentary made mention that:

After college, men do not have many opportunities to meet women. We provide that opportunity to them. However, hostessing is not sex work. That is not what we do. There's a clear line a customer cannot cross. Hostesses draw the line. Our bars protect women from customers violating the rules (Mr. Nagata in Fukuda, 2014).

Moreover, Yamanaka and Piper (2005) expounded on the Philippine-Japan migration stream which mostly involves unauthorized women migrants who are connected with the entertainment industry usually associated with criminal gangs including the Yakuza. Japanese Yakuza is still considered a criminal syndicate but have since registered themselves as business corporations running the entertainment industry (see also Ball and Piper, 2002; Oishi, 2005). Until the mid-2000s, the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report warned about Japan becoming a destination country for a significant number of "Asian, Latin American, and Eastern European women and children who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation" (Fujimoto, 2006, p. 41; see also Chung, 2012). This situation led to the government's policy of abruptly limiting and imposing strict regulations for the issuance of entertainer's visas for all sending countries. Many of the advocacy and human rights groups considered the move a successful outcome of their international anti-trafficking campaign. However, other scholars disagree, including Parreñas (2011, p. 4) who argues:

...the drastic decline in the number of Filipina hostesses in Japan has stripped thousands of migrant women of their livelihood, forcing them to stay at home and helping to reverse the trend in Philippine gendered migration... I challenged the identification of migrant Filipina hostesses as sex-trafficked... the numbers indicate that prostitutes are a small minority of all Filipinas in Japan which is just 2.8 percent.

Similarly, the study of Min Liu (2011, p. 44) concludes that "equating trafficked victims with women working in the sex industry or other conditions of sexual exploitation overlooks the complex and diverse experiences of migrant women and their motivation for entering prostitution." In fact, Liu in her study of Chinese

women who work in the sex industry came up with five categories to differentiate between those who are forced or trafficked and those who willingly work in the said industry: 1) involuntary migrants; 2) voluntary migrants, seeking to work in the legitimate sector ending up in the sex industry against their will; 3) voluntary migrants, knowing in advance that they will be involved in sex work; 4) willing prostitutes, and; 5) drifting prostitutes. Liu also suggests that to address the question of whether women volunteered or were forced (i.e., trafficked) is rather a complex conceptual issue.

Studies however revealed that many of these female migrants have become increasingly vulnerable to trafficking or sexual exploitation than other migrants. Human traffickers and smugglers work through legal channels as fronts in the thriving migration industry. In some occasion, labor recruiters and smugglers have been renamed brokers, contractors, intermediaries, middlemen, *coyotes* and *taikongs* such as in the case of Indonesian Javanese migration to Malaysia (Pijpers, 2009). As Kaye (2010) pointed out, with as many as fifteen thousand firms, global recruitment industries comprise an annual multi-billion-dollar enterprise. In some instances, employers and brokers earn more profits from the exemption of referral fees as in the case of rural-urban migration to mainland China. In other instances such as those in Taiwan, this payment is by the workers and not the employers (Lee, 2002). Koser (2007) underpins how huge profits feed on the migration industry:

The enormous profits that the immigration industry makes from migration, it has been argued, adds considerable momentum to

the process. At the same time, its increasing complexity – linking highly organized groups with small operators and subagents in origin, transit, and destination countries – makes it difficult for policy to intervene to reduce its impact (p. 38).

Furthermore, this review explores various themes and definitions to come up with a foundational understanding of the term “migration industry.” Previous studies reveal that the migration industry was loosely defined and limited on the premise of Filipino NGOs and Japanese civil society organizations (CSOs) and were considered formal entities who negotiate for a bargain of the migrants’ status’s recognition before the recipient government (Japan). Marshall (2006), Koser (2007), Castles (2007), and Pijpers (2010), agreed on a definition that the migration industry is a complex network of agents (including non-state recruiting actor – international employment agency), brokers, lawyers, travel and housing providers who facilitate migration from the migrants’ country of origin to their destination countries. However, this study posits that the migration industry also includes a broad range of state-run and state-sanctioned agencies (legitimate industry), both from the country of origin and the receiving end. Migration industry also includes a range of individuals and agents (labor recruiters/brokers, employers, recruitment agencies, and immigration lawyers), as well as non-state entities (NGOs) that provide assistance and shelter to irregular migrants. To address the limitation above, the researcher expanded the discussion on the significant contribution of an illegitimate part of the migration industry comprising of human

Table 2. Irregularities in the Migration Process*

Context/Issues	Against Migrants	By Migrants
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisement without job order • Forging documents • Providing wrong information • Contract substitution • Extracting illegal fees • Practicing without a license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing unlicensed recruiters • Forging documents • Providing wrong information
Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smuggling people across borders/ avoiding checkpoints • Admitting people without proper documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering/avoiding checkpoints • Destroying personal documents
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring workers without proper documentation • Placing workers in a different employer • Hiring for a different occupation • Confiscating documents • Contract substitution • Abusive working conditions (working hours, safety, etc.) • Wage cut and wage retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working without permit • Working for a different employer • Working in a different occupation

*adopted from Battistella and Asis (2003)

Table 3. Profile of the Respondents: Filipina Entertainers in Japan

Case Informants	Mode of Entry/Entries	Visa Status Upon Entry	Facilitator of Entry	Circumstances of Irregularity
Case 1	Entertainer’s Visa	Forged Passport	Recruiter	Runaway from Employer
Case 2	Fake Japanese Passport	Forged Passport	Recruiter	Deported/Runaway and Returnee
Case 3	Entertainer/Spouse Visa	Fake marriage	Recruiter	Runaway from Employer/Husband
Case 4	Entertainer’s Visa	Forged Passport	Recruiter	Runaway from Employer
Case 5	Tourist/Spouse Visa	Fake marriage (“Fiancée”)	Fiancé	Runaway from Employer/Husband
Case 6	Tourist/Spouse Visa	Fake marriage (“Fiancée”)	Fiancé	Runaway from Employer/Husband and Deported

traffickers and migrant smugglers (e.g. criminal mafia such as *Yakuza* in Japan) in the Philippines-Japan migration stream, (see also Villa, 2016) and how migrants contribute to the perpetuation of the migration process in terms of recruitment, entry, and employment (as shown in Table 2).

Building on the findings of the previous studies above, the focus of this paper is to reexamine and validate the extent and the scope of the thriving migration (entertainment) industry as reflected in the particular circumstances and experiences of the respondents (night-workers). This manuscript offers a fresh insight and an empirical evidence of an institutionalized feminization of migration industry in the Philippine-Japan migration stream. Overall, the study hinges on the interlocking discourse on the important role played by the entertainment industry through a reflection from migration network-institutional theory and gender-aware approach of the Filipino migratory process to Japan as mediated by state agents (see also Castles et al., 2014; Samers & Collyer, 2017).

Results and Discussion

The analysis of this paper pivots around the role played by the migration industry, and how individual Filipina migrants as entertainers capitalize on such network to address personal difficulties and irregularities brought about by such negotiated relationship. In this discussion, a gender-aware approach is also intertwined with Massey et al.’s argument on the institutional theories of migration.

The respondents’ narratives disclose numerous reasons why Filipinas made their way out of the Philippines to take a risk in a not so distant and reluctant host country like Japan. Earlier migration studies scholarships such as those of Dizon (2004) and Asis (2008) would still make sense in the revelations above as it shows

consistent pattern on the desperate reasons why Filipino women risk their lives working abroad from decades ago up till today. They reasoned out that either way, both life in the Philippines and in some “risky” countries abroad would always involve difficulties. Back home, a woman has to contend with extreme poverty due to much lesser economic opportunities, the many children to feed, and families to take good care of. And leaving for work abroad is the only practical solution for most of these women migrants. However, their mobility was not only made possible out of their sheer desperation but expedited by recruiters, brokers, and employers both at their places of origin and destination, whether though legal or irregular channels. Others utilized the opportunity to seek “spouse visa” through fake or “imitation” marriages who eventually figured out as nightworkers. Such survival strategies point to Massey et al.’s first assumption, that is, the institutionalization of migration.

Institutionalization of the Gendered Migration Stream

Massey et al.’s first hypothesis states that “as international migration becomes institutionalized... it becomes progressively independent of the factors that originally caused it, be they structural or individual.” As shown in Table 4, government and state agents undeniably supports the regular outflow and inflow of migrants from both corridors of the Philippine-Japan migration stream. However, as these migrants become fully entrenched in their host societies, they start to build their own families and as their priorities changed, the factors that originally caused their mobility from their country of origin may have changed too. Apparently, this could only be made possible through the proliferation of networks and organizations that support, sustain and promote it.

Indeed, institutionalization comes full

Table 4. Decision Factors and the Role of Migration Industry*

Push Factors	Pull Factors
Original Causal Factor: Financial Difficulties Back Home	Original Causal Factor: Earning More in Japan (Wage-Differential)
Relationship-based Complications (Personal Idiosyncrasies)	Explore other environments/Starting Anew (Curious about Japan)
Not much alternative jobs back home	Existing Network (Chain Migration)
[Government facilitates push factors – unable to provide full employment]	[Migration industry prey on their vulnerabilities – facilitates their exit]
Supported by government personnel working in the bureaucracy	Club owners/managers, Labor Recruiters, Talent Scouts, Japanese/Filipino Promoter, Clients
(both migration corridors – borders)	

*adapted from Villa (2016)

circle when semi-legitimate organizations (migration industry), as mediated by the state, facilitates the exit of attendant migrants to leave for work abroad – offering support via fake or forged passports, sustains the process by readily providing the necessary employment at the destination (Japanese employers, clubs owners, etc.), and promoting their mobility through their entertainers’ clients or customers who at other times serve as their potential husbands when things get rough along the way (through a spouse visa).

First and foremost, the entertainment industry in Japan is largely associated with the “water trade” (*mizu shōbai*) consisting of bars, restaurants, and sex joints businesses that rely on customers’ patronage (Suzuki and Takahata, 2007). Most of the Filipinas who came to Japan as overseas performing artists (OPAs) who are doing entertainment or nightwork reveal common processes undertaken before and after coming to Japan (pre-departure and post-departure) (Nuqui et al., 2002; Chung, 2012). Some of them have overstayed and work in the sex industry which frequently overlaps with the entertainment

industry (see also Suzuki, 2008; Parreñas, 2011). The second dimension of the institutionalization lies at the receiving end, wherein the demand for spouses is driven by a shift of priorities. This usually comes when Japanese men have already established an intimate relationship with the Filipina entertainer and their need to settle down with the potential wife – as objectified by loving, caring, and entertaining Filipinas – and build their own families (see Faier, 2007; Suzuki, 2008). Studies also reveal this ongoing trend simultaneously occurring along with the demand for entertainers (as shown in Table 5).

Massey et al. further posit that international migration only becomes institutionalized through the formation and elaboration of networks and organizations that facilitates it. Apparently, this include the recruitment agencies – both private run and state-sanctioned agencies – as reflected in all the case respondents’ life stories above. In the long run, the migration process becomes increasingly independent even if the original reasons that caused it are stopped. This is proven by the impact of the 2004 and 2005 US Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP). The said TIP report led the Japanese government’s policy of abruptly decreasing the number of issuance for entertainers’ visa for most Southeast Asian countries including the Philippines. The rapid decrease in the deployment of Filipina entertainers (in terms of documented visa issued for overseas performing artists) resulted to a sudden change of deployment from more than 70,000 in 2004 to about 5,000 in 2007. But this did not hinder the women migrants to look for other channels as the measure inadvertently shifted to spouse visa applications. This experience is as real to those who overstayed their visa. Many of the respondents reasoned out that their decisions grew out from the necessity of their circumstances. Most of the respondent even recounted about the need for a tourist visa as an “entry-strategy” where their husband-to-be served as a guarantor in inviting

Table 5. Filipino Spouses of Foreign Nationals (1989-2013)

Country	Total
USA	193,661
Japan	117,362
Australia	36,339
Canada	19,626
Germany	14,969
South Korea	14,669
UK	10,607
Taiwan	8,704

Source: CFO Stock Estimate (2014)

them from the Philippines, as shown in the profiles of the case respondents above. Nowadays, a growing demand for caregivers and healthcare workers from Japanese men and women are gaining ground. This could potentially shift employment visa types and work opportunities for Filipinas back home and those who are already in Japan.

Humanitarian Groups, Network Formations, and Entrepreneurs

Massey et al.'s second hypothesis states that once migration has begun, it is rather hard for governments to regulate a migration flow which is perpetuated by a network formation outside its control. Such processes also occur regardless of the immigration policies pursued by the state regime. This is what Catherine Dauvergne (2016, p. 7) calls policy paralysis in which "States are not reaching their policy objectives and that most new policy rollouts in prosperous industrialized states at this point involve intensifying ideas that have been tried before, ratcheting up restrictions, heightening privileges for the most attractive migrants, and building bigger fences – literally and legally." Interestingly, Case Informant No. 5 pointedly explained that she was fully aware of the massive crackdowns of the immigration authorities against irregular migrants but would still take the risk of going out in the open as regular people do as they maintain links with their network that often provide them with all the necessities to survive life – for their families and children in the Philippines and in Japan.

Indeed, stricter immigration policies only further fueled the illicit channels through the "black market in international movement" via the migration industry. This is true for all the cases as apparently covered in the life stories of Case Informants 1-4 who went to Japan using forged or fake passports. On the other hand, Informants 5 and 6 resorted to bogus or sham marriages in order to get their spouse visa. In addition, Massey et al. conclude that stricter immigration policies are constantly mediated by humanitarian groups and non-government organizations (NGOs). These observations are very much present in the case of the intervention provided by NGOs for and in behalf of the informants in this study – common among migrants was the ability to connect, through their personal networks with humanitarian groups and NGOs when seeking help and assistance.

The findings above also reveal about common pattern on Filipina migrants' agency of running away from their unscrupulous employers, brokers and company managers and also the necessity of running away from abusive partners (e.g. domestic violence, infidelity, and abandonment of children). Lieba Faier (2008) calls

this "runaway agency" which is the agency of that "dialogic or in-between space that emerges from a complex calculus of political economic factors, personal histories, and the unequal dynamics of women's encounters abroad." Faier aptly offers this explanation in the context of her study on how some Filipino women in Japan faced marital problems and frustrations. Indeed, as for the night-working migrants, at the onset of their journey, in dealing with the migration industry (illegitimate or not), migrants exercised their agency upon complying with the conditions provided to them, whether it turn out to be disadvantageous or not, albeit indirect or non-confrontational. Thus, Filipina night-working migrants were able to reassert their rights and entitlements, albeit subliminally, and somehow empower themselves by working through the established network in the entertainment industry.

Narratives of the respondents show striking points on how irregular migrants capitalized on these existing networks for their personal and familial ends. NGO volunteers from humanitarian groups encountered in this study however cited many cases on how irregular migrants utilize these services but once they were able to successfully obtain their negotiated status, they would just disappear and go on with their "normal lives." Nevertheless, the said key-informants also expressed that they have addressed these concerns through follow-up service provision and after-care programs through further trainings and seminars. Without their own established network, distressed women migrants are obviously at their worst, distraught situations – especially those who have children at their young age and fully dependent of their Japanese husbands. This is much revealing in the case of Informant 6 (eventually deported to the Philippines), who had not expanded her personal network despite her special circumstance, as victim of abuse and domestic violence, which could have warranted humanitarian assistance and recognition of her Japanese child.

Finally, corollary to the second hypothesis above, Massey et al.'s third assumption reiterates "the disparities between the supply of and demand for entry visas into core receiving societies create a lucrative niche for entrepreneurs to provide licit and illicit entry services, and that the exploitation that results from this disparity will also prompt humanitarian organizations to intervene on immigrants' behalf." In juxtaposition, it is in this context that the whole process of "feminizing migration" becomes only possible with the unwitting collaboration of both the migration industry and the individual migrants as mediated by state agencies of both sending and receiving countries: the nightworkers, the brokers, the club owners (entrepreneurs), the customers (husbands),

and the humanitarian organizations (NGOs).

This assumption vividly correlates the opinion of the club owners and promoters on how they provided for the need of this specific “market niche” where women seemingly look at clubs/pubs as their gateway to Japan. The researcher has confirmed this observation upon visiting various clubs/pubs in the Philippines wherein some are owned by former mamasan (club manager) from Japan, while others were under the management of Filipina wives married to Japanese citizens. What makes the matter worst is that, in many instances, as brokers and some employers arrange for these migrants to come to Japan, they gain huge profits by reducing or delaying payment of their wages and further exploiting their vulnerabilities as in case informants (1-3) of this study. This only further perpetuates the gendered institutionalization of migration as the Philippines is able to steadily supply the demands of Japanese men for entertainers in the said lucrative migration industry.

Conclusion

Certainly, dreams of earning large sums of money in a foreign land is an appealing prospect for almost all migrant-workers abroad, including the Filipino entertainers in Japan. This study reveals patterns on how Filipina entertainers employ survival strategies at the nightwork industry either through legal or illicit channels. Though there have been a steady decrease of inflow of entertainers coming to Japan in the past decades, spouse’s visa applications have also increased. However, in the substantial period of encounter of the researcher in the nightwork industry, he still find a relatively few entertainers working in the red light district under the spouse visa. This paper argues that it is the migration industry and the network formation that completes this institutionalization process but this has to be incorporated in a wider discourse of gender-aware approach on theories that interrogate institutionalization of migration in the Philippine-Japan migration stream.

The findings also reveal how migrants rely on their personal networks to gain advantages to get by on their difficult life-circumstances, but not everyone has equal access to powerful networks. Network formation is an important element in the institutionalization of migration including the migration industry. As pointed out by Marshall (2006) and Kaye (2010), the migration industry is not only composed of legitimate actors servicing international migration but also a range of formal and informal support systems or personal networks including criminal gangs of traffickers that may either complicate or offer some solutions to their precarious status.

This study inadvertently divulge sensitive areas of the feminization of migratory process beyond the scope of this study – that women migrants are mothers too – and that in the process of regularizing their status in Japan, they also need to put a bargain on the citizenship status of their children. Most, if not all, of these women have successfully fought for their children’s recognition and eventually obtained their legal status as well. From another angle, using a gender-aware framework, such structural constraints further cast a shadow on Filipino men’s ability to put a bargain to their status, thus privileging women in distress than men.

In addition, most often it is not only the child who suffers from psychological or emotional stress but parents too, especially mothers. This study also found out that incarcerated mothers may face not only emotional consequences but also physical and structural barriers in terms of maintaining contact with their children. In all these circumstances, the role of humanitarian groups and NGOs played an indispensable role in addressing their psychological and emotional distress, as well as questions on their legal status in Japan.

Massey et al. further argued about the institutionalization of international migration which over time became more independent of the original factors that caused it – largely driven by economic factors or due to poverty situations back home and for others, a background on hostess work in the origin country. However, what is particularly remarkable about the Philippine-Japan migration stream is that the nightwork industry supports, sustains, and promotes the perpetuation of a gendered institutionalization of Filipino migration to Japan.

References

- Abe, R. (2009). Gendered labor migration from the Philippines to Japan: Mapping “Philippine pub space” into the Japanese context. *Geographical Review of Japan Series, B* 81(1): 68-78. Association of Japanese Geographers.
- Abe, R. (2011). (Un)constructing the local multicultural Society: A case study of Filipino migrants in Nagoya, Japan. *Colloquium: Proceedings of the IFSSO Conference*. Institute of Sociology.
- Asis, M. (2008). The Philippines. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 348-378.
- Allison, A. (1994). *Nightwork: Sexuality, pleasure and corporate masculinity in a Tokyo hostess club*. University of Chicago Press.

- Anderson, J.N. (2000). *Filipino migrants to Japan: Entertainers, house helpers, and homemakers* (Unpublished Study). Tokyo, Japan.
- Bakewell, O. (2010). Some reflections on structure and agency in migration theory. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(10), 1689-1708.
- Ballescás, M.R.P. (1992). *Filipino entertainers in Japan: An introduction*. Foundation for Nationalist Studies.
- Ballescás, M.R.P. (2003). Filipino migration to Japan. In I. Setsuho & L.N. Yu-Jose (Eds.), *Philippines-Japan relations*. Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Ball, R. & Piper, N. (2002). Globalization and regulation of citizenship – Filipino migrant workers in Japan. *Political geography*, 21, 1013-1034. Retrieved from SciVerse - Science Direct database.
- Battistella, G. & Asis, M. (2003). *Unauthorized migration in Southeast Asia*. Scalabrini Migration Center.
- Castles, S. (2007). The factors that make and unmake migration policies. In A. Portes & J. DeWind (Eds.), *Rethinking migration: New theoretical and empirical perspectives*. Berghahn Books.
- Castles S., de Haas H., & Miller, M.J. (2014). *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world* (5th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Commission on Filipinos Overseas. (2013). *2012 stock estimates of overseas Filipinos*. <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/StockEstimate2012.pdf>.
- Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2014). *Stock estimate on the number of Filipino spouses and other partners of foreign nationals by major country (1989-2013)*. <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/majorcountry8913a.pdf>
- Choy, C. (2003). *Empire of care: Nursing and migration in Filipino American history*. Duke University Press.
- Choy, C., & Tzu-Chun Wu, J.T. (2017). *Gendering the trans-pacific world: Diaspora, empire, and race* (Eds.). Brill Publisher.
- Chung, Haeng-ja. (2012). In the shadows and at the margins: Working in the Korean clubs and bars of Osaka's Minami area. In D.W. Haines, K. Yamanaka, and S. Yamashita (Eds.), *Wind over water: Migration in an East Asian context*. Berghahn Books.
- Dauvergne, C. (2016). *The new politics of immigration and the end of settler societies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dizon, M.J. (2004). *Philippine migrants in Japan: Networks, strategies, narratives and the negotiation of identities* (Unpublished master thesis). Ritsumeikan APU, Japan.
- Faier, L. (2007). Filipina migrants in rural Japan and their professions of love. *American Ethnologist*, 34(1), 148-162.
- Fawcett, J.T. (1989). Network, linkages, and migration systems. *International Migration Review*, 23(3), 671-680.
- Fujimoto, N. (2006). Trafficking in persons and the Filipino entertainers in Japan. In *Focus Archives* (Vol. 43). APHRIC – HURIGHTS.
- Fukuda, S. (2014, May). *On location video: Meet the beautiful, melancholy women paid to flirt in Japan*. Global Post. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/japan/140506/location-video-meet-the-beautiful-melancholy-women-p>
- Giddens, A. & Sutton, P. (2013). *Sociology* (7th ed.). Polity Press.
- Kaye, J. (2010). *Moving millions: How coyote capitalism fuels global immigration*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Koser, K. (2007). *International migration: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, J. (2002). The role of low-skilled foreign workers in Taiwan's economic development. In Y. Debrah, (Ed.), *Migrant Workers in Pacific Asia*. Frank Cass Publishers.
- Liu, M. (2011). *Migration, prostitution, and human trafficking: The voice of Chinese women*. Transaction Publishers.
- Marshall, B. (Ed.). (2006). *The politics of migration: A survey*. Routledge: Taylor & Francis.
- Massey, D., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 431-466. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938462>

- Nuqui, C., Montañez, J., & Sicam, P. (2002). *Pains and gains: A study of overseas performing artists in Japan from pre-departure to reintegration*. Development Action for Women Network.
- Oishi, N. (2005). *Women in motion: Globalization, state policies, and labor migration in Asia*. Stanford University Press.
- Parreñas, R. (2011). *Illicit flirtations: Labor, migration and sex trafficking in Tokyo*. Stanford University Press.
- Pijpers, R. (2010). International employment agencies and migrant flexiwork in an enlarged European Union. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(7), 1079-1097.
- Samers, M., & Collyer M. (2017). *Migration* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Sarker, S., & Niyogi De, E. (Eds.). (2002). *Gender in the globalization of South and Southeast Asia*. Duke University Press.
- Suzuki, N. (2008). Filipino migrations to Japan: From surrogate Americans to feminized workers. In S. Yamashita, M. Minami, D.W. Haines & J.S. Eades (Eds.), *Transnational migration in East Asia: Japan in a comparative focus*. National Museum of Ethnology.
- Takahata, S. (2007). *The Filipino community in downtown Nagoya: Local and international networking*. Hiroshima Associated Repository Portal (HARP). <http://harp.lib.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/hkg/metadata/811>
- Takahata, S. (2021). Filipino Enclaves as Products of Migration Industry: Cases in a Big City's Downtown and a Port City's Coastal Area. In Y. Ishikawa (Ed.), *Ethnic enclaves in contemporary Japan*. Springer Nature Singapore Pte. Ltd.
- Takeda, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Life stories of Filipino entertainers: Their empowerment and its assistance*. Kwansei Gakuin University Press (in Japanese).
- Tyner, J. (2009). *The Philippines: Mobilities, identities, globalization* (Global realities series). Routledge.
- Villa, A. (2015). *Filipino irregular migrants in Japan* (Unpublished dissertation). Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan.
- Villa, A. (2016). Complexities and irregularities in the migration stream from the Philippines to Japan. *Tambara, Journal of Ateneo de Davao University*, 33(1).
- Villa, A. & Mani, A. (2013). Perspectives on the negotiated status of Filipino irregular migrants in Japan. *Tambara, Journal of Ateneo de Davao University*, 30(1).
- Wolfel, R. (2005). Migration in the new world order: Structuration theory and its contribution to explanations of migration. *Geography Online* 5(2).
- World Economic Forum. (2013). *The global gender gap report 2013*. Berkeley: University of California and Harvard University. World Economic Forum. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf
- Yamanaka, K., & Piper, N. (2005). *Feminized migration in East and Southeast Asia: Policies, actions and empowerment* (Occasional Paper 11). UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). <http://www.unrisd.org/publications/opg/p11>
- Yu-Jose, L.N. (2002). *Filipinos in Japan and Okinawa, 1880s-1972*. Tokyo: Research Institute for the Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa - Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.
- Yu Jose, L.N. (2007). Why are most Filipino workers in Japan entertainers? Perspectives from history and law. *Kasarinlan: Philippines Journal of Third World Studies*, 22(1), 61-84.