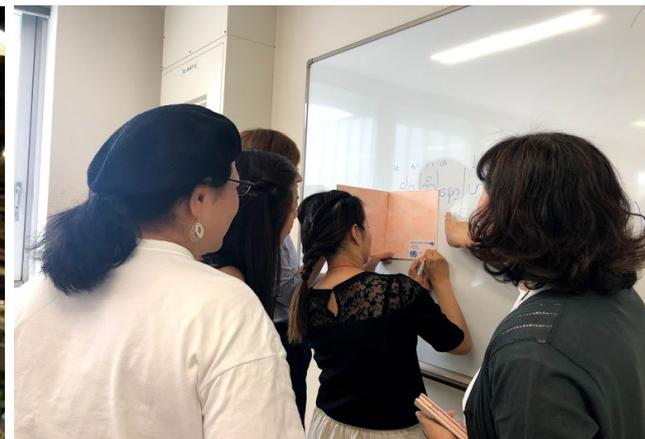
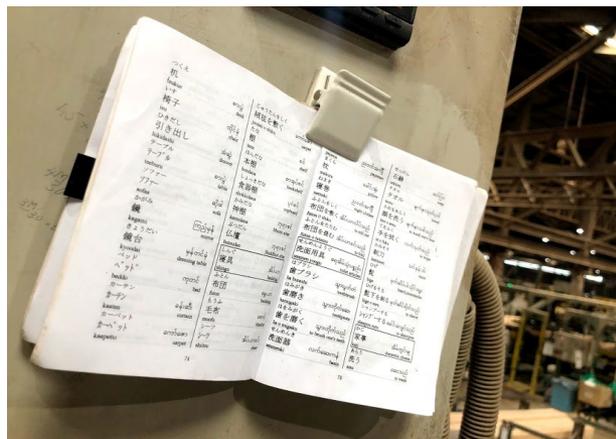


NODE: Resettlement, integration and civil society

Self-reliance, refugee resettlement and economic integration in Japan:
policy, practice and experience



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1. Who am I ?

Mr. Kuni Kabe

Current positions

- Lecturer & Researcher at Meijigakuin University
- Deputy Chief Advisor, Japanese Initiative for the future of Syrian Refugees (JISR) of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- Advisor to Expert Council on the resettlement program at Cabinet Secretariat of Japanese Government
- Manager, Integration Unit of Japan Association for Refugees, (JAR, nonprofit organization)

Interest

Policy development and practice on (economic) integration of resettlement refugee and asylum seekers into a host society, Japan; forced migration (human trafficking); non-traditional security

2. Overview of Resettlement Program in Japan

Since 2010 under the resettlement program, Japan has accepted a total of 174 Myanmar refugees, or 44 families, including some Rohingya Muslims. The government decided in May 2018 to encourage refugees to live in rural areas that are facing a decline in population.

In June 2019, the government of Japan reviewed and changed its policy to accept more refugees from 2020, with an eye to doubling the current annual ceiling of about 30 to strengthen its response to regional humanitarian needs.

One of the key arguments behind this decision was “self-reliance” in other words, faster steps towards integration of refugees through employment

3. Integration in Japanese context

The Japanese government does not have a definition of integration, focusing rather on self-reliance as a way towards integration.

Although self-reliance is not defined, the main focus in the Japanese resettlement program has been on ensuring the refugees are able to support their families through employment.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Warfare says that early and secure employment and income is necessary in order for refugees to become "INTEGRATED" and have wider option in the future (2014)



Q1: How much does the idea of "self-reliance" = employment make the refugees feel integrated into the host society?

Q2: Does it contribute refugee integration across multifaceted domains in what ways?

4. Before research...

According to Gatfield (2007), many studies focus on the structural and organizational aspects of integration (sometimes in a top-down manner)

Trying to conceptualizing (understand) integration through employment **as a subjective process** in resettlement program in Japan has never done, in which refugee's perceptions are central.



Q1: How much does the idea of "self-reliance" = employment make the refugees feel integrated into the host society?

Q2: Does it contribute refugee integration across multifaceted domains in what ways?

5. Methodology

By using 3 vignettes developed from qualitative research with refugee families who have arrived in Japan under “self-reliance” in Japanese context to examine

1. How much does the idea of "self-reliance" make the refugees feel integrated into the host society
2. In what ways does it contribute refugee integration across multifaceted domains?

To analyze the data Interviews was done with semi-structured questionnaires developed based on key aspects of integration (Gaby Atfield, 2007), key questions were

- A: What does “a job” mean to him/her?
- B: Is she/he treated equally at work?
- C: Does she/he feel comfortable at work?

8 resettlement refugees participated in this research (Aug to Nov 2019)

Vignette 1



Father works at manufacturing company

Mother works at cleaning business, 1 child (Elementary school students), 1 child (junior high school student)

*I (father) am a line worker who works in a manufacturing plant. The job involves inspecting completed parts. The company has about 30 employees, half of whom are Japanese (elderly) and half are foreigners (Vietnamese and Brazilians of Japanese descent). His salary is about 220,000 yen. I work overtime 5 days a week from 8 AM to 5 PM. He returns home after 8 PM. It's been five years since I started working. There is a morning meeting in the company, but I don't understand well because Japanese is difficult.

*During break time, Japanese people stay together and do not interact with foreigners. There are some Japanese employees whose children go to the same school, but they don't talk.

*Considering the cost of education for children, I am worried about the future.

Vignette 2



Mother works at catering plant (delicatessen)

Father works at Hotel cleaning company, 1 child (Elementary school students), 1 child (junior high school student)

*I (mother) work at a food processing (delicatessen) plant. The job involves peeling vegetables and assisting with simple cooking. The company has about 15 employees, half of whom are Japanese (Female) and half are foreigners (Student). His salary is about 140,000 yen. From 8:30 AM to 3 PM on 5 days a week. I don't work overtime. It's been a year and a half since I started working.

*I work because I can't live on my father's salary alone.

*They are mean because they are foreigners. I want to complain, but I can't explain it well in Japanese. I can't get help. I don't like Japanese anymore. I want to quit my job.

Vignette 3



Father works at Hotel cleaning company as a manager

Mother works at Food processing factory, 1 child (Elementary school students),
1 child (junior high school student)

*I (father) work for a building management company. He is the leader of a foreign group. I also clean the hotel and manage it. The company has about 60 employees. His salary is about 300,000 yen. There are 5 days a week from 8 AM to 6 PM, overtime work and manager MTG. It's been seven years since I started working.

*The company holds sports meets and BBQ parties on weekends. It is also fun to talk with employees who don't usually talk. I sometimes go out with my colleagues.

*I was told by the company to try hard to read and write Japanese in order to get a better position, but I don't have time to study.

6. Results



A: What does “a job” mean to him/her?

- Tools to earn money for his/her families, school fees, and her/himself (1,2,3)
- Something you can show your children good (3)
- Something you can be proud of yourself (1,3)

B: Is she/he treated equally at work?

- She/he is not treated equally because her/his salary is lower than Japanese even they do the same assignment (1,2)
- She is treated bad because nobody helps her but Japanese (2)
- She/he gets discriminated because they are foreigners (1,2)

C: Does she/he feel comfortable at work?

- He works comfortable very well because he is a manager, and the company wants to get him promoted higher. (3)
- He is luck because he is offered an opportunity to learn Japanese for better position (3)
- She feels not comfortable at all because her colleagues do something bad to her, and she wants to quit a job.

7. Comments from refugees

- During lunch time Japanese and non-Japanese are at different room. There is no rule to do so but Japanese do not like us to join in the same room because we are different. I feel so sad at work. I do not like to go to the place where many Japanese.
- My supervisor is angry at me when I did something wrong. But he is not angry at Japanese when they made the same mistake more than 3 times. It is not fair. I do not like this.
- I talked to a Japanese colleague good at work. But he does not like to talk to me when we meet at the elementary school where his and my kids are going together. I do not why... I feel separated.
- Brazilian-Japanese newly started working at my company. I was so surprised because he gets higher salary although he just got started working here. The company told me that he can speak Japanese...this is not fair.
- On weekend or/and after work, I go to shops with non-Japanese colleagues who are very nice at work and home. I feel so comfortable. We help each other anything such as schooling and so on.

8. Conclusion ①

Q1: How much does the idea of “self-reliance” = employment make the refugees feel integrated into the host society (JAPAN) ?

Very limited (although it is recognized an important tool according to them)

- Some of refugees have a strong aversion to Japanese colleagues at work
- They feel separated as there is almost no communications b/w Japanese and non-Japanese at work
- Due to early employment, it is the Japanese and its society 101 and get bad impression

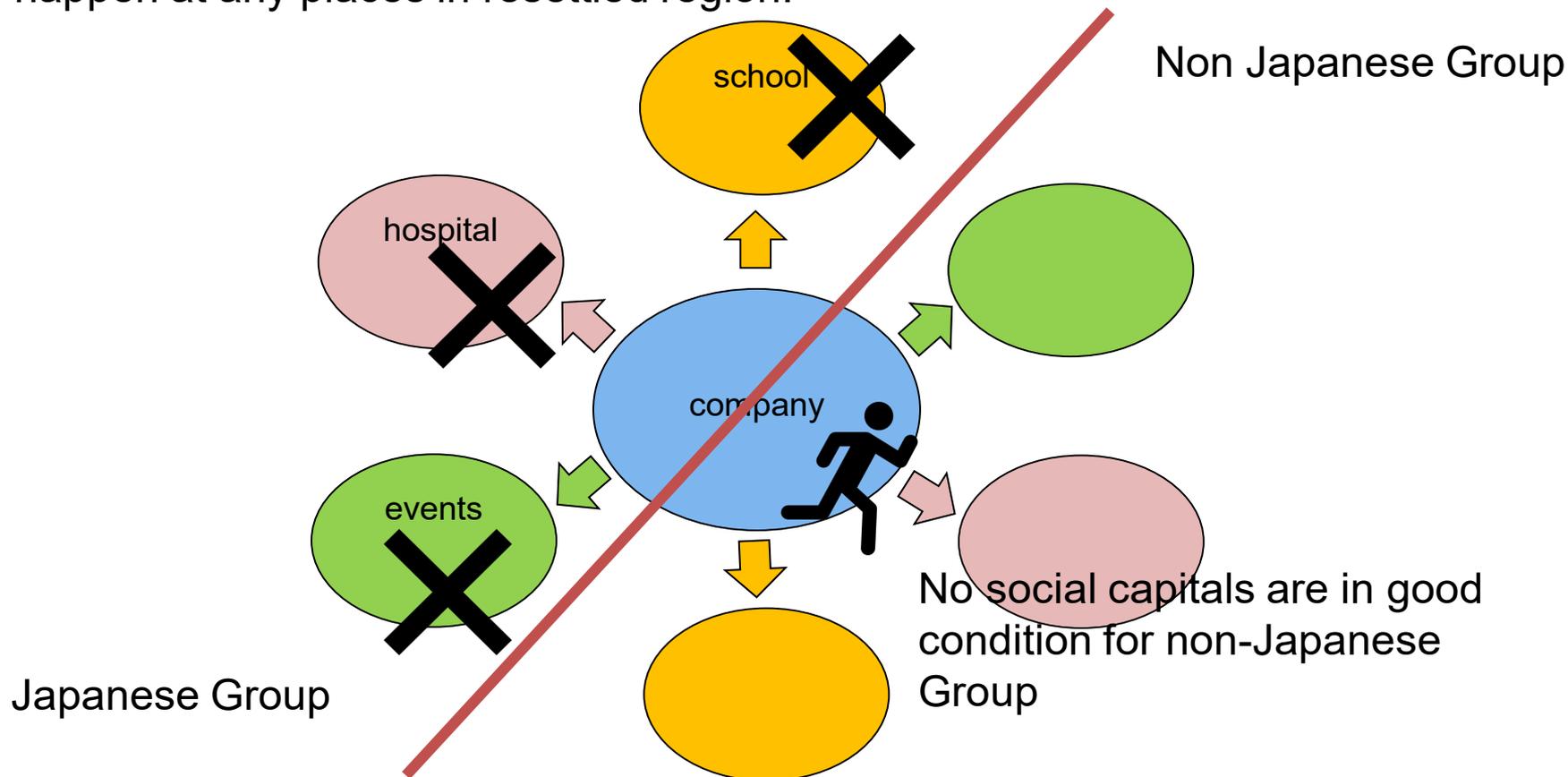
Q2: In what ways does it (self-reliance) contribute refugee integration across multifaceted domains?

Self-reliance = employment is recognized as an important tool, but the place for it is not as expected. The experience of employment might contribute in negative way to some degree

- They are getting far away from Japanese at school and other places in the resettled community

9. Conclusion ②

No motivation to get along with Japanese based with bad experience at work
Separation b/w Japanese and non-Japanese happens at work and might happen at any places in resettled region.



Many social resources are ready for the Japanese. It is difficult for non-Japanese to access. In other words, there is no safety net for them. It might lead them to a vulnerable living environment when they are in need.

10. Finally

It is important to examine not only refugees' but also Japanese' own experiences of the integration, their aspirations for integrated-life in Japan for next steps...Integration process in Japan is **a one-way process.**

It reminds me of

- Integration... is a **two-way process**, which places demands on both the receiving society and on the refugee. As such, integration is not assimilation.” *Refugee Council, Agenda for Integration, 2004*
- “...integration is principally the process that ensures new residents and existing residents adapt to one another” *Commission on Integration and Cohesion, Our Shared Future, 2007*
- Integration is a dynamic **two-way process** that puts demands on *both* the refugees and the receiving community to make adjustments to encourage inclusion. (UNHCR)

Thank you very much