

FILIPINO IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN JAPAN

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Abstract

This study explores the specific phenomenon of the outcome and consequences of irregular migration that is immigration detention and/or deportation. The study aims to shed light on the consequences of unauthorized migration from the Philippines and the recipient countries' response which include migration enforcement measures such as arrest, detention and deportation (i.e. Japan's migration control). It attempts to further elucidate on the reasons behind seemingly sustained phenomenon of distressed migrants and their precarious status as the borders of their countries of work destination are governed by strict immigration policies that either sought to facilitate or hinder their entry. The research aims to generate a hypothesis and a conceptual framework to further expand the scope of the study.

The study utilizes an exploratory-descriptive case study research design using multiple cross-case analyses. The research addresses the question of validity through utilization of varied sources of information in terms of data and theory. The research process was accomplished through a modified-grounded instrumental approach (research-before-theory model), using replication sampling instead of the typical population sampling. Reliability of the data gathered was made certain through a pilot study conducted at the earlier phase of the research process. In addition, as a qualitative research employing open-ended in-depth interviews, a combination of data collection techniques validated the methodology including key-informant interviews, direct and participant observations, and document analysis from secondary sources.

The narratives of the respondents reveal that the state's discretionary or selective application of the law appears to be consistent with the current trend in advanced welfare states, as in the case of Japan, which is bent on excluding irregular migrants and not moving forward on extending citizenship rights to the large group of unwanted immigrants. To address this rival explanation, the study also highlights the role of selected non-state entities (NGOs, church-based organizations) and self-help groups in the Philippines and Japan, which becomes a catalyst to ensure protection of migrants' rights serving as "watchmen" to ensure that these are constantly upheld through a negotiated status. As such, in exercising their agency, some of these migrants were able to protect their rights while others unsuccessfully defended their lot and became deportees.

Keywords: Filipinos, Irregular Migration, Japanese Immigration Control, Negotiated Status, Migrants' Organizations