

The N U F S Times

Nagoya University of Foreign Studies
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The 5th edition : COVID-19

Anguished Drug Stores

Which is scarier, a virus or people?

By Kisumi Sato

COVID-19 has drastically changed our lifestyle. This change has also seeped into businesses and drugstores worldwide. At the drug store where I work, protective acrylic shields have been installed to protect workers from infection. Antiseptic solution can also be found at each store entrance.

Amidst such drastic changes, even customers who once treated workers with respect have begun to lose their temper. I personally remember countless customers who were once very nice to employees, but who now become angry when they cannot receive masks or antiseptic solution.

Masataka Hanada, the manager of a drug store, told me about his experience working since the outbreak of COVID-19. “Because of people’s desperation or supplies, sales have increased by 110% and the number of customers has increased by about 130% since the outbreak of COVID 19. You can imagine how busy my store was.”

At the end of February, the rumor that toilet paper and tissues will be in short supply spread throughout Japan. Crowds of people rushed to stores. I recall being unable to leave the cashier because of the endless line of customers. It was chaos. Even after closing the shop, we had to work overtime and do other work such as unpacking products and cleaning up. I had never experienced such a degree of busyness in my life.

From early February, information regarding COVID-19 flooded Japanese news networks. Soon after, customers rushed to buy products that protect them from COVID-19, such as masks and antiseptic solution. Within the span of a week, these products sold out.

As the number of customers increased, so did the number of enquiries and complaints. In response, some stores implemented a per-customer-limit for certain products to prevent shortages. Some customers ignored these rules. Clerks had to explain the limits and apologize to customers who did not understand.

Following the implantation of these rules, people’s desperation for masks and sanitizer came to light. People would wait outside the store before opening hours to buy the masks on display. Some began waiting as early as three a.m., even



Above: Acrylic shields at cash registers, and foot-seals on the floor in a drugstore, in Toyota City, Aichi.

though our store opens at nine. After witnessing such desperate actions, on April 10th, we ceased displaying our masks. Despite displaying a notice about this decision, customers continued to inquire: “when will you sell masks? Where are the masks?” Some customers even began doubting our integrity: “Do you really sell masks?”

On February 29th, Tama, twitter name, a drug store employee, said: “I have become scared of people more than I am scared of COVID-19.” Tama tweeted about this horrible situation, accumulating over thirty thousand retweets and fifty thousand likes in response.

Tama earnestly apologized about the product shortage every time customers inquired about masks. The inquiries never ceased, and Tama became exhausted. In response, many salespersons sent comforting messages, empathizing through their own experiences. Workers spoke of customers shouting and even throwing coins at em-

ployees. These horrible incidents occurred countless times. To raise awareness, drug store clerks trended the hashtag,

“#criesofdrugstoreclerks,” tweeting and sharing the hellish atmosphere of their work. These horrible changes occurred in other stores as well. Yuki Matsubara, who works at AEON, shared his experiences:

When COVID-19 started spreading, I hardly expected the shop to become overcrowded with customers. Before I knew it, my store be-

came filled with customers when masks and antiseptic solution arrived. I couldn’t leave the cashier for over three hours.”

Some customers complained to me without a cause. When masks sold out, a man demanded of me: ‘If you don’t have masks you have to buy them from somewhere and sell them to me.’ I hope COVID-19 will disappear as soon as possible.”

“I learned that some customers have no room for compassion in their heart. It baffled me. Even my work ethic was affected. After customers scolded me I made mistakes which I usually never make.”

Anna Fuji, another drug store worker, said, “I can understand customers’ anxiety about COVID-19. However, I cannot understand why so many customers release their anger on clerks unreasonably. Think straight and please act politely.”

Looking ahead, this situation will not end simply by manufacturing more masks and antiseptic solution: even things like instant noodles and frozen food have sold out due to COVID-19. Children can easily prepare these types of food, so after the closure of public schools in late February, instant noodle and frozen foods sold out instantly.

According to Hanada, a limit has been placed on the amount of food products that customers can buy in one outing. These limits have been accompanied by mistakes in product distribution. In other words, even if certain food products are ordered, they may not arrive. Situations like these worsen the situation for our store, which has already been struggling with acquiring masks and sanitizer. As we encounter product shortages of instant ramen and frozen foods, the complaints of customers once again come to haunt us. It truly is a vicious circle.

Special Thanks to: *Nina HAMASAKI: University of Tasmania, Australia: Jacob TEICHRIB: The University of British Columbia, Canada: Angéline Nicole Emirene FARRES: Université Jean-Moulin Lyon 3, France: Malcom Guido ORSI: University of Turin, Italy*

Owing to the new coronavirus, the world has changed completely. The N U F S Times is not immune to its influence. N U F S domestic students and exchange students are usually expected to work together to contribute their articles to the paper but we did not have any exchange students this semester due to the world catastrophe caused by the virus. Moreover, all of our writing and editing sessions were held online. It was extremely difficult to publish an English paper in such an environment. Fortunately, we had 4 former N U F S exchange students help us as informants and advisers. We could not have managed to publish the paper without their help. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to them.

We are overjoyed to deliver the 5th edition of The N U F S Times. This issue’s theme is COVID-19.

Minorities of the COVID Era

Discrimination Due to COVID-19

How can we eliminate the hate?

By Hinano KOBAYASHI

We can tangibly feel the global crisis stirring up our lives like an earthquake beneath our feet. Amidst these difficult times, humans have had to push themselves to extraordinary and uncomfortable measures. Even though we must help each other in such desperate times, COVID-19 has exacerbated instances of Asian discrimination.

One victim of this discrimination is Keigo Ichie, a 21-year-old Japanese student studying abroad in Canada. Despite being urged to return to Japan following the outbreak of COVID-19, Ichie decided to stay.

Ichie took time off school to study abroad in Toronto from February 2020. When Ichie entered Canada, the COVID-19 epidemic had yet to intensify. After two weeks of studying abroad in Toronto, the virus became widespread. Companies began to shut down, schools began worrying about how they would transition online, and citizens entered a state of panic as governments rushed to catch up with COVID-19. Deciding to remain in Canada, Ichie had to struggle through the beginnings of the global epidemic as a foreign student.

Alongside the outbreak of COVID-19, instances of Asian discrimination reached an all-time high. Canadians harassed Ichie because he is Asian. In daily life, citizens maintained a careless distance from Ichie, forcing him into a helpless state of despair and isolation. He even incurred somebody's displeasure on public transit, being expelled from a train due to his race.

After vulnerably leaving his home country to study English, Ichie was mistreated by Canadian nationals. Ichie believes that such incidents are exceptionally racist, incorrect, and must not exist. In order to publicly denote these actions, Ichie created a YouTube channel, and continues to share these stories with many people. He hopes that others experiencing the same thing may be able to cope with their struggles if they have someone with which to share their burden.

Humankind is facing difficult problems, and although we should be helping each other, Asian discrimination has worsened. Keigo Ichie is one of many who has experienced discrimination during COVID-19 because he is Asian.

There are also many cases of discrimination in Vancouver, Canada. Jacob, a fourth-year student from the University of British Columbia,



Top: Keigo Ichie trying to share the discrimination that he experienced through YouTube.

Above: #HealthNotHate's home page photo

explained terrible instances of Asian discrimination in Vancouver. There have been many instances of Asian discrimination: racist citizens staining the wall of Vancouver's Japanese cultural center, and people shouting derogatory remarks. There was even an instance of assault: a paranoid customer pushed over an elderly Asian man, forcing him to fall onto a hard sidewalk.

There is also discrimination against Asians in France. Angeline, who attended France's Nihon Go Gakko, introduced me to the situation. When adults explained COVID-19 to young children, they would say, "The Coronavirus originated in Wuhan and we must not forgive China. We also must not approach Asians because they likely possess COVID-19." To make matters worse, many people criticize those who eat Asian food because they think the food is "COVID infested."

Just because it is easy to discriminate against vulnerable minorities, does not mean that we should. Instead, we must help each other. In this dire situation, people should fight for the equality of not only their own country's citizens, but for that of foreign minorities as well.

Many of us could hardly help but be shocked at this explosion of racism. We too often fail to realize that discrimination has a close relationship with ourselves. In truth, discrimination is an extremely realistic occurrence present in everyone's lives. Discrimination must be eradicated, and it will not easily disappear.

One movement on the Internet, "#HealthNotHate," fights to eradicate discrimination. The model of this movement comes from the Japanese proverb, "see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil" (mi-zaru, kika-zaru, iwa-zaru). The proverb describes three monkeys who cover their face, nose, and eyes with their hands. These three monkeys not only represent a rejection of evil, but

also symbolize an ignorance towards evil. In the context of #HealthNotHate, this proverb means that we do not turn a blind eye to vulnerable people when the health and well-being of our community is at stake. Global citizens must recognize and combat the unnecessary amount of discrimination that hinders our response to the crushing pandemic of COVID-19.

#healthnothate emphasizes the importance of social distance while denoting the notion of ethnic distance. After all, COVID-19 is a health problem, not a race problem. The overwhelming issue is that people are associating COVID-19, a biological phenomenon, with the concept of race. Admittedly, such an action has its reasons within the current epidemic: people feel overly concerned about the virus and cannot afford to live. People lack a calm state of mind and fail to correct wrongful actions such as discrimination. Nonetheless, people must rethink their racist views and attitudes. After all, it is in such situations as this, a global pandemic, when compassion for one another is indispensable.

Pictogram: Advertising physical distancing.



Pros and Cons of Online Learning

What can we learn from other countries?

By Miho SAKAI

In May 2020, Nagoya University of Foreign Studies implemented online classes for the first time. It was challenging for both students and teachers to adapt to them quickly, but it was a big step to introducing technology into education.

Though online classes are admittedly quite useful, many problems, including computer bugs and excessive screen exposure, accompany online learning. In order to ask how we can conduct online lectures and make good use of them, I interviewed citizens from the US, the UK, Australia, Malaysia, China and Japan.

Originally, in-person classes were scheduled to start in the middle of April at NUFS, but it was regarded as unsafe to teach at a school where many students gathered. As a result, there was no choice but to conduct online lectures. Students and teachers who did not have a computer or the environment to use them had to hurriedly prepare, and some of them seemed to struggle to use Zoom or Google Meet during class as well.

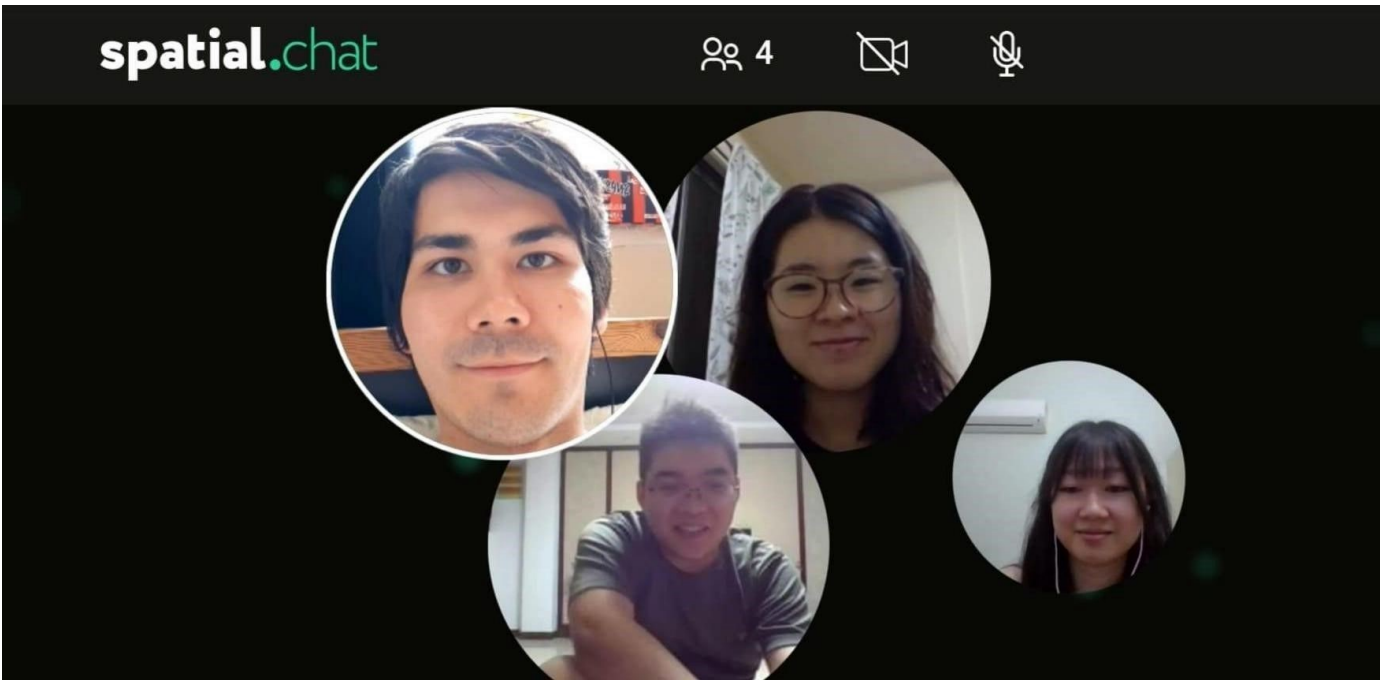
Japanese universities took their time in conducting online classes, only implementing them when the severity of COVID-19 reached unprecedented levels. In contrast, there are several universities in other countries that had adopted online classes at much earlier stages in the COVID-19 epidemic. How are students actually faring with online classes?

Let's hear the voices of overseas and Japanese students regarding their encounters with online learning.

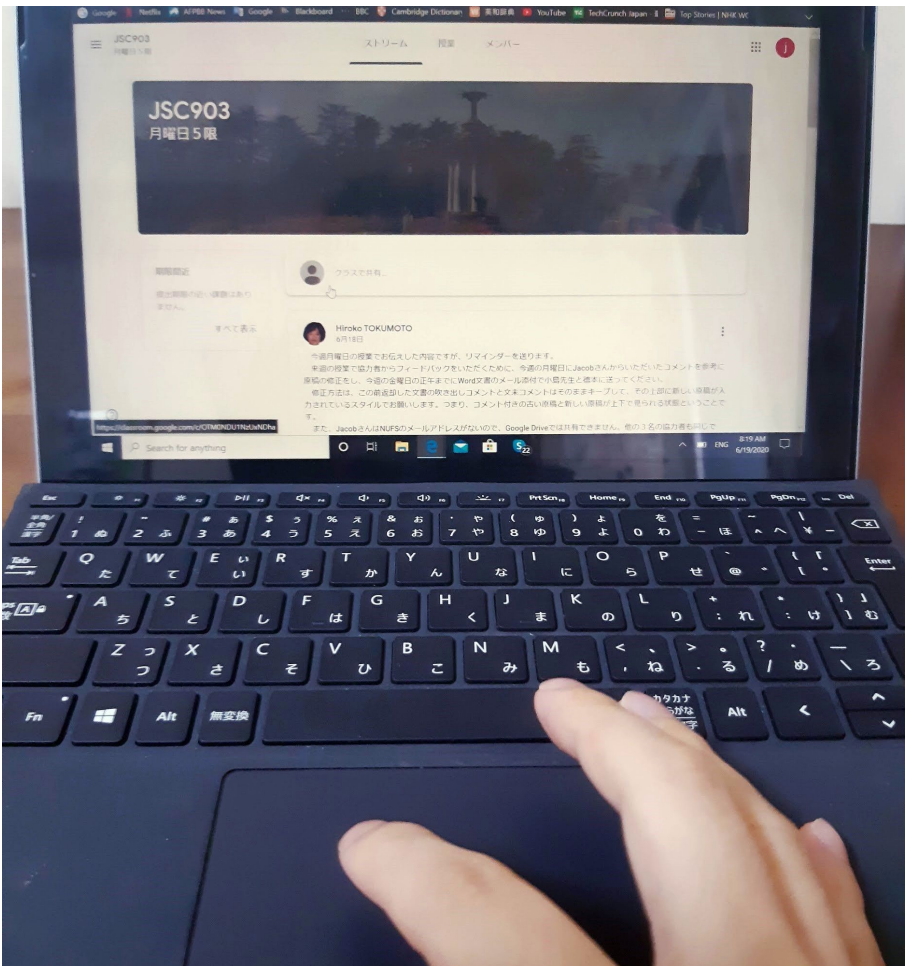
First, the pros:

Noah Shackelford (Student of University of Texas, America, 20s) said, that "I live in an environment geared towards online learning, so taking classes online feels similar to in-person classes. I do have one hybrid class, and I have to physically go to school once a week for that, so if I have questions, I can ask teachers directly. But I can also study from home, which is convenient for me."

Adan Semahu (student from Southern Cross University, Australia, 20s) said, "I do not have to attend classes on time as long as I submit homework later. So, if I'm busy, I can just watch the class recording any time I want. Teachers are easy going and trust students that they will properly study, so I don't feel tired from taking online courses. Essentially, I can find a good balance of studying and hobbies."



Above: I interviewed them by Spatial. Chat, Zoom and Skype. It is useful that I talk with them even though we are geographically far apart.



Left: NUFS students mainly download/submit assignments and check the schedule for the next class by Google Classroom

imposing more tasks than usual. Admittedly, it is important for students to study, but if students receive too many assignments, it may actually burden their learning.

Sherry Lee (student from Tunku Abdul Rahman University, Malaysia, 20s) said, "online classes are not efficient because you can't express yourself properly. It is also difficult to engage with others, because some students simply pretend to be attending class, when they are actually playing games or doing something else." Teachers not knowing what students are actually doing inevitably puts education to waste.

Post-COVID Education Style:

Due to COVID-19, education and work environments have been digitalized. Amidst this change, we can very clearly see disparities in each student's ability to engage in online education. In the face of this, universities have been taking measures, such as lending PCs and Wi-Fi routers to students for free, and such disparities have been gradually disappearing.

Now that the medium of learning has changed into the digital format, the implementation of online classes may expand into other sectors of business and education, resulting in a drastic transformation of future education systems. Despite this daunting and exciting potential for change, we cannot forget that several students remain dissatisfied with online classes. As we move forward and develop online learning, it is necessary to consider such students' needs, recognizing that many issues must be solved as we pave the path for a digitalized future.

Online classes are clearly a viable and efficient alternative to physical classes. After all, as Shackelford mentioned, students can carry out most classroom activities, including in-class discussion and presentations, all from the comfort of their own home. Further, students who live far from school can avoid long commutes. Students can even choose when to study, watching pre-recorded classes whenever they desire. In other words, it doesn't matter where students are or what they are doing, as long as they have internet access, they can succeed in school.

The cons:

Though voices worldwide suggest that online learning might be the way to go, Lee, Goto, and Zhu suggest otherwise. Yuxuan Zhu, student, 20s from Shandong, China, said, "For me, it's a little bit inconvenient when I want to ask questions regarding online classes, be-

cause I can not talk to teachers directly, and they do not always answer immediately through email." On the other hand, if classes occurred face-to-face, students would have the chance to chat with teachers directly after class. To make matters worse, in online classes, students might even be afraid to ask questions where others can hear, which places an unnecessary burden on shy students.

Yusuke Goto (student from NUFS, Japan, 20s) said, "Because of online learning, the quality of classes is deteriorating, and the amount of work is increasing. Many lecturers don't conduct lectures properly, only assigning a lot of work, and failing to teach properly. This highlights the difference between 'good teachers' and 'lazy teachers'." Further, the teachers over assigning work may think that being at home makes it easier for students to learn, and respond by

Teleworking

COVID-19's New Business Style

Avoiding rush hour; working at home with family.

By Nanako IWAYAMA

Today, many people work in their own houses to protect themselves from COVID-19. The virus has changed everyone's working style. What does the new working style, which functions remotely, look like? I asked people from different industries what the new working style looks like for them.

We would assume that people in sales jobs have trouble working the same way that they did before COVID-19. However, this is not the case. Kenjiro Iwayama, a sales worker, has been working at home for four months since the start of the pandemic. At first, he was not used to this working style. However, he came to realize that working from home is better than working in the office.

Thanks to teleworking, Iwayama no longer needs to wake up early to go to his office. This means that any stress associated with commuting on crowded transit has totally disappeared. Able to avoid transit, Iwayama took advantage of his early waking habits and began making breakfast for his family. He was even able to exercise in the morning, fitting 30 minutes of running into his morning schedule. This not only improved Iwayama's health, but partially emancipated his wife from the burdens of housework. Iwayama expressed gratitude to his wife after experiencing firsthand the difficulties of housework.

With regards to work, Iwayama improved his efficiency. Working online resulted in avoiding waste. Workers carried out all meetings, negotiations and reports online. Before starting teleworking, Iwayama's company meetings required almost an entire hour. However, as soon as his company implemented online meetings, the meeting times reduced to 30 minutes. My father said that, strangely, in online meetings, workers limit discussion to important things, allowing everyone to leave the meeting faster.

Another bonus is that Iwayama doesn't need to wear a suit, no matter how important the negotiation. Suits are uncomfortable and most of us despise wearing them for a long time. Thanks to his plain clothes, Iwayama can work efficiently.

Though Iwayama's experience has been positive, opinions regarding telework vary between young and senior employees. I enquired into the opinions of both groups. One young employee, who works at a trading company, claimed that telework is better because he does not have to visit clients nor bring

contracts. Nowadays, contract transportation is completed by 'cloud sign,' which can deal with official contracts. Stamping important documents is a Japanese tradition, but it may fizzle away with COVID-19.

Another young employee, who works at an IT company, expressed gratitude for the transition to telework. Thanks to working from home, he no longer needs to worry about senior workers as much. Before the implementation of telework, he constantly worried about leaving a good impression on them. Such behaviour is extremely tiring and old-fashioned. After the transition to telework, he quit buttering up older workers, instead focusing on his work ethic. Telework allowed him to be evaluated by hard work and numbers, rather than his ability to please.

Other young employees working in foreign consulting companies noted that they stopped being perfectionists after transitioning to telework. They were able to deeply relax because they no longer had to worry about the gaze of others. These younger employees also enjoyed the ability to take a rest when they wanted. Each day's goal is determined ahead of time, but the daily working schedule is decided by each worker. If workers achieve their goal, they can finish as early as they want and do whatever they desire. The high degree of freedom and low degree of stress that telework offers has become indispensable to younger workers.

Senior workers' opinions regarding telework contrasts with those of young employees. A worker of a pharmaceutical company claimed that face to face communication is necessary to a successful contract negotiation. The ability to directly engage with customers gives him more influence over their opinions. Essentially, he can directly convey his enthusiasm and force customers to buy his products.

Another worker from a major construction company claims that he can hardly concentrate on working because of his noisy children. Because he does not have a work room at home, he must work in the living room. Naturally, other family members also spend time in this room, interrupting his online meetings. Since the implementation of telework, he has considered moving into a new house that has a separate work room. However, this costs a lot of money that the company is not willing to pay.

If we desire to continue the new trend of working online, there are many issues that we must tackle. Another issue is the loss of the office atmosphere that inspires employees. In employees' offices, there



are many things that inspire one to work hard. These are necessary items that allow employees to work a long time with sustained concentration. Now, however, employees work in their houses with cheap chairs, desks and choppy wi-fi. Online meetings sometimes go nowhere because of terrible wi-fi. Moreover, sitting in cheap chairs and working on cheap tables contributes to employees' tiredness. To solve these problems, employees must purchase office supplies. Because companies are the ones who implemented the transition to teleworking, they should also shoulder the responsibility of improving and equalizing at-home work environments.

It is undeniable that telework has many advantages, especially

Top: Kenjiro Iwayama is working in his living room. A dining table and a chair turn into his office.
Above: Myoden Station of Tokyo Metro, many workers commute in crowded trains in the early morning.
Photograph: by Nanako Iwayama

from the perspective of young workers. Nonetheless, there exist various problems that we must solve. The most pressing of which is the barriers that prevent employees from efficient and comfortable telework. If there is even a slight possibility that the new working style might continue for a while, or even forever, companies should pull up their socks and improve support for their new army of teleworkers.

Japan's Immovable Working Style

Is teleworking a solution?

By Risa KONO

With the spread of COVID-19 and the accompanying declaration of the state of emergency, Japanese work styles face a major turning point.

Since the government announced a national state of emergency in early April, local governments in various parts of Japan requested a full shutdown of the service industry, including restaurants and retail stores. Along with this, the introduction of telework was encouraged in various industries to limit unnecessary outings. To Japanese workers, who have not experienced out-of-office work styles in a long time, 2020 is undeniably a year of great change.

How do actual workers view the sudden transition to telework? We will hear the voices of two people, who engage in two completely different types of work, about the changes they have encountered since the declaration of the state of emergency.

The first interviewee is Sumiko Kono, a counselor who works in Aichi Prefecture as a fiscal year appointed employee, that is, as a civil servant, under the direction of the local government.

“Telework was originally introduced by the local government, but it wasn’t allowed after the emergency was declared. And gradually my working style returned to normal,” she says. In Sumiko’s office, in addition to ventilation and disinfection, superiors implemented other infection control measures, such as forcing colleagues to work away from each other. These extra measures greatly inhibited Sumiko’s work: “There were vinyl sheets between desks, and it was prohibited to eat lunch together, so it was very difficult to communicate with the team.”

Since Sumiko mainly counseled students receiving compulsory education, counseling sessions were canceled one after another during the COVID-19 epidemic, and the amount of work plummeted.

Despite these drawbacks, Sumiko agreed with the introduction of telework in the future. “While teleworking, I functioned very efficiently. I was saved the trouble of commuting and constantly responding to telephone calls.” Not to mention, the contracted area of Sumiko’s work is very large; “it may take about 2 hours for a round trip depending on the client,” she said.

However, according to Sumiko’s predictions, local government organizations are hesitant to reform



What skills are needed in a telework environment?

in an easy-to-understand79.0%

Keeping myself in control66.3%

selfmanagement65.1%

must record our temperature every morning, and we must also collect visitor information in case we must track down the routes of infection.”

In contrast to the thorough implementation of infection control, Kaho’s workplace is also returning to its pre-COVID-19 working style. “During the state of emergency, the number of projects at my work was small, but with the lifting of the state of emergency, I’m now getting more business trips and going to work more frequently. In other words, we are returning to our normal working style.”

Two people who work in completely different positions had completely different views on telework. The fact that there was such a great difference in awareness about telework seems to be due to the differences in industry as well as differences in experience.

In Recruit Management Solutions’ emergency survey of telework, revealed on April 27th, 917 people responded to the question: “what skills are needed in a telework environment?” 79.0% responded, “To communicate information and requests in an easy-to-understand manner with texts,” 66.3% responded, “Keeping myself in control,” and 65.1% responded, “self-management.” In particular, the skill of self-management has proved

Above: Rush hour at Fushimi subway station (a business district in Nagoya City, Aichi prefecture) more than a month after the declaration of emergency.

Photograph: by Risa Kono, June 2020

to be difficult for new employees who have no experience in the workplace. This difference in experience may negatively affect workers’ satisfaction of teleworking.

Sumiko’s and Kaho’s comments illustrate that the reasons for introducing telework are not limited to the prevention of COVID-19. With the end of the first wave of the infection, telework has already been abolished in many workplaces as they return to their original working styles. However, teleworking can be a great support for workers who face difficult commutes, injuries, illnesses, or even pregnancy, and those who must work without leaving home, such as those who engage in childcare, elderly care, and nursing. It’s too disappointing for companies to undo their efforts for telework that they have built quickly and efficiently. It may be important to think of telework as an option, rather than something that is simply good or bad, in order to create a less restrictive work environment.

It is true that the separation and fear brought by COVID-19 left a deep wound in people’s hearts. However, adopting new working styles through this plight may lead to a more flexible and comfortable working environment.

Doctors and Nurses on the Frontline

How can we support our COVID-19 soldiers?

By Saori MORITA

Recently, many people in Japan have been expressing concerns regarding the current war against COVID-19 in hospitals. How are we supporting the nurses and doctors on the frontline of this war? What are our options for helping health workers? In order to answer these questions, we will compare methods of supporting health workers in different countries.

Recently, people can find donation boxes in some Japanese supermarkets or department stores. However, according to two surveys on Instagram, about 70% of the Japanese students surveyed have never donated their money through these boxes.

There are various reasons why most Japanese students fail to donate money to health workers. For starters, only about 45% of students pay attention to the news regarding medical workers. Further, Japanese cannot go outside freely, which makes it difficult for students to donate their money.

If there were online donation systems, the Japanese would be more likely to donate their money. In Japan, donation boxes are an ordinary way to donate money, but other countries use online donations via, for example, online stores. Japan should establish a similar donation system.

In addition to online donation systems, Japan could further support health workers through encouraging private donation. Celebrities around the world have been supporting their country's health workers. Angeline Farres, a student at Jean-Moulin University Lyon 3, said that various French celebrities and influencers have donated money to hospitals. According to Malcolm Orsi, a student at the University of Turin, relayed that plenty of famous Italian people, such as politicians, influencers, singers, athletes, sent different types of donations to strengthen the infrastructure of hospitals and overcome



Above: A donation box in the supermarket, which supports healthcare workers in Nagoya City, Aichi prefecture.

Photograph: by Saori Morita on June 1st, 2020.

Vancouver's apartments and condominiums go outside every night to make sounds with their pots and pans, screaming positive remarks to cheer on hospitals. These acts develop a sense of community and mutual support. Similarly to Canadians, French people have also been cheering on health workers. Farres said that people in France join together to celebrate doctors every night at 8 pm with a round of applause.

Public support has also arisen in visual forms. Orsi said that Milo Manara, an Italian comic artist, dedicated some illustrations to the women working in hospitals. Displaying feelings of appreciation is good for health workers. In such depressing times, people should support each other. It is heartwarming to witness news that shows humans coming together and overcoming COVID-19 through mu-

tual support.

The information above brings to light a few heartwarming ways in which we can assist those battling COVID-19 on the frontlines. However, this is not to say that all countries have been providing ample support for their health workers. Rinka Saito, a high school student from Orland, noted that people in America are experiencing various tragedies, resulting in fewer visible support for health workers. Due to the current protests against racial discrimination in America, people are hardly concerned with supporting health workers.

In the best-case scenario, public healthcare systems themselves strategically encourage the public to support health workers. Nina Hamasaki, a student at the University of Tasmania, points out that Australia has a public healthcare system. This means that health workers' salaries, including general practitioners, dentists, and community health workers, are funded by the government. Such healthcare

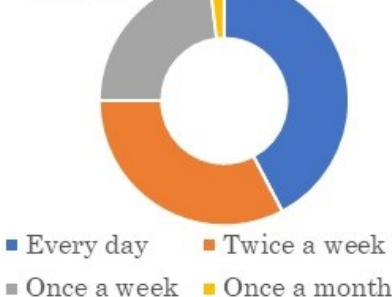
systems, where the government pays for people who cannot afford to go to the hospital, naturally result in positive public opinion regarding health workers, and in increased public support. Other countries should recognize the multifaceted benefits that arise from public healthcare systems.

In this article, we have focused on global support and donations towards healthcare workers that struggle to quell COVID-19. Though many countries still encounter problem in the wake of COVID-19, the above actions by celebrities and the public allow us to think that people have tender hearts. In order to overcome COVID-19, countries like the United States must follow the example of countries such as Canada, Italy, and Japan. The operations of healthcare systems are difficult to mobilize quickly, but we cannot deny that healthcare systems are important to protect people's lives. People should continue to deeply consider how we can support these systems. Public support of health workers will help us recover from the current pandemic, and generate peace.

(1) Have you donated your money to medical workers? (including online system)



(2) How often do you find the news of medical worker?



Special Contributions

Grasping the Phantom of COVID-19

By Jacob TEICHRIB
Contributing Writer

It wasn't until I stumbled upon a piece of street art that I realized what current news coverage of the pandemic lacks. The graffiti hit me abruptly. Perched on a beach wall, it elicited shock from the surrounding emptiness. The bold, evocative lines and saturated colours shoved me, momentarily, into the belief of the unbelievable—I could grasp the phantasmal virus haunting everyday life.

Throughout the COVID pandemic, the overwhelming discourse trend has revolved around graphs and charts. One of The New York Times' recent boasts regarding the pandemic was its tracking system for the virus—according to Sarah Bures, the newspaper's records “had no equivalent in the public sector” (2020). Even public rhetoric, ceaselessly chanting about ‘flattening the curve,’ has embraced wholeheartedly the messaging of data.

When it comes to a world-wide pandemic, however, graphs don't

cut it. Though we stipulate them as the epitome of objectivity, their lines subjectively muzzle the pandemic's humanistic underbelly. Renowned cultural critic, Michel De Certeau, notes the shortcomings of data in *The Practice of Everyday Life*: a map “only refer[s], like words, to the absence of what has passed by, [and] in doing so it causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten.” In a depressingly similar way, the graphs and curves tracking COVID-19 lose what has passed by: lost loved ones, sorrow, and

to palpably perceive an invisible virus, logical explanations and facts are not enough. With 0.14% of the world's population having contracted COVID-19 (according to WHO), many have yet to personally encounter the virus. COVID media speaks to a phantasmal reality in which we must believe, even if we have never lived it ourselves. To many, the virus is a phantom. We depend on media to perceive this phantom, and our vapid computer screens aren't helping us.

In order to grapple with COVID-19, without getting caught in a Catch-22, art is indispensable. What takes the form of a phantom on our computer screens becomes unavoidable and demanding in artists' vivid strokes. Art recognizes a truth that marketing agencies realized decades ago: people don't respond to logic nor to skeletal sketches of data. Rather, they respond to emotion, to raw, and refreshing stimuli. If we want people to truly grasp the gravity of COVID-19, we need something enthralling and tangible.

In an interview with CNBC, @ponywave, a tattoo artist who turned to street art during COVID-19, shared a message that news agencies should take to heart: “The best chance to change something is when you have no choice. ... It's time to create something new.” News media

needs to remodel itself: the ghostly, ungraspable nature of COVID-19 gives it no choice. Current news expects us to sense the pandemic through data and words, which are nothing more than vacant skeletons on our screens. What we yearn for, however, is art, art that strikes us and continues ringing, like a bell, inside our souls.



Street art: @ponywave poses next to her graffiti art.

Photo: taken by Maxim Puchkov

lonely deaths in quarantine. If it's not graphs, it's specialists and politicians pleading that we stay home and avoid complacency, or an endless river of alerts, dings, and banners. But this overwhelming tsunami of information still misses the point—if we want people

The boundary of a screen, which chops reality into “here” and “there,” disappears in the presence of street art. We cannot avert our eyes from a screen; the murals' message enthralls us where we stand. Whether street art captures a moment of human embrace or fear, it is the tangible representation of COVID-19 that we so desperately need. The evocative nature of graffiti brings to life COVID's deadly spectre.

A Disappointing Response to COVID-19

By Nina HAMASAKI
Contributing Writer

Despite being a global pandemic, information about Japan's fight against the COVID-19 has been limited, not only internationally but within Japan itself. Although having a relatively low spread of the infection in comparison to other countries, the response from the Japanese government regarding the pandemic has been disappointing. It is not to say that Japan and its government have not taken any action at all, rather, there was significant delay in response and inadequate action taken in dealing with a global disease. It has been confronting to see the difference in reaction by the Australian government and media in comparison to Japan and the consequences that have followed.

As seen in countries such as China and the USA, news and information surrounding COVID-19 did not reach its citizens immediately after the virus was identified as an extreme health hazard. There was significant downplaying of its seriousness and urgency to take action by authorities in charge, leaving

citizens and businesses vulnerable and misinformed. Japan has not been too dissimilar in this respect.

Hiroko Tokumoto, lecturer from NUFS, has said that she has had to source news about the COVID-19 from news articles online and from overseas in order to have more accurate and up to date information. Particularly at the beginning when cases were discovered outside of China, the Japanese mainstream media did not adequately report on COVID-19 as a threat to Japan. Masako Chimura, healthcare worker from Kyoto, has said she has relied on Google News, Facebook and other social media and overseas news sources to be informed about the dangers of COVID-19 and precautions that must be taken.

Even as COVID-19 began to spread outside of China, Japan did not close its borders to travellers from China, despite being a close neighbour. Although its response was not perfect, the borders in Australia where closed to those arriving from China as a preventative measure even before the WHO announced a global pandemic. It is true that the Japanese economy relies heavily on tourism, exports and imports from China, meaning that there would be reluctance to take drastic steps. Both interviewees expressed that Japan's delayed response is most likely due to the

timing of the 2020 Olympics in Japan. The Japanese government did not announce COVID-19 as a pandemic until the day after the Olympics was cancelled. Hospitals, universities and other industries had to prepare for the pandemic without the guidance and support of the government.

Not only has the Japanese government delayed information regarding COVID-19, its actions have not been clear to struggling Japanese citizens. Japan did follow suit of other countries by eventually closing businesses and implementing social distancing rules but have not provided meaningful assistance beyond these measures. Financial assistance in Japan has been difficult to attain with little to no online access, and funding being limited to roughly \$1000 (USD) per person in a lump sum. Furthermore, the government sending each household in Japan two masks each, further confirms that it is a response detached from reality, insulting to many who have lost their lives, jobs and studies during COVID-19.

In Australia there has been significant increase in access to financial assistance for businesses and individuals who have lost work due to the pandemic, are unemployed, or are students. For example, businesses have been given funding to pay staff members \$750 (AUD) per

week during the pandemic or there has been lump sums given to. Although there are still many issues and not everyone has been fortunate to receive this money, it has been life-saving for many. This may be due to many factors, including difference in political structures, taxation, economic and cultural differences, therefore the comparison may not necessarily be equal between Japan and Australia. However, it is clear that there is still a long way to go in order for Japan to support its citizens.

It seems that although the Japanese government itself has been performing unrealistically and disconnected from its citizens' struggles, individual mayors from jurisdictions such as Osaka have been active in supporting its constituents in practical and meaningful ways. According to the interviewees, this is the sort of leadership that they expect to see and that the current government must be reformed. The current leading government in Japan must now face scrutiny by its citizens on the insufficient steps taken during this pandemic. With national elections for the House of Representatives coming closer, the people of Japan must vote to ensure that they have a ‘representative’ government, who acts according to the best interests of its citizens and with reliable leadership during a global crisis.

COVID-19’s Struggling Music industry

Is art really unnecessary?



By Nanako ISHIDA

In the middle of February, COVID-19 became a source of worry to many of us. Soon after, this worry transformed into a global pandemic, wreaking havoc on human life, and sparing no part of civilization. One of the most devastated sectors of human life is the arts. Recently, in Osaka, a crowd of people enjoying a live performance contracted COVID-19. This resulted in a “cluster” of COVID-19. Music venues nationwide had to shut down for an undetermined amount of time. The concerts and stages that citizens expected to attend were canceled. Music lovers, and members of the art community, must have felt blue to hear the news.

COVID-19 continually deprives us of entertainment as it becomes more serious. We cannot access live art, such as live music, or plays. In addition to art lovers’ feelings of disappointment, artists and those involved in the art industry have rapidly lost their source of income. It is now impossible for artists to appear in front of the public, and as a result, the businesses associated with art have been facing a predicament. Their lives are becoming harder and harder.

Unlike grocery stores, pharmacies, and hardware stores, which have remained in business during the pandemic, cultural and artistic facilities have been completely shut down. Venues such as museums, theaters, and concert halls are not considered to be essential foundations for our lives, so they are inevitably shut down. But is art really something that we should prioritize so lowly?

According to the president of

Uemura Gakki, a musical instruments store in Nagoya city, “all instrument lessons were cancelled for 2 months because of the state of emergency. Some instructors completely lost their source of income.” In addition, officials called off instrument fairs in June. Hitoshi Uemura, the CEO of the company, mentioned: “we had no choice but to cancel the lessons, and even now that we have resumed them, some people still hesitate to attend.” It will clearly take a long time for the shops to return to business as usual.

Unfortunately, the idea of taking lessons, and enjoying instruments has been laid by the wayside since the outbreak of COVID-19. Because music stores have been taking measures to prevent infection, such a devaluation of instruments is unnecessary, yet still, music stores are barely slugging along.

Why are people so reluctant to attend? People’s ways of thinking are the key to this question. Firstly, people want to avoid being blamed for catching the virus through an enjoyable activity. Second, the majority of people do not place much emphasis on the arts in comparison to bread and butter. Adults especially tend to make careful decisions when it comes to attending lessons.

In contrast with the current situation surrounding the music industry, the arts are relatively familiar to us since our childhoods. In Japan, art classes such as music, fine art, and calligraphy are mandatory for all students from elementary to high school. However, Japanese adults express little interest in the arts when compared to European nations.

According to a report published by

Above: Caring for of the wind instrument, Uemura musical instrument store in Nagoya City, Aichi prefecture.

the Japanese Agency of Cultural Affairs, the budget for art and cultural policy was 107.7 billion yen in 2018. The amount is much smaller than European countries. France’s Ministry of Culture, which promotes the arts allotted €3.5 billion (approximately 485.1 billion yen) for the 2017 budget. Germany also highly prioritizes the arts, spending €1.6 billion (about 217.4 billion yen) in 2017, according to BKM(Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien). Although Japan’s governmental budget for the arts has steadily expanded for 10 years in a row, it is obviously much more frugal than the budgets in Europe.

Though we can assign a concrete dollar sign to the arts, art is one of the most difficult terms to define and measure. Masako Umegaki, professor at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, stated that “peoples” attitudes toward art are not measured by the amount of the budget. It is not so simple.” Rather, the thing that influences public attitude towards the arts is the way in which the budget is directed, allotted, and used. There is a risk, for example, that governments use the budget in dishonest ways to control the public opinion of the arts.

Looking back in history, we can notice instances when the Japanese Agency of Cultural Affairs disproportionately allotted funds to certain artists in order to suede public opinion. The Aichi Triennale 2019 art festival is a great example of this. A statue of a girl, called “comfort woman” had been put on display. After receiving constant criticism and intimidation, the exhibition closed down within only three

days after its opening. One of the reasons for this was controversial use of the governmental budget. People cast doubt on the exhibition because it had been funded 78 million yen by the Japanese Agency of Cultural Affairs. Some people were not happy that taxes were allocated to the sensational exhibition although this event did not intend to express any political position. However, if the audience lacks education of art appreciation, subsidies by public organizations could control the eyes of the citizens.

Assuming that even the governmental aid could be harmful, what would be the best solution for the art industry to survive? Private donations are one effective solution to these issues, and it could also be a means of measuring public awareness of the arts.

Giving USA 2018, which investigates charitable givings in the United States, provides interesting data regarding private donations. The total amount of donations, country-wide, was 410 billion dollars in 2017. Over 5%, 19.5 billion dollars, was for the arts, culture and humanities. Most importantly, donations to the arts were reported to have grown at the second-fastest rate. The above data illustrate that the arts can be influenced by private donations as opposed to governmental ones.

During the pandemic, people involved in the arts have greatly suffered because the public does not place much emphasis on the arts in comparison to the basic needs of life. The artists would be supported by subsidies from governments if they cannot get enough salary under the pandemic. In Japan, enjoying the art is considered to be nothing more than a hobby that is not an important part of daily life. In order to revive the arts in Japan, art lovers need to take the lead and engage in the kind of philanthropy that we see in the United States. We must be donating to the work of artists. After all, the arts are one of the most important ways to heal and encourage us during such depressing times as the current pandemic.



Above: Hand sanitizer in a lesson room forcing participants to sanitize their hands upon entering.