

An Analysis of the Implementation of International and Japanese Government Countermeasures Before and after COVID-19

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Abstract: In the aftermath of COVID-19, countries are on their way of recovery and rejuvenation on different extents. During this process, the author started to reflect on many problems revealed in the pandemic and try to clarify future direction. This paper analyzed how Japan reacted to COVID-19 and embodied resilience from different perspectives of social and mental health, the food system, international efforts, and domestic policy, providing a clear panorama of Japan's countermeasure. Japan successfully responded to the crisis on some extent. The government intervened less on citizens' casual activity and provided conditions for the development of resilience. Traditional culture and high stress cause anxiety of youth and healthcare workers. The food market maintained stable supply through direct market and promotion of a network of farmers. The national policy followed the direction of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), but the latter is not clear and constructive enough. However, Japan designed National Resilience to mend this imitation.

Keywords: COVID-19, Resilience, National Policy

1. Introduction

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. COVID-19 will be a point of penetration for this article to review Japan's resilient policy and conditions [1].

The first recorded case of Japan's COVID-19 infection was from the luxury cruise ship Diamond Princess [2]. This was a sudden incident that brought Japan into a whole new condition, and the initial response was compounded by complicated issues of governance and regulation [2]. However, Riyanti Djalante, the Academic Programme Officer from the United Nations University-Institute for the Advances Study of Sustainability, and his partners regard the Japanese government formulated a sequence of strict principles, thus limiting the spread and the number of deaths of COVID-19 [2]. This is the result of communities' active self-discipline and the government's efficient directions [2]. However, Nima Asgari from the Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and her colleagues point out, in early February, the response of the Diamond Princess cruise ship was seriously criticized as dissatisfactory [3]. However, they agree that after variable periods of adaption,

Japan practiced a series of administrations to deal with the emergence of a brand-new pathogen [3]. Additionally, the government readjusted surveillance systems to ensure they can identify potential cases. In 2020, diagnostic tests were offered to all suspected cases despite their history of travel [3]. For security, the Japanese government also controls traveler entrance through formulating travel restrictions on citizens from Hubei and Zhejiang provinces. They also quarantined cruise ships that carried COVID-19 cases [3].

This paper reviewed past studies of how Japan reacts to COVID-19, categorized into four perspectives. They are: social, mental health, food system, international reaction, and domestic policy, respectively.

2. Social Mental Health

Mental health has increased its importance in a global challenge such as the pandemic, and different strategies are necessary to be implemented to address it [4]. Especially after the first case emerged, the emergency of the Diamond Princess cruise ship and the unexpected announcement of school closures increased the anxiety of society [3].

Daichi Sugawara and Yuta Chishima from the Faculty of Human Sciences, University of Tsukuba, cooperated with other Japanese and international researchers to research the relationship between cultural differences and how these factors affected the mental health of the population. An essential conclusion is that mental distress was negatively associated with a sense of control in the four countries they discussed [4]. Additionally, the deterioration of mental distress will be stronger when the sense of control is low and the fear of COVID-19 was high [4].

In their experiment, most Japanese respondents answered that there was no change in self-restraint, such as the number of hours staying at home from the previous month [4]. For income, similar to U.S. and China in the research, Japanese respondents reported a slight decrease or no change [4]. Additionally, Japanese respondents reported a lower number of confirmed infections among acquaintances than Malaysia, China, and the U.S. According to the results of this research, we can tell Japan is relatively stable in psychological resilience during the early stage of the pandemic [4].

Yuta Takiguchi from Kanazawa University and her partners researched how leisure activities affect mental health and its impact on resilience to COVID-19. Their conclusions demonstrate that more engagement of leisure activities can decrease negative symptoms through resilience to some extent [5]. Engaging in multiple leisure activities can also be a surprisingly effective process of resilience construction, and this kind of resilience is useful to protect individuals' mental health from stress and pressure even in a shocking biological disaster such as COVID-19 [6].

They found that nonstrict policies practiced in Japan in response to COVID-19 prevention did not intervene in people's restriction of leisure activities. Simultaneously, the current data indicates people are keen to discover more new activities instead of the previous ones they abandoned [5].

However, reviewing from a traditional aspect, Yuta Takiguchi and her partners point out, that recent Japanese culture is plausible to contribute to the low level of resilience among youths [6]. Similarly, Yuji Ogihara from the Department of Cognitive Psychology in Education, Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University, reckons Japanese tradition is collaborative and that place grows harmony is a priority. However, it seems to be inclined toward individualism in recent years, which emphasizes individuals' responsibility and autonomy [7]. In modern Japan, because of increasing individualism, society requires people to be responsible for themselves rather than relying on others [7]. Despite this, the traditional collaborative concept remains its effect to some extent. Thus, playing expected roles in the community and belonging to a social group is still critical [5]. The uncertain condition increases Japanese youths' confusion and anxiety, which can decrease their resilience and consequently lead to vulnerability and the negative psychological influence of the pandemic [5].

A special group is the healthcare workers. According to a survey designed by the Japanese Red Cross Medical Center, moderate-to-severe anxiety disorder was developed by 85 (10.0%) of the healthcare workers, and 237 (27.9%) developed depression [8]. The research demonstrates that healthcare workers who do not have enough resilience face a relatively higher risk of suffering from depression than others, so they should show initiative in receiving psychological therapy [8]. Ageing groups of workers and those health workers with better resilience tended to have less proportion and probability of developing mental depression [8]. Furthermore, they mentioned that there were already systematic countermeasures for mental depression by helping health workers establish resilience [8]. Most of them are proven to be persistent and possible for eternal therapy [8].

3. Food System

Akash Balakrishnan from the National Institute of Technology and his partners observed the crisis caused by the pandemic posed some challenges in the agro-food systems. Various countries met with changes in food production and market. Food systems and security interfered, and this even showed a greater impact on vulnerable populations [9]. Thus, a crucial experience built upon the pandemic is to establish a resilient food system [9].

From this perspective, Shingo Yoshida from the Policy Research Institute, Ministry of Agriculture, and Hironori Yagi from the Department of Graduate School of Agricultural Life Sciences, The University of Tokyo, discovered how Japanese agricultural development shows sustainability and resilience facing the COVID-19 pandemic [10].

The covid-19 pandemic caused an unparalleled crisis in the food system that can threaten human health. To ensure sustainability, society expects urban agriculture to be resilient [10]. The conclusions are: at first, approximately over 50% of the sample farms in the research increased their sales during the pandemic. This can imply to a "persistence" approach, which is also a demonstration of resilience [10]. Second, resilience and other sustainable activities that farms display in the short term are beneficial for them to improve farmland preservation and long-term development [10]. Finally, the most critical resilience attributes were to market directly, social networks of farmers, and strong entrepreneurship [10]. The result is, that support to construct short-term resilience is more meaningful than maximizing the short-term economic profit of the farms [10].

However, Yoshida and Yagi recommended giving support to the farmers who are not applying direct marketing to keep the urban farming systems diversified [10]. Furthermore, promoting efficient management capabilities—the basis of sustainable development for farmers—is indispensable [10].

4. International Resilient Efforts and Implementation of Japan-The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

Djalante and his colleagues' work demonstrates that the crisis of COVID-19 can be regarded as an opportunity to achieve great progress on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) expected goals and further reinforce disaster risk management [2].

A series of disastrous events urged the international community to formulate a disaster risk management framework for instructing action, and recognition of priorities for practical plans in worldwide are required for the achievement of disaster resilience [6].

The SFDRR Reduction 2015-2030 was adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan, on March 18, 2015 [11]. This is regarded as a continuity and reinforced version of the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005 [11]. Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005 provided important guidance to reduce disaster risk at different levels of scope [11]. leading to a critical decline mortality in caused by some hazards [11]. Efficient management of disaster risk contributes to the goal of

sustainable development and is worth taking into account when formulating political schemes and strategies [11]. In conclusion, the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005 had a significant influence on promoting social attention to disaster risk management [11]. However, there are a few limitations in resolving the potential factors of disaster risk, in the formulation of priorities and goals for action, it is necessary to stimulate resilience of disaster risk management for all extents, and in guaranteeing sufficient methods of implementation [11].

Thus, The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction clarified its expected outcome and goal, it aims to achieve great progress in reducing disaster risk and losses in populations, livelihoods, and hygiene, physical, cultural and many other aspects related to security [11]. It is necessary to enhance the capability and implementation capacity of most developing and least developed states to actualize these goals [11]. Additionally, international cooperation is crucial for the preparation of necessary methods of implementation according to their priorities [11].

Three important international conferences on DRR were all held in Japan, a nation constantly affected by natural disasters but ahead of many other regions in disaster preparedness and recovery [6].

For example, the 1995 Hanshin Awaji disaster caused more than 5500 immediate mortality and approximately 40,000 injuries. However, this led to a reformation and reinforcement in the health system and building code, often considered contributed to the decline of the 2011 tsunami and earthquake influence [6].

Although SFDRR appeals for the construction of resilience, including from biological hazards, however, organizations related to SFDRR have lacked early-stage strategies and formulation of policy. the ultimate goal of SFDRR is to largely decrease risks and losses, simultaneously laying the crucial foundations for timely recovery and sustainable development [2].

Draft and putting into practice a continuous countermeasure for COVID-19 coupled with the 2030 SDFRR is indispensable, especially international cooperation in the formulation and dissemination of global response [12]. International cooperation is urgent for enhancing communication and decision-making regarding a series of humanitarian issues. Nations should share examples of pandemic preventive systems and the latest medical information [2].

5. Domestic Countermeasure

5.1. Fiscal Stimulus

Japan adjusted financing measures and collected funding from routine financing and contingency funds, thus becoming able to bear all direct costs for the therapy of patients by the government [3]. DeWit et al. agree to some extent. Japan shows its resilience in fiscal stimulus. a sequence of natural disasters that occurred in the past few years, this contributed to Japan's reformation on adjustment of holistic disaster resilience [12]. Japan inserted considerations of sustainability and holistic resilience into its fiscal stimulus measure. Japan's emphasis on comprehensive resolution accelerated decarbonization, improved sustainable development, and countermeasures against various effects brought by COVID-19 is an instance of how COVID-19 countermeasures were applied to connect both domestic and international urgencies [12]. "Post 2020 Olympic Games" legacy investment in Society 5.0, National Resilience Plans and disaster reconstruction, economic risk countermeasures, and SDGs-inclusive society are the three crucial pillars of the December 2019 stimulus [12].

However, DeWit and his partners criticized that the Japanese government underestimates the threat and potential damage brought by the pandemic. More generally, Japan's countermeasure was delayed and inadequate [12].

5.2. National Resilience

A critical platform for designing, revising, and actualizing comprehensive policy in Japan is National Resilience, which was developed before SFDRR in 2015 [12]. However, National Resilience closely parallels SFDRR to some extent, including accentuating preparation for all-hazard disasters, later construction, and "whole of government" inclusive administration [12]. According to the Japanese Cabinet Secretariat, National Resilience includes some specific basic principles: (i) Avert human loss by any possible fashions. (ii) Avoid mortal destruction to crucial functions for maintaining governance. (iii) Alleviation of damage to properties of both private and public. (iv) Achievement of efficient recovery and reestablishment [13].

6. Conclusion

By reviewing Japanese countermeasures towards COVID-19, we can gain precious experience.

The outbreak of the pandemic was from the luxury cruise ship Diamond Princess. researchers maintain different attitudes toward the countermeasure of the Japanese government. Some of them approved how the government responded to the emergency since they formulated a series of strict rules and directions. However, others reckon the Japanese people were unsatisfied of the government. But generally, the Japanese government worked efficiently and swung into action.

Regarding mental health, the investigations found that the conditions of Japanese people were relatively stable. Japanese persisted in their leisure activities since the government didn't limit them very much, and this is proved to be helpful in constructing a better mental health that can enhance the power of resistance toward depressive emotions. However, there are some traditions and cultures in Japanese society that affect the younger generation and increase their anxiety. This is a problem that needs to be resolved. And healthcare workers are suffering a high-percentage of depression, so the researchers recommended the government to provide help.

Agricultural production is essential for a nation when enduring pandemics. In Japan, approximately half of the representative farms increased their farm sales during the pandemic. This can be seen as a form of "persistence", which is also a sign of resilience.

Japanese countermeasure of COVID-19 is the implementation of the SFDRR in a biological crisis. Simultaneously, it was pointed out that the SFDRR lacks comprehensive countermeasures and instruction on pandemics. Global cooperation is crucial, especially to share experiences of resolving the pandemic.

For national fiscal resilience, the Japanese government adjusted its schemes and made efforts to afford all direct costs of therapy for the patients. However, some claim that the fiscal countermeasure is neither efficient nor abundant.

Additionally, the Japanese government designed a National Resilience plan, accentuating the significance of overall recovery and government comprehensive management to resolve natural disasters.

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