

Symposium | Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Foreigners : [Symposium 107] Mental health and well-being of foreign nationals: Future prospects seen from a comparison of community activities in Japan and the United States

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[Symposium 107] Mental health and well-being of foreign nationals: Future prospects seen from a comparison of community activities in Japan and the United States

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[SY-107-02] Racial Identity Struggles and Access to Care: Mental Health Consultations for Nikkei Latin Americans in Japan

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With ongoing globalization, Japan's foreign resident population reached 3.58 million as of June 2024. International migration can cause stress not only for migrants but also for their descendants, who may face delayed language development, bullying, and discrimination.

Nikkei—Japanese Brazilians with ancestral roots in Japan who have migrated back—are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues linked to racial and identity conflicts. However, effective interventions for this group remain limited. The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Toho University.

This report describes mental health consultations conducted for Nikkei Latin American residents in Japan, in collaboration with NPOs and multicultural centers in Tokai and northern Kanto. Each 45-minute session was supported by interpreters as needed. Over four years, 329 consultations were held; 66% of consultees were women, and 63% required interpretation. Adolescents accounted for 28% of participants, followed by mothers in their 30s–40s.

Many adolescents, though raised in Japan, experienced unstable caregiving and lacked a sense of belonging. Identity struggles and anxiety about the future were common. Even in adulthood, underdeveloped ethnic identity contributed to psychological vulnerability. Mental health issues in this population reflect a complex mix of biological, psychological, and social factors. Supporting their well-being requires attention to both language accessibility and cultural identity.