



**HOME RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION
WORKING PAPERS
Number 80**

**Belonging for international students in Japan in a
situation of Disaster, from shelter to home
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Paper delivered at Home Renaissance Foundation V International Conference: "Happy Homes, Happy Society? The contribution of domestic life in a time of social changes",
Online due to Covid19 measures, 12-13 November 2020

Belonging for international students in Japan in a situation of Disaster, from shelter to home

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to document the reaction of international students to the Covid-19 pandemic in Japan. Since 2009, with the Global 30 program, Japan has been trying to attract more international students with high-education programs. If good efforts are put to soften the language and cultural gaps inside the university, international students still suffer from a lack of preparation when facing major life's unexpected events like accidents and disasters, deepening their state of vulnerability.

In the case of Covid-19 pandemic, the disaster spread worldwide at the same time, but governments reacted to the issue differently. Some governments reacted quicker than others closing their borders and implementing mobility restrictions. International students based in Japan found themselves trapped wherever they were. The study is based mainly on participant observation and questionnaire surveys carried out between February and May 2020 and follow-up interviews with international students experiencing lockdown in Japan, in their home country, or trapped in between.

Major findings include the process of lockdown, sources of information, lockdown at "home", study from "home" experience, family/friends support, Japan state of emergency application and consequences, and economical problems. Based on the findings, suggestions for future disaster planning are advanced to relieve international students' stress, as well as a discussion on the challenges of adaptation response of international students during the crisis, to make the place where they are residing feel better than a shelter and be home.