

The Impact of the Global Pandemic on Part-time Employees Working in the Tourism Industry: The Case of Beppu

Deepika Rana
Malcolm Cooper
Phillip Pardo

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan

Abstract: The corona virus COVID-19, commonly termed the “pandemic,” is a respiratory disease first identified in China that has spread globally. To prevent the virus from spreading, nations across the globe have adopted all kinds of preventive measures. These measures include national lockdowns, social distancing, and travel bans. As we might expect, due to these actions the tourism industry and the people working within it have been one of the most impacted groups in this situation. Beppu is a famous tourist town in Japan, known for its large number of hot water springs and nearly 9 million domestic visitors per year, and for the international cultural exchange that was occurring prior to the pandemic due to an increasing number of foreign visitors as well as the foreign nationals living in Beppu. Consequently, the Beppu tourism industry has been heavily impacted by the global pandemic. Moreover, it suffered from the prefectural lockdown which happened in May- June 2020. The virus has adversely affected the people employed in the industry, specifically part-time employees. The aim of this research paper is to examine how the global pandemic has impacted the part-time employees working in the Beppu tourism industry. To investigate this impact, statistical data from a range of sources were gathered in the form of content analysis and a questionnaire on the impact of the COVID19 virus distributed as a Google form available in both English and Japanese. To achieve accurate results, the data was collected from September 2020 to October 2020 when the local industry started recovering from the global pandemic. The study shows that there has been high impact on the part-time employees working in the tourism industry. The findings also show that the increase in financial burdens on the industry, the reduction in well-being across the population and in the labour market, loss of jobs, and misconceived government policies were the reasons that altogether led to a high impact on part-time employees in the tourism industry.

Keywords: Global Pandemic, COVID-19, Part-Time Employee, Beppu Tourism Industry.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

In the 21st Century tourism plays a vital role in boosting the economy of many countries. The economy as a whole, its employment activities, foreign exchange

situation, and individual business activities are all important outcomes of a successful tourism industry. Nonetheless, the industry has always been prone to difficulties and crises. Incidents such as terrorism, war, natural disasters, epidemics, and now pandemics severely affect the tourism industry and its activities. Moreover, some of the crises are hard to predict like the 2008 Financial Crisis, the 2003 SARS Outbreak, as well as the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima Nuclear Crisis that occurred in 2011. The occurrence of these kind of crises can have a significant impact on tourism and its activities. Inevitably, external forces have mostly caused the list of entanglements that have taken place within the tourism industry. Therefore, it is incredibly challenging but necessary for the tourism industry to anticipate, prepare, and mitigate these events from occurring.

One such crisis that no one predicted or was prepared for is the currently ongoing global pandemic known as the Corona Virus (COVID-19). This infectious respiratory disease was initially discovered in Wuhan, China, in December (WTO, 2020). It is a contagious disease that is easily transmitted from one person to another and has spread globally. COVID-19 is one the biggest intractable crisis which has occurred in the world in decades. It has affected individuals, industries, and economies and has also frozen the whole socio-economic system, threatened globalization, and badly affected multinational businesses operating worldwide. Generally, the infection has permeated the susceptible groups in the community first; those with food and healthcare vulnerabilities in their ways of living, in other words the impoverished in society.

However, the novel virus infection initially affected international tourists and their travelling activities, primarily affecting the most affluent social class across the globe until it became entrenched in local communities and affected all travelers. Thus the tourism industry is one that to a great extent has been impacted most strongly by the COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic is paralyzing the sector. Thus, COVID-19 is now playing a significant role in shattering economies that rely strongly on tourism for foreign exchange. Countries like Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Paris, Italy, and India are countries where tourism has in recent years been spurring the country's economic growth and have been suffering massive economic losses because of the outbreak.

Japan is a country formerly highly renowned for its beauty, nature, culture, and technology, but without inbound tourism. From about 2013 though, the country's inbound tourism industry has exhibited rapid growth, making Japan an international tourist destination not seen since the beginning of the Second World War. However, in Japan tourism and crises go hand in hand. This is so because the country is heavily exposed to natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, floods, and so on, due to its geographical location. Every time a natural disaster strikes Japan, the tourism industry is affected, leaving adverse effects on the industry and its activities and the people engaged in the industry. For example, the "Great East Japan Earthquake" and "Fukushima Nuclear Crisis" severely affected the Japanese tourism industry. This tragedy led to a 27.8% decline in the number

of international tourists from 2010, which according to the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) is regarded as the highest rate of decrease in statistical history (JTA, 2012). Also, the earthquake harmed Japan's domestic tourism industry and its activities, and the people employed in the industry. In 2020 an unusual disaster, COVID-19, struck the tourism industry with colossal strength leaving many businesses devastated and for which no one in Japan has effective policies to deal with its aftermath.

Major cities like Tokyo and Osaka, Prefectures (regional government) such as Kyoto, Okinawa, Hokkaido, Shizuoka, and towns like Beppu are highly renowned as tourist destinations. The repercussions of COVID-19 on these tourism-based cities, prefectures, and small towns can be acutely observed and have adversely affected the people employed within the tourism industry. In Japan, the number of employees in the accommodation, eating, and drinking services flattened from 35,800,000 in January 2020 to 33,600,000 in August 2020 (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2020). In addition, the part-time employees working within this industry have, to a greater extent, been affected in comparison to the full-time employees. On May 14, 2020, UBS Securities estimated that if COVID-19 continues, about 800,000 jobs will be lost from hotels, restaurants, and bars until September 2020 in Japan. The primary operations that will be affected by the outbreak will be the small and midsize firms along with the high ratio of part-time employees across the industry (Nagata, 2020).

The consequences of COVID-19 are so vast that everyone around the world, including governments, news organizations, leaders, and big organizations like UNWTO, WTO, and so on, are estimating its impact on the global economy, countries, industries and people. Thus COVID-19 pandemic has become a hot topic that has attracted many academic researchers' attention. In one way or another, the tourism industry has not been left out in addressing the ongoing pandemic since there is a strong linkage between them. The outbreak of COVID-19 has distressed nations' economic, financial, political, religious, and social frameworks. Studies on the impact of global pandemic on the worldwide economy and different industries, including tourism has been covered by numerous academic researchers and scholars. Thus, this paper's focus is not to show the impact of COVID-19 on the Japanese tourism industry but to focus on the Beppu tourism industry highlighting the impact of COVID-19 on the part-time employees working in this industry.

1.2. Tourism in Japan and Beppu

Japan tourism has suffered huge losses from the virus. Many small and medium size enterprises operating within the tourism industry such as travel agencies, hotels and ryokan are all suffering from the decline of tourism, while restaurants and bars are closed after 8pm as their customers are forced into stay at home through this government policy. All these situations are causing problems or difficulties for the companies to operate at the same time leaving huge impact on the employees engaged in these industries.

The tourism industry in Japan employs a huge number of people as part-timers in comparison with the full-time employees. The number of part-time employees in hotels, restaurants and drinking services is higher than that of full-time employees as shown in Table 1. The impact of the corona virus has been proven to be much higher on part time employees than full-time employees because of the low level of job security in part time employment.

As the virus pandemic began many companies in the tourism industry started reducing the shifts of their part-time employees and even laid them off for some period of time. This then led to many of them being terminated, as the companies wanted to sustain themselves in this difficult situation by cost cutting. The Statistics Bureau of Japan suggests that the largest decline in the labor force was in part-time employees (6,300,000), while full time employees fell by 2,000,000 during the global pandemic (Labour Force Survey, 2020). Until September 2020, part-time employees in Japan numbered 7,378,000 (Japan Part-time Employment, 2020).

Beppu, has been styled as an 'International Tourism Hot-Spring Cultural City' since 1950 (Beppu City Hall, 2018a,b), and has many individuals employed as part-timers in its tourism industry. Therefore, it can be assumed that the impact of COVID-19 in the city will be largely seen on these part-time employees. Beppu is a city in the southern part of Kyushu. It is the second-largest city in the Oita Prefecture and has been famous for hundreds of years for its hot springs, also known as "Onsen." The Beppu Onsen has the highest output of all the hot springs in Japan (Phro, 2013) at some 85,000 l/min, and is the location for 9 of the 10 world-recognized types of mineral springs (Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper, 2009). Apart from the onsen, Beppu is also famous for its natural beauty: the Tsurumi and Yufu Mountains and the Seven Hells of Beppu (Jijoku). The city is one of 5 major spring locations in the country and one of the largest domestic tourism destinations.

At the same time approximately 3,600 international students attend Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University and Beppu University, and the city is growing as one of the leading international student exchange cities in Japan (Beppu City Hall, 2020a). Based on this trend, until 2019 the Beppu Tourism industry was overseeing an increase in the number of international and domestic tourists. The number of international visitors, though small (650,000+ of approximately 9,000,000) was rising and in 2019 received a great boost from the Rugby World Cup, as 5 games were held in Oita and Beppu was the initial training camp location for the New Zealand All Blacks, at that time the top team in the World.

Of course, Beppu is no stranger to natural disasters like epidemics and earthquakes and they all influence the Beppu tourism industry. The year 2008 for example witnessed a fall in the number of foreign visitors who visited Beppu due to the then global economic crisis (Han & Yotsumoto, 2010). However, the recent COVID19 outbreak has changed the shape of the industry in Beppu. Never in its history has Beppu experienced such a significant reduction in the number of

domestic and international tourists like it has from February 2020. This has had a drastic effect on many small and medium scale business and on the people employed in the tourism industry and is showing little sign of abating. In the 2020 Golden Week and for the first time in history the city welcomed zero tourists and many tourist facilities were closed as the virus peaked (Beppu City Hall, 2020b).

1.3. Research Questions

This study asks two main questions:

- 1) What is the impact of the global pandemic on the job prospects of part-time employees working in the Beppu tourism industry? and
- 2) What are some of the causes or reasons for these impacts?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Japanese Tourism Industry

Japan is well known all over the world for its tourism activities and for its natural disasters. In the year 2019, the Travel and Tourism industry's contribution was 7% to the total economy, wherein the tourism and travel GDP accounted for US\$359.4 billion, and created 5,359,900 thousand jobs (WTTC, 2019). In 2016 McKinsey & Company estimated that Japan would once more be a tourism-oriented country by 2020 (as it was during the Meiji, Taisho and early Showa periods prior to the 1940s (Funk & Cooper, 2013). Many factors would contribute to this however; one of the main factors was to be the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (Andonian et al., 2016). Thus, 2020 should have been an excellent year for Japan in terms of tourism as the Tokyo Olympics would have involved the movement of millions of people to Japan. However, January 2020 marked the first case of COVID-19 in Japan (Kyodo, 2020), which changed the entire tourism industry's shape in Japan, in terms of both inbound and outbound tourism.

The overall number of international tourist arrivals dropped 58.3 % in February, which was the most significant decline in the last nine years (JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co., 2020) and to 93% in March, and eventually plummeted to effectively zero. The primary reason for this sharp downfall was due to the decline in the number of Chinese visitors as a result of the ban imposed by the Chinese government from 27th January 2020 (Nguyen, 2020), as Chinese tourists were the number one foreign visitor to Japan in 2019 (JNTO, 2019). An example of the impact can be seen in the experience of one of the famous ryokans in Tokyo named Kaminarimon. The business took on debt for its renovation as it was being transformed into a business style hotel for the Olympics. As soon as the government-imposed bans and travel restrictions responding to the virus came into effect, there were more than 80% cancellations, and the staff was reduced to one-third of its standard size, leaving the owner and the employees in a tough situation (Ryu, 2020).

The heat of COVID-19 is affecting not only the ryokans but also the restaurant industry in Japan. March and April are typically the most booked out months for

the restaurant industry because this is the commencement of the new financial year in Japan. Hence many businesses and corporations hold farewell and welcome parties in these months for their colleagues and employees. However, after the outbreak of COVID-19 the industry was "devastated" (Rurika, 2020). COVID-19 has not only affected tourism but has adversely affected the employees associated with the tourism industry. The restaurants and accommodation businesses are at the top, wherein the impact of the pandemic has been unfavorably seen in their corporate activities (Statista, 2020).

To help businesses cope with losses during the pandemic, Japan's government offered cash grants of 2,000,000 yen for those businesses suffering a downfall of 50% or more in monthly profits. An offer to which the CEO of a Tokyo Based Airbnb start-up stated that there are 30 employees in his company and the way the company is operating during pandemic there is no way that it can be rescued by a grant of 2,000,000 yen provided by the government (Nagumo, 2020). Along with the cash grants, the government also announced a "Go to Travel" and a "Go to Eat" Campaign to boost domestic tourism with subsidies, which commenced on 22nd July 2020. These campaigns proved to be almost completely out of touch with the true situation as the virus expanded as people travelled or went out to eat. While they have not been dropped there is very little comment at time of writing on their impact and they have certainly not changed the shape of tourism "after" COVID-19 as was promised. The tourism industry is still struggling to get back in shape.

2.2. Part-Time Employment in Japan

Part-time employees are a vast and increasing proportion of employment in Japan (Houseman & Osawa, 1995). The rise in the percentage of temporary or non-regular employees working in Japan has been a focus of debate in the country (Takenaka, 2019). Temporary employees are defined as part-time employees in Japan with a specific name of *arubaito* or *arubaitosei*. Part-time employees are described as staff whose working hours are limited compared with the usual employees in the same company (Asao, 2011). A part-time job is defined as a "side job" done by somebody at university, school, or adults who opt for part-time employment rather than a full-time job. In recent years, part-time employees have particularly been housewives, students or retired people (Gaston & Kishi, 2007).

The ratio of part-time workers increased from 16.4% to 20.9% from 1985 to 1995. Moreover, in the year 2005, it further jumped to 32.6%. One of the primary reasons for such an increase is that the owners of retail outlets and their relatives and colleagues are becoming part-time employees in their own convenience stores or supermarkets. Along with that, there is a downfall in the number of full-time farmers (Takenaka, 2019). In other words, Japan has witnessed a steady rise in part-time employment. Compared with a full-time employee, the part-time employee is hired without any employment security and offered less compensation, a restricted career path, and has limited benefits, such as social welfare benefits, union membership, or annual payments (Broadbent, 2002). In

particular, a high proportion of women and students are in non-regular employment (Brinton, 1993).

In Japan, rules and regulations for part-time employees are mentioned in the *Japan Labor Standards Act*, and all part-time employees are required to abide by these laws while working. As per the regulations, a part-time employee can work 40 hours a week and 8 hours per day with a rest period of at least 45 minutes to 1 hour. However, in case of foreign nationals like international students, dependent holder visa types and special designated activities visa holder types are allowed to work only 28 hours a week, although in the case of long holidays like summer and winter holidays, the working hours of the international students get extended to 40 hours a week (MHLW, 2020). The part-time employee is provided wages at a minimum wage rate stated by the *Minimum Wages Law*. However, the minimum wage rate differs from industry to industry. The salary payment must be paid directly to the employee in total at least once a month or on a date set by the employer. The salary will be paid in cash or in the official bank account of the employee. However, the source through which salary or wages paid to the employee will be decided by the employer (MHLW, 2020).

In this paper, the definition of a part time employee is particularly oriented to those who are involved in part time employment in the tourism industry in Beppu. These individuals are further categorized into international students, domestic students, other Japanese part timers and any individual who does not belong to the above three mentioned categories but are engaged in part time employment because of their visa status (dependent visa and visa for special designated activities). The *Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act* defines international students as those foreign students studying at any university, university preparatory courses, junior college, professional training college and graduate school or College of Technology in Japan with a student visa type (Ministry of Justice, 2020).

In the context of the present study, international students are those non-Japanese individuals studying in university, college, and professional training colleges while being at the same time engaged as part-time employees in the tourism industry. They are allowed to work 28 hours a week during school days and 40 hours in a week during holidays. Domestic students are categorized as part timers who are engaged in part time employment but hold Japanese nationality. Both groups are currently studying in university, college, school and professional training colleges that are also known as *senmon gakko* in Japan.

2.3. Employment and COVID-19

As noted earlier COVID-19 has had a very real impact on the tourism industry, which is critical for many individuals, locations, and businesses in countries, towns, or regions where tourism plays a significant part in the economy. Substantial effects on the small and medium-sized companies that comprise approximately 80% of the tourism sector have been seen. Hence, this may impact on millions of livelihoods worldwide, including the vulnerable communities that

rely on tourism as a tool for spurring growth and economic inclusion (UNWTO, 2020). Approximately 100.8 million jobs are at risk worldwide and the impact on the worldwide tourism industry will largely depend on the duration of the outbreak.

330 million jobs were generated in the year 2019 in the tourism industry, one out of ten jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2019). However, 2020 appears to be the worst year for the tourism industry as the global pandemic has adversely impacted the industry along with the people employed in it. UNWTO estimates that there could be a loss of 50 million jobs with a further increase to 100-120 million jobs lost across the world. One of the contributing factors to such a vast employment loss is international tourists' decline due to border and airline shutdown (UNCTAD, 2020). Job instability will continue to rise, given the possibility of decrease in income and working hours (ILO, 2020b). It will result in increases in job instability and unemployment eventually leading to a decline in employee salaries and a subsequent fall in the consumption of goods and services. However, the rate of employment loss will differ from one country to another.

In numerous Asia and Pacific nations, over 3 out of 4 employees in the tourism industry are employed in informal jobs, which will make them particularly sensitive to the adverse impacts of COVID-19. Those workers who were employed in the hotels and hospitality businesses who do not have the opportunity to work remotely were at the uppermost risk of the infection. Those who fall sick during this time might have difficulty accessing the health services. Moreover, they will not have any substitute of their wage or salary if they do not work due to their poor health condition or lockdown (ILO, 2020a). Asia and Pacific regions are experiencing the most significant loss of nearly 63.4 million jobs (Lock, 2020).

In the United States, workers in the tourism industry have been placed in an inordinately troublesome situation of handling their livelihood along with their families while concerned about their immediate income disruption, probably facing job loss for an extended period, inadequate or null employment benefits, no paid sick leave or limited paid sick leave while being unable to pay for the necessities which were food, rent, utilities, bills (Sonmez et al., 2020). In a small country like Portugal, the employee's work often gets extended, and there is no rest break like lunch break and tea break, leaving a substantial impact on the quality of life of these workers (Almeida & Santos, 2020). It was observed that individuals who stopped working due to the pandemic outbreak reported health issues and distress (Zhang et al., 2020).

The proportion of non-standard staff will be at higher risk. It will vary from country to country. Employees at temporary jobs, part-time staff, and self-employed individuals may be vulnerable, especially to job loss, because they usually have low job security and social protection (OECD, 2020). Employees in Australia have experienced a large decrease in their employment along with the number of hours worked. From February to May, casual employees who are part-time employees in Australia have faced a greater adverse impact than the full-time

employees (Borland and Charlton, 2020). It is in these contexts that the present study examined the situation for part time works in Beppu, Japan.

3. Methodology

The collection of reliable data is vital for proper interpretation. The data collection tool used in this study was a questionnaire on the impact of the COVID19 virus distributed as a Google form available in both English and Japanese. To achieve accurate results, the data was collected from September 2020 to October 2020 when the industry had started recovering from the global pandemic. The primary data objective was to analyze the impact of the global pandemic on part-time employees and determine the cause or reasons for this impact. The study attracted 225 respondents working as part-time employee in the tourism industry across Beppu to ensure the data's authenticity and validity. The research was carried out in Beppu City, which is in Oita Prefecture, Japan, in alignment with the aim of the study. The research has been carried out by using both inferential and descriptive statistics. SPSS along with Microsoft Excel is used to process, analyze, and interpret the primary data.

3.1. The Research Concept

The variables studied were designed based on the literature review (Figures 1 & 2). This study observes the link between the global pandemic's impact and the employees working in the Beppu tourism industry. The study has one dependent variable: the impact of the global pandemic and five independent variables that further have sub-variables: the first independent variable was the financial aspect, and is divided into two sub-factors, financial burden (rents, school fees, etc.) and daily life expenses (food, utilities, etc.); well-being is the second variable and is further divided into three sub-factors (mental & physical health, social life, discrimination); the third variable is the employment aspect which has two sub-factors (working hours and job loss); the fourth variable is academic performance; and the last variable is government policies and support.

The part-time employees and other vulnerable individuals in Japan faced a reduction in the working hours and wages in the first wave of the global pandemic (Takahashi, 2020). One of the main factors seen during COVID-19 in every industry was a reduction in working hours and a decline in wages as a result of restrictions on travel due to which the employees faced financial hardship. The students who lost their part-time jobs or income found that this affected their capability to proceed further with their education or job searches (EMN & OECD, 2020). In other words, the global pandemic has impacted students' academic performance for those who work as part-time employees. Government policies to offset the impact of the virus were quickly seen as the main game-changer for the tourism industry, its activities and the people employed (Constantin, Saxon & Yu, 2020). Social distancing and government travel bans had a significant impact on businesses and individuals, which has now led to an imbalance in their personal and professional lives. In addition to this, the virus has a considerable impact on

social life as people are reluctant to meet others. The ILO has estimated that extended hours of work, low pay, discrimination and absence of social security are faced by the people associated with the hardest hit sector, the tourism sector (UN, 2020).

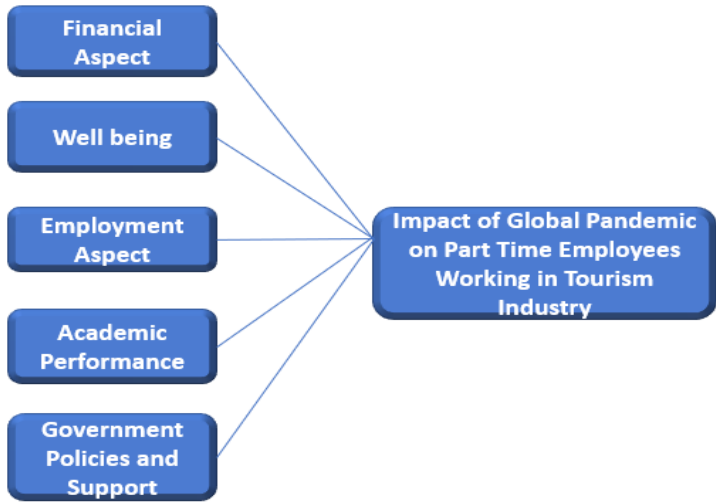


Figure 1: Research Conceptualization

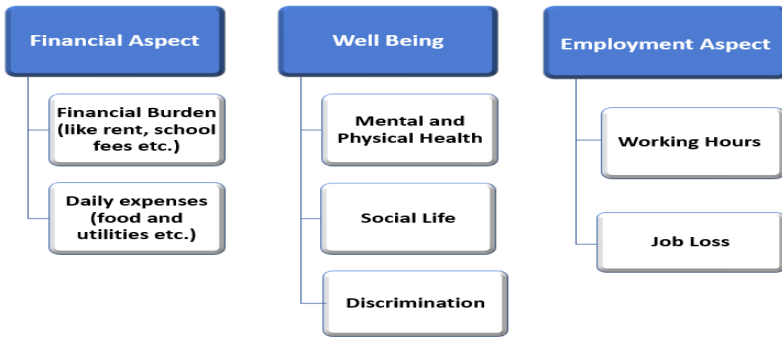


Figure 2: Sub-factors of the three research conceptualization variables

4. Research Findings

This paper explores the research findings in Beppu to explain the implications of the COVID19 pandemic on part time labour. This section illustrates in what way the data is synchronized with the study objectives and questions.

4.1. Demographic Segment

In this study, the respondents are working as part-time employees. Initially, the data collected demonstrates the type of business/organization the part-time

employees are associated with in tourism industry. The businesses and organizations were divided into six categories: 1. Hotels/ Hostels/ Guest houses/ Airbnb's;2. Restaurants and Izakaya;3. Clubs/ Bars/ Karaoke;4. Travel companies/ Travel Agencies/ Tourist Information Centers;5. Onsen; and 6. shopping malls and souvenir shops. Moreover, the respondents who did not belong to any of the above-listed categories but still work in the tourism industry as part-timers were given a free format to answer and mention the type of businesses/organizations they are associated with. In this case, the data derived were combined and categorized as 'Other'.

The study also discusses the status of an individual, which highlight the type of residency the individuals hold in Japan, like international students, domestic students, and Japanese Part-time employees, and others. The international students are students other than Japanese individuals who are studying in Japan and hold a student visa. On the other hand, domestic students are Japanese citizens who are studying in Japan. Japanese part-time employees are being referred to as the Japanese citizens who are engaged in any kind of part-time employment. Other representatives are neither Japanese nor studying in Japan but are involved in part-time work. Furthermore, to restrict biasness with international students, the questionnaires were distributed among different nationalities. Fair representation of data was considered between male and female participants in this paper, validating the data neutrality concerning gender.

**Type of Business/Organization:
225 respondents**

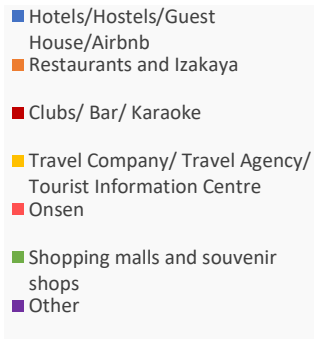
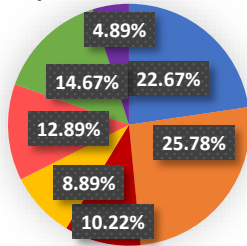


Figure 3. Type of Business/Organization

From the data gathered (Figure 3), the majority of the respondents were individuals working in restaurants and izakaya (25.78%), the second-highest was hotels/hostels/guest house/Airbnb (22.67%), the third in this category was shopping malls and souvenir shops (14.67%), followed by onsen (12.89%), clubs/bars/karaoke (10.22%), then travel company/ travel agency/ tourist information centers (8.89, and last individuals who are not associated with any of the aforementioned categories but are however working as part-time employees (4.89%).

Considering the status of part-time employees as highlighted in Figure 4, international students account for 60%, while domestic students added 24.4%, followed by Japanese part-time employees at 12.4% and others at 3.2% who are reported as individuals holding dependent visas and visas for special designated activities. The largest percentage of the respondents were females 56% (males 44%) as represented in Figure 5.

What is your current status in Japan apart from being a Part-Time Worker: 225 responses

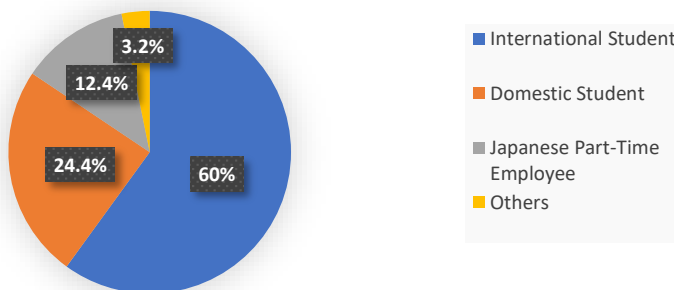


Figure 4: Current status in Japan apart from being a Part-Time Worker

Gender: 225 respondents

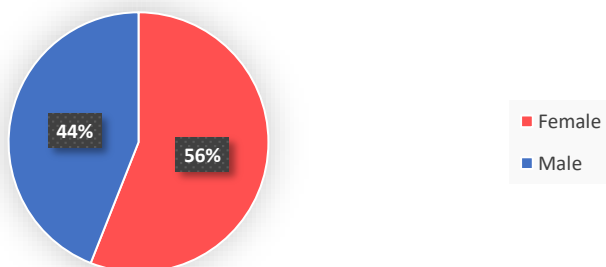


Figure5: Gender category

4.2. Impact

This section focuses on summarizing the descriptive statistics of impact on the part time employees, using a 10-point Likert scale (maximum value 10 signifies highly impacted groups, minimum value of 1 indicates no impact. Table 1 presents the data.

The above table shows that academic performance and the employment aspect were less affected, as the mean value falls under 6. This indicates that academic performance was somewhat impacted, and the jobs were not so secure, but because

many were university students this is a normal state of affairs. However, on the other hand, financial aspects, well-being, and government policies and support had a higher impact. This shows that the financial aspects, well-being, and (existence or lack of) government policies and support were considered highly important after the pandemic started. The standard deviation is 2 to 2.8 for all the variables. This shows that all the variables are clustered around the mean.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics				
After the pandemic occurred	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Financial Aspect	225	6.85	2.251	5.069
Well Being	225	6.19	2.067	4.274
Academic Performance	225	5.88	2.693	7.252
Employment Aspect	225	5.80	2.833	8.027
Government Policies and Support	225	6.42	2.382	5.674
Valid N (listwise)	225			

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Impact of global pandemic on part-time Employees in Beppu tourism industry

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS			
Impact of global pandemic on Part-Time Employees in the Beppu Tourism Industry			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Impact of the global pandemic	225	6.67	2.403
Valid N (list wise)	225		

The mean for the global pandemic's impact on part-time employees working in the Beppu tourism industry is high at 6.67 (Table 2 and Figure 6). This indicates that the impact of the global pandemic on part-time employees was high (67% of the respondents had difficulties in coping with lack of arubaito during the lockdown).

4.3. Paired Sample T. Test Results

The Paired Sample T. Test is done to find out if the impact before and after the occurrence of the global pandemic on the part-time employees working in the tourism industry is same in terms of financial aspects, well-being, academic performance, employment aspects, and government policies and support (Table 3).

Table 3: Paired Samples Statistics

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Financial Aspect	6.01	225	2.082	.139
	Current Financial Aspect	6.85	225	2.251	.150
Pair 2	Pre-Well Being	5.55	225	2.058	.137
	Current Well Being	6.19	225	2.067	.138
Pair 3	Pre-Academic Performance	5.39	225	2.627	.175
	Current Academic Performance	5.88	225	2.693	.180
Pair 4	Pre-Employment Aspect	5.06	225	2.732	.182
	Current -Employment Aspect	5.80	225	2.833	.189
Pair 5	Pre-Government Policies and Support	5.76	225	2.520	.168
	Current Government Policies and Support	6.42	225	2.382	.159

Table 4: Paired Samples Correlations

Paired Samples Correlations				
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre-Financial Aspect and Current Financial Aspect	225	.651	.000
Pair 2	Pre-Well- Being Aspect & Current Well Aspect	225	.610	.000
Pair 3	Pre-Academic Performance & Current Academic Performance	225	.650	.000
Pair 4	Pre-Employment Aspect & Current Employment Aspect	225	.607	.000
Pair 5	Pre-Government Policies and Support & Current Government Policies and support	225	.399	.000

Table 5: Paired Samples Test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-Financial Aspect - Current Financial Aspect	-.836	1.817	.121	-1.074	-.597	-6.898	224	.000
Pair 2	Pre-Well Being Aspect - Current Well Aspect	-.636	1.822	.121	-.875	-.397	-5.235	224	.000
Pair 3	Pre-Academic Performance - Current Academic Performance	-.484	2.226	.148	-.777	-.192	-3.264	224	.001
Pair 4	Pre-Employment Aspect - Current Employment Aspect	-.738	2.469	.165	-1.062	-.413	-4.483	224	.000
Pair 5	Pre-Government Policies and Support - Current Government Policies and Support	-.658	2.690	.179	-1.011	-.304	-3.668	224	.000

In Table 4, Sig. is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 for all the variables: meaning that financial aspect, well-being, academic performance, employment aspect, and government policies and support factor are significantly correlated to one another. In Table 5, Sig. is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 for all the variables: financial aspect, well-being, academic performance, employment aspect, and government policies and support, indicating that there was a significant difference between the pre-pandemic situation and the current pandemic situation.

The data show that:

- 1) Part time employees suffered from a decline in shifts, and many lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 6 shows the number of respondents to the experiences at the workplace). It is noticeable that at their workplace only 30% (68) experienced a greater emphasis by management on health & safety. However, on average, most part-time employees worked from 7-14 hours per week during the pandemic as shown in Figure 7, so there was some work for them even during lockdown.

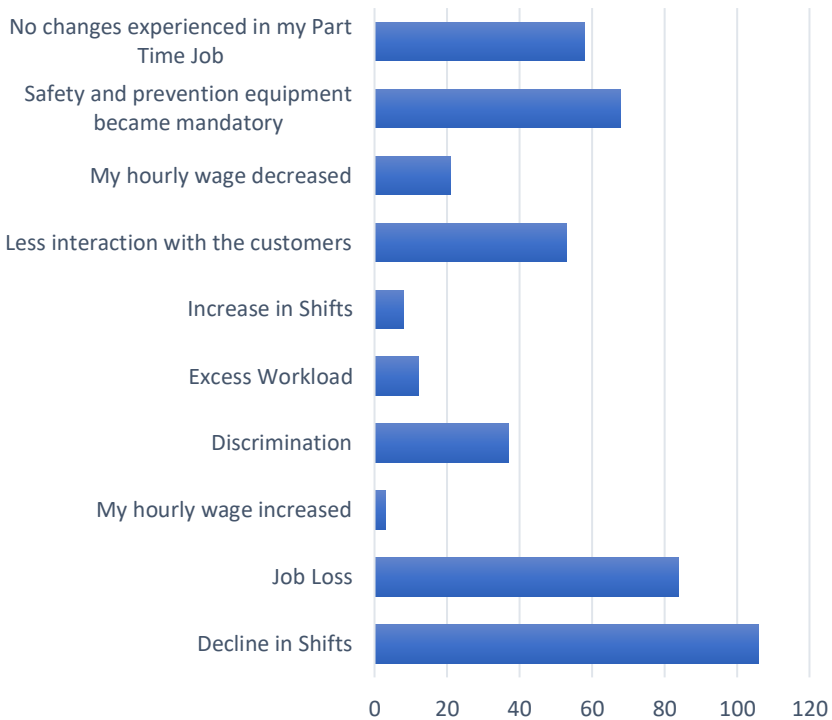


Figure 6: Changes experienced at the Workplace

Average Hours Worked in a Week during pandemic:
225 respondents

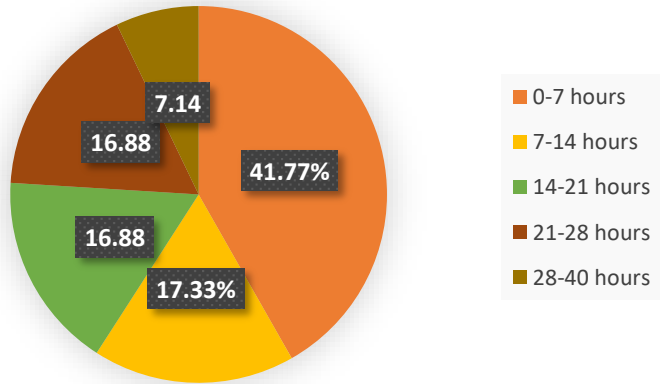


Figure 7: Average Hours worked during the Pandemic

Part time employees in Beppu faced an increase in their financial expenses as a result of the pandemic. This increase in their financial expense is represented in Figure 8, and referred to in Figure 9, and is a comparison of pre and post financial burden faced by parttime workers (Likert scale 1 (least impact)-10 (greatest impact)). Prior to the pandemic most of the respondents rated the impact at 5/10 (neutral), however, after the pandemic occurred most respondents chose 8 or more/10, indicating a high impact.

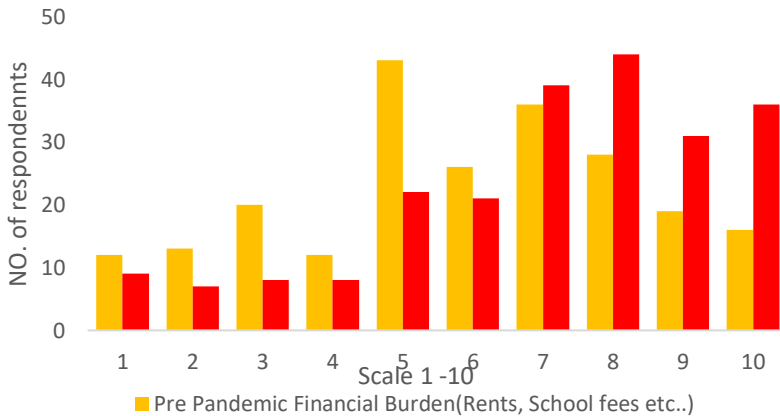


Figure 8: Financial Burden

- 2) The part-time employees felt a social life imbalance during the global pandemic as shown in Figure 9. In other words, most of the employees suffered a high level of adverse effect on their social life. Health issues and instability in mental health were also seen during the pandemic, which impacted the part-time employees.

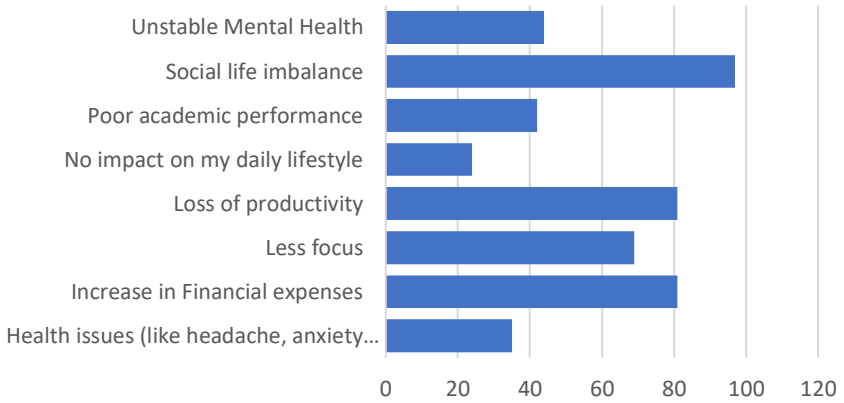


Figure 9: Impact on Daily Lifestyle

Figure 10 compares mental and physical health pre and post the beginning of the pandemic. There is a distinct trend towards higher impact in concerns about mental and physical health among the part time workers.

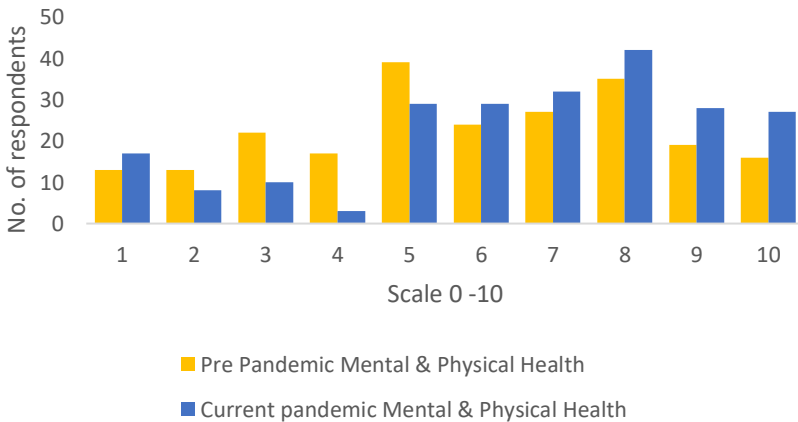
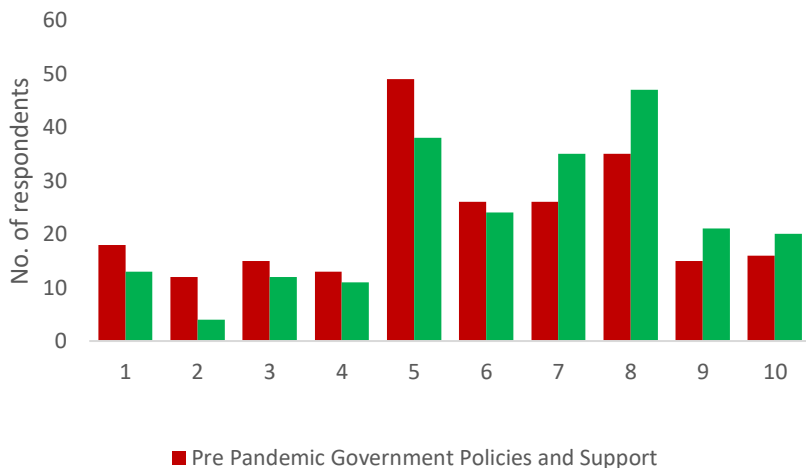


Figure 10: Comparison of pre pandemic and current pandemic mental & physical health

Finally, the data show that there has been an increase in government support for part time workers in Beppu, largely from the City Council or Oita Prefecture (Figure 11).



5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

Beppu is a small town, and the tourism industry plays a vital role in its economy. In turn, international students, domestic students, and Japanese part-time employees play a significant role in the Beppu tourism industry. This study empirically observed the impact of the global pandemic on part-time employees working in Beppu's tourism industry. The outcome from the findings shows that there is an impact on part-time employees based on the following factors:

- 1- Financial Aspects;
- 2- Well-being;
- 3- Employment Aspects;
- 4- Academic Performance; and
- 5- Government Policies and support.

However, it was observed that the financial and employment aspects had the most impact as compared to the other variables. The part-time employees faced an increase in their financial expenses as a result of the pandemic. Moreover, it was seen that most of the part-time employees spend around 2000-5000 yen on an average to maintain their personal safety and adopt precautionary measures, which in turn has increased their financial expenses. The part-time employees also suffered a decline in shifts, and many at least initially lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But many of them were able to work around 50% of pre

pandemic hours, on average most part-time employees work from 7-14 hours/week during the pandemic to date.

The part-time employees we interviewed felt a social life imbalance during the global pandemic. In other words, most of the employees suffered a high level of adverse effect on their social life. Health issues and instability in mental health were also seen during the pandemic, which impacted the part-time employees strongly.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on these impacts, the study proposes following recommendations to mitigate the impact of the global pandemic on part-time tourism sector employees working in Beppu and in other locations.

5.2.1. Benchmarking Mechanism

This concept was first introduced in the corporate sector of Japan to describe the classification and learning about best products or practices adopted by someone else (Murphy, 2005). The Japanese government should benchmark some of the mechanisms already introduced and implemented elsewhere and try to implement the same in Japan to mitigate the global pandemic's impact. Some of the practices adopted by other countries are:

- Wage Subsidy - In New Zealand, part-time employees were given aid at a flat rate of 350 New Zealand dollars for up to 20 hours in a week, with the condition that the employer should state the name of the employee in the wage subsidy application form. In the Cook Islands the aid was provided for three months from April to July 2020;
- Tax Relief - In Norway, the government imposed a tax relief wherein the Value Added Tax was reduced from 12% to 8% until October 2020. In 2019, Japan increased its consumption tax from 8% to 10%. If the government reverses the tax rate, it would be a relief to the part-time employees and all the individuals suffering from financial hardship;
- Paid leave - In Latvia, the government will cover up 75% or up to 700 euro per employee, per month, if an employee falls sick, and in Brazil, the government has agreed to sponsor an employee for 15 days, in case of sickness or COVID-19.

5.2.2. Easing Rules and Regulations

The rules and regulations for part-time employees should be eased. The working conditions and break policies should be made flexible for the employer to support physical and mental health while maintaining the hygiene factor among part-time employees during this challenging situation. For example, giving a 5 minute break every hour so that the part-time employee can get time to frequently sanitize themselves.

5.2.3. Government Support

The Beppu City government should emphasize COVID-19 related projects regarding financial aid, daily life, and resource-based support. The government can organize support groups like APU Hands, which distributed daily necessities and hygiene-based items in the first year of the pandemic. They should also introduce debt financing schemes for all residence card holders. The cooperation between Beppu city hall and small-medium enterprises operating in the tourism industry should be improved by introducing public-private partnerships where appropriate. The issue of retaining part-time jobs in conjunction with industry should be highlighted.

5.3. Limitations of the Study and Future Research

The research was highly constrained by time limitations. The entire research was conducted within a duration of approximately 9 months. The deadline for the research submission prohibited the researchers from the opportunity to investigate the topic deeply, and this influenced our ability to concentrate on more than one specific town, Beppu. The second limitation was less operational and involved inadequate information available on the research topic. Since the global pandemic started in 2019, it is a new topic, and not many academic papers were published on this topic before mid-2020, which made it difficult for the researchers to provide an extensive academic literature review to back up their data. This forced the researchers to get up-to-date information from newspapers, articles, media channels and public reports. The third constraint was the impact of the global pandemic itself in general, and due to this, there was a barrier to data collection. While there were few cases in Beppu and Oita Prefecture to avoid getting infected, the researchers could not arrange interviews for data collection by travelling around Beppu, all data were obtained from online sources.

A global pandemic of this magnitude is a new topic for academic researchers. We would suggest that future research should compare the impact of the global pandemic on the part-time employees working in the tourism industry in Beppu with some larger tourism town like Kyoto.

Comparison between pre and post pandemic effects on the part-time employees should be further explored to highlight the real issues and challenges faced by part-time employees during these kinds of crises. The current study can thus be used as a base for further academic work on health and wellness tourism.

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About the Authors

Deepika Rana is Scholar in Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan

Malcolm Cooper in Emeritus Professor in Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan

Phillip Pardo is Professor in Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan