

A Report on Changes in the Lifestyle of Buddhist Temple Priests Before and After the Spread of the New Coronavirus Infection in Japan

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1. Introduction

Japan has been taking measures to prevent new-type coronavirus infection by promoting the spread of vaccination, testing, and therapeutic drugs, and by further strengthening the flow from detection to early treatment, as well as by improving and strengthening the medical care delivery system, including the securing of hospital beds, in anticipation of a worst-case scenario. However, on January 27, 2023, the Infectious Diseases Subcommittee of the Health Sciences Council summarized that new coronavirus infection (COVID-19) should be placed in category 5 infectious diseases because it is not considered a condition that meets the private rights restrictions under the Infectious Diseases Act. On May 8, the status was changed to a category 5 infectious disease (1). In accordance with this change, workers were subjected to environmental changes, such as behavioral restrictions, the recommendation to wear masks, and ventilation, which had been introduced in FY 2020 due to the coronary disaster. In addition, as far as the authors researched, they could not find any articles that clarified the actual working conditions of priests working at temples in Japan. Therefore, in this study, the authors clarified the working conditions of monks and the changes in their lifestyle before and after the Corona disaster.

2. Methods

Interviews were conducted with monks at Temple A, a prosperous and well-known tourist spot located in the center of the city.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted after obtaining approval from the ethics committee of WAYO Women's University.

3. Results

1. Regarding the Working Conditions of the Priests at Temple A, etc.

Qualifications,

To become a monk, one must enter and graduate from one of the 18 universities in Japan to obtain a bachelor's degree in Buddhism. Many monks enter a temple upon entering university and live in the temple. They study at the university during the day and practice at the temple in the morning and evening. In some cases, temples cover part of the tuition fees.

A. Temple Hours

7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., seven days a week.

Working hours for monks

9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with a one-hour lunch break.

Working Hours

Monks work 6 days a week with one day off. Long vacations are possible upon request.

Salaries are fixed and paid monthly, but there are no bonuses. For monks, there are no clear salary standards, but there are rough, nationally standardized wage and work standards.

Regarding benefits, commuting expenses are fully paid, and public transportation is used. Lunch is provided by the temple's bribe meal. There are also guarantees of employment and wages in case of illness. If desired, live-in work is also available. In addition, long-term training and training programs such as mountain retreats and water works, which were held irregularly, have been discontinued after the spread of corona infection.

The president is a priest and the vice president is a vice priest. Monks are given positions according to their rank and years of experience, and their wages are increased.

Although masks are being worn and hand sanitizing with alcohol and soap is being thoroughly implemented after the corona infection spread, the temple is open as usual from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and there are many visitors to the temple. The wearing of masks, hand washing, and rinsing of the mouth are still ongoing. In addition, from the time the corona infection spread until now,

Temple A has prohibited its monks from drinking. This will continue in the future.

4. Case Study

Case 1

Male, unmarried, in his 20s, live-in worker

Height 173 cm, weight 65 kg, no weight change before and after Corona since high school.

No drinking or smoking.

Went out to eat less due to the spread of corona infection.

Wakes up at 5:00 a.m. and works until 7:00 p.m., 6 days a week, with 3 meals provided.

Because he is a low-ranking monk, his main duties start at 5:00 a.m. with the head priest and deputy head priest, starting with praying, then cleaning the temple and grounds, and doing other chores, so he gets a lot of exercise.

In high school, he was a member of the rugby club, but since he started his training at university, he does not play any particular sports.

His hobby is listening to music.

The results of his annual physical examination are unchanged.

He rarely goes out even on his once-a-week vacation.

He regards his daily duties as a form of ascetic training.

Case 2

Male, 30s, married, with children

Commuting time: 1 hour one way (40 minutes by train, 20 minutes on foot)

Height 160 cm, weight 60 kg (body fat ratio 10.8%) after Corona, 55 kg (body fat ratio 14%) before Corona

Drinks about one alcoholic beverage once a week and does not smoke.

Working hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Work content is desk work for management

In high school, he was a member of the strong Suki club. After college, he entered training and did not play any sports. However, with the spread of corona infection, he started going to the gym four days a week because he had to go out to eat less. The reason for this was to prepare for the long-term training sessions that are held irregularly but have been canceled since the spread of corona infection.

His hobbies are sports in general.

The results of his annual physical examination show no change other than an increase in weight.

On his weekly day off, he goes to a nearby hot spring with his family. In addition, since his parents live in a local temple, he returns home to help his parents during the week of Obon (August 10-17).

In addition, he is always thinking about monk training and hopes to enter into special training, such as mountain retreats, once his coronary infection has settled.

Case 3

Male, 40s, married, with children

Commuting time: 40 minutes walk one way, 80 minutes walk to work and back.

He used to take the bus before the spread of corona infection, but changed to walking to work to avoid crowds to prevent infection. Currently continues to do so.

Height 168 cm, weight 64.6 kg after corona. He has lost 2 kg since high school, but his weight has not changed before and after corona.

No drinking or smoking.

Working hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Work content is desk work

In high school, he was a member of the baseball team. Since entering training at university, he has not been involved in any sports.

Due to the spread of corona infection, he has been going out to eat less.

Hobbies include watching movies.

The results of his annual physical examination show no abnormalities.

He spends time with his family on his weekly day off.

Case 4

Male in his 70s, married, with children, resident, temple and home attached

Height 165 cm, weight 55 kg, no change in weight before and after Corona.

No abnormality in medical checkups.

No drinking, smoking, or exercise habits

Went out to eat less due to the spread of corona infection.

Wakes up at 5:00 a.m. and works until 7:00 p.m. He is on call all year round, including for funerals.

The results of his annual health checkup are unchanged.

He regards his daily duties as a form of ascetic practice.

5. Discussion

The authors have conducted surveys of the actual conditions of the elderly and working women in Japan [2,3].

3). We plan to continue to survey the actual living conditions of various people in the future. This time, we conducted a survey and research on the work of Buddhist monks in Japan. However, as far as we could find, there was only literature on pastors [4,5].

It became clear from this study that monks view their work as a form of ascetic practice, and that they have a different value system from that of work that generates compensation. The monks' sense of mission and professionalism have a significant influence on their lifestyles and health consciousness.

Before and after the outbreak of corona infection, it is natural for monks to take precautions to prevent infection. Since their work involves the life and death of people, monks themselves strongly desire to avoid an environment in which they cannot hold events. We believe that this is reflected in their daily lives. The results of the survey clearly indicate that monks have a strong sense of professionalism and devotion to their vocation as long as they are

in the priesthood.

Even with the coronary disaster, funerals were held on a small scale, so it was not a major change, but rather an event that was carried out in coordination with the mourners and required infection control measures. Some modifications were made to the daily services for parishioners, such as the introduction of a remote control system. However, it was found that the service was performed modestly on a small scale, with measures taken to value the in-person performance of the service.

With these backgrounds, it became clear that diet, exercise, and alcohol consumption were restricted and adjusted according to the circumstances. Therefore, even during the spread of the corona infection, the health-consciousness of the patients may not have been significantly affected by the spread of the disease. This behavior also indicates a high level of health consciousness.

In Japan, new coronavirus infections were classified as "new influenza and other infectious diseases (so-called category 2 equivalent)," but as of May 8, 2023, they have been classified as "category 5 infectious diseases. However, even today, the monks who were the subject of this study were taking thorough precautions against infection, as the new coronavirus infection has not completely disappeared. It became clear that they were not simply protecting themselves, but had a strong sense of

responsibility not to interfere with their work as professionals.

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