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An Episode about the Miss-written article, Daily Manila Shim bun,
"Is the Philippines a country of desperation? The trend of young people's suicide"

As usual, I take a look at the internet newspapers, among which caught my eyes and mind so strong was that of Daily Manila Shim bun, which wrote in the headline, “Philippines is a country of desperation? The trend of young people’s suicide”.

The internet of the Daily Manila is only the titles. If the visitors want to read the article, they must buy the ticket by the credit card only, so that I could not read what the article write in detail. I have canceled the credit cards ever since I came to this country.

Coincidentally, one of the members of the Japanese group called “Network for the Helping-each-others-group”, came to my house with the newspaper with other three fellow member people to have a talk. When I read it, I could not help even from getting angry to what it wrote about the behavior of the Philippine people trend of suicide!

I immediately used the “Question corner” of the newspaper company, telling if the article is terribly miss-informed. The following day a very polite reply email came to me, who apologized so much. Before writing the email exchanges between me and the writer, I would like to give the English translation of the miss-written article on the right side of the copy.)

Suicide gives no pain. It makes the one easy to change the future, and whether make it or not comes from nobody but him/herself---. I happened to recall the words of the intro song of the movies ‘Mash’, which WHO(The World Health Organization) decided to make on 10th, as the World suicide prevention day theme.

In fact, suicide is not painless, especially so when hanged, shot by gun and cut by cutlery. However, people are inclined to tell the suicide stories as the one who were despaired with no hope and having so much of pains in life.

Last week, Natasha Goldborn Foundation said in accordance to the WHO report of the Philippines suicide ratio numbers 98 in 100 thousands, reported that the Philippines is the country among the East South Asian countries the highest ratio of "Desperation" suicide.

According to the 2004 report, Philippines is such that even 10-year-old children commit suicide. According to the 2004 report by The Welfare Dept of the Philippines, children between 10 to 14 of age commit suicide by 42, 15 to 19-year-old 261, 20 to 24-year-old is 335.

According to the Asia Pacific Public Health Journal, reported that in Philippines that every day 5, every month about 150 commit suicide. These statistic reports tell that there is a strong need to prevent the suicide by the young people in this country.

The Philippine people, who live every day trying to live first of all with joy and cheer has their key word of “Bahalana”, meaning that they are so optimistic depending upon everything to God. When we think of this, those data reports are interesting. However, it is probable that people come to think of suicide in daily poverty with no hope.

A philosopher said, “For those who continue to dream a bad dream, the committing suicide would give them a strong self consolation” However, only a thought is apt to turn to reality. Before an irreversible death occurs, let us endeavor not to let them trip to “the unknown world” that nobody ever returned in the past.

(The following is the email from the writer of the article;)
Dear Mr. Yoshida,

Thanks for your kind comment. My name is Minami Oya, Manila Shim bun editors room. As regards the article dated on September 19, the one on every Monday is the translation of the local English newspaper. The column dated on 19th is from the Inquirer, which I made the translation.

Upon your question made to the article, I made a check by the website of WHO and others. As you pointed out, there was apparently a big mistake written in the column in regard to the number of suicide.

As for the ratio of the suicide, a Filipino correspondent of the Inquirer Newspaper made a mistake in reading the number, 98, as the suicide ratio par 100,000, which was nothing but the writer’s misreading of Year 20(98). When rechecked the original English article, there was no mistranslation on my side. However, as the translator of the article, I cannot but to say that I have neglected to check the original article, of which I am ashamed as the professionals. I would be more careful in doing this sort of work with double checking never to make another error.

As far as the English article itself is concerned, we are in no place to take responsibility for its contents. As for whether or not we make the publication of the apologizing article, I have to
consult or leave to the editor –in-chief decision. I would like to consult with the chief and let me answer you later days. Would you be kind to wait for the decision? Thanks for your understanding.

(The followings are the email I wrote back;)
Dear Mr/Ms Oya,
I appreciate your very kind and understandable response. As a Japanese who is trying to introduce good side of this country and people of the Philippines to my fellow country people through my originally edited website, I feel very relieved to know that it was a mistaken data.

Yesterday, I talked about this issue with my favorite Filipino computer technician brothers with my belief that the article is entirely missed informing, who said spontaneously “Never that true!” They seemed so happy that I pointed out the error and that I made the writer admit it.

For the readers of this article, I would like to paste below the article which I wrote after a year of my move here, entitled “Filipinos are rich in the heart even in poverty. Why?”(Both in Japanese and English) There must be some misunderstanding as it was a matter of my experience of a little more than a year stay here. However, I still believe the article never gives me any regrets. Thank you again for your very kind response to me.
http://www.a-bombsurvivor.com/contents/Philippines_information/philippinesinformationNo.11.ipn.pdf

(The following is the second email from the writer;)
Dear Mr. Yoshida,
    Thanks for the response and your good understanding to my article, I would like to read your article later with deep interest and make it useful for my future correspondent career. As for the possibility of publishing the corrected article, I consulted with our editor-in-chief, who made a decision of not making it. As an independent newspaper company, we are in no place to take the responsibility of other publishing companies.
    I would like to take more care in using other's articles from now. Thanks again for your kind concern, I remain. Minami Oya

Well, what the writer and his/her editor-in-chief think and say comes from their dignity and pride for what they have written, and I know quite well about it, so that it is not a matter of whether or not they write an apology article at all.

I hit upon an idea that this is a good opportunity and significant for me to write in my own website a true story behind this misinformed article. It would be my duty to tell the people of this country what the article wrote by mistake, and that I made the error clearly testified to the newspaper company to admit.

I take pride in being able to tell the people of the Philippines that I succeeded in telling and pointing the fact to the mass media about the real feature of this country and its people, never that weak as shown in such a misinformed article! I would continue to tell them “I have done something to protect and preserve the dignity and honor of this country and your people!”

For the readers more information, I would paste the “International Suicide ratios” below;
http://www2.ttcn.ne.jp/honkawa/2770.html

By the way, I find in the misinformed article, an interesting phrase about the Filipinos character and personality. I would like to write again here; “The Philippine people, who live every day trying to live first of all with joy and cheer has their key word of “Bahalana”, meaning that they are so
optimistic depending everything to God. When we think of this, those data reports are interesting. However, it is probable that people come to think of suicide in daily poverty with no hope.”

The last part of the phrase is something that makes me think why the writer did not come to wonder if that bright character of them did not drive them not to commit suicide.

I asked a Filipino who was an ex-land of my residence in 2009, what is meant by “BAHALAMA”? He kindly texted me with the phrase of “To accept whatever happened and solve it later” My belief is that that is why the Filipinos are less liable to commit suicide as the WHO data shows.

At any rate, I could imagine the writer Oya-san’s humble and modest attitude in lines of the emails. However, this is all the more reasons why the writer did not come to be doubtful to the original English article which said of the suicide ratio with the word of “98 in 100,000”.

My joy over this happening is that I could and would be able to tell from time to time to the people of this country about the low ratio of suicide in the international level. I take pride in being able to say to them that I succeeded in protecting and preserving the dignity and honor of the people of the Philippines through the misinformed article. is something that makes me think why the writer did not come to wonder if that bright character of them did not drive them not to commit suicide.

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September 23, 2011
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