

GENDER SITUATION IN JAPAN

In this paper I would like to talk about the gender situation in Japanese society, especially about gender discrimination against women.

Let me show some examples of occupations which have much fewer women than men in Japan. The first example is being a member of parliament. According to the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office, as of 2015, the percentage of women in Japanese parliament was only 9.5%. Japan which was extremely low at 153rd out of the 190 countries surveyed.

The next example is doctors. Among Japanese doctors, women comprise only twenty percent. This figure is considerably lower than in other OECD countries.

The third example is researchers. According to UNESCO, the percentage of female researchers in Japan is 14.4% while it is 45.5% in Portugal, 38.6% in Spain, and 37.7% in the United Kingdom.

I will now turn to wage inequalities. In Japan, as of 2015, the regular salary of female workers was 72.2% when that of male workers was 100%. According to Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, the difference between Japan and other developed countries is huge. Why is there such a large wage gap between women and men? One of the reasons is that women are more likely to leave their employment after marriage, childbirth, childcare and parenting. Currently in Japan there is a childcare leave system for men, but very few men use it.

Another reason is Japanese the traditional thinking of gender role. As Mizuho writes in her paper, there used to be an infamous husband's saying "*Meshi, furo, neru* [Make me a dinner, a bath and a bed]" in Japan. Similarly, there is a

deep-rooted idea in Japan that “Men work, women do housework”. This idea often puts Japanese women in a weaker position than men in society. Legal action is currently being taken against such gender discrimination. However, one should say gender discrimination will not be eliminated unless we throw away the traditional ideas as to gender roles.

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THE GENDER GAP IN THE JAPANESE HOUSEHOLD

I would like to discuss discrimination between women and men in Japanese families. However, before I begin, I would like to ask a question: what is the name of the Ukrainian writer who received a Master’s degree at the University of Tokyo? Her name is Olga Khomenko. I read an essay of hers and I was surprised to know that many women have a second job in Ukraine. For example, a woman who works as a doctor on weekdays also works at a museum on weekends. Or full-time mothers are often taking courses to complete their Master’s degree. After reading that many women usually have a second source of income, one should expect that this is quite normal in Ukraine. I believe that Japan also should encourage women to pursue a career in a field where merit and ability are more important than one’s gender.

In former Japan, the status of women compared to men was significantly lower than today. There was an infamous husband’s saying “*Meshi, furo, neru*”, which represents a hierarchical structure of Japanese family. These words mean that a wife had to prepare her husband’s meal, make a bath, and spread a futon (traditional Japanese bed). Furthermore, only women were forced to learn house economics so that they could manage their household.