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Work Industry Inequality for Women in Japan

Labor positions and income inequality negatively affect the emotional levels of many Japanese women at a large scale. In the last several decades Japan has seen an increase in unemployment and occupational inequality in the Japanese community. Working day in and day out seems to be the only way many Japanese women can live the life they want.

Coinciding alongside the increase of inequality of treatment within the work industry for Japanese women are the researchers who wish to renounce workplace discrimination completely. To show the world the root cause of these issues, and for people to know that this is occurring to gain their support in fixing the overall issue. Announcing their findings through articles, films, and personal claims by individuals who have suffered from such an unfair system.

The methods used to investigate the issue stem from research done either identifying the underlying causes as to why women are treated so unfairly in the work industry. The course provided information from videos and articles that Dr. Dustin Wright verifies are trusted sources. Peer-reviewed articles taken from the library application OneSearch provided by California State University Monterey Bay that are associated with the main topic.

Constantly being mistreated by their employers and fellow employees, having to follow a set path that they have almost no choice in taking. To quote Makoto Kawazoe, a participant in Shiho Fukada, “Net Cafe | Japan's Disposable Workers,” while being a member of the Young Contingent Workers Union in Japan he states, “In our society, once you lose your job, you cannot survive,” (Fukada). Work is the backbone of their society, a lifeline that only condemns them. We have been shown that this means of working will continuously break a vast majority of people both physically and mentally, this form of life becoming the norm will only cause the Japanese work industry to fall apart.

Certain labor positions make it more difficult for female Japanese workers to obtain happiness through their work. Either being in a position that they dislike from lack of anything that can continue their drive to advance forward in their careers, or their employers treat them poorly causing them to either leave their jobs or seek work elsewhere. In some cases, they keep working at that painful job because they have no other means of obtaining income. Quite a difference compared to their American counterparts, who seem to empower the idea of single parent mothers being able to gain more wealth.

It's not just who they work under that affects their place in society, but their workstyle as well. Akinori Nakata, author of the published article, "Work to live, to die, or to be happy?" references the NHK nation time use survey from 1970 to state, "The prospective UK million women study revealed that sleeping less than 7 hours (as compared to 7 hours) was the second strongest factor reducing happiness next to physical disabilities," (Nataka). Women work longer hours, and getting little sleep contributes to a faulty work ethic. Meaning that if they start to slip up, they will start to gain attention not as a diligent worker but as a slouch with no potential. This leads to the possibility of losing their jobs, and as stated earlier, once somebody loses their job in Japan the likelihood of surviving becomes minimal.

Nahoko Mitsuyama and Satoshi Shimizutani reference the research data of an older article, "Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) shows that women's happiness has sharply declined since the early 1970s while men's happiness has changed very little over recent decades," (Nahoko 189). Which many find surprising as little by little Japanese women are gaining more traction when it comes to handling domestic and work industry affairs.

Income affects happiness at certain levels. Not all individuals find their worth through how much they make in a year. Though it seems to be a recurring issue within Japan that whatever amount of income they make determines if they will lead a happy life or not.

Emotional disparity in Japan within the labor force has been commonly linked with the amount of income they make. In the case of Japanese women, there is still a noticeable wage gap between them and their male counterparts. Zonghuo Yu and Fei Wang authors of, "Income Inequality and Happiness: An Inverted U-Shaped Curve," notice just how emotionally distraught people become when they consider just how much they make compared to their coworkers. Acknowledging that envy is the driving force for such problems in their lives, "if income

inequality level increases beyond a critical point, the *jealousy effect* will become the dominating factor,” (Yu and Wang). As if to make matters worse they start to compare themselves to their coworkers spreading hate throughout their hearts.

Yoko Niimi’s article titled, “What Affects Happiness Inequality? Evidence from Japan,” is an article published alongside many others works in the 19th volume of Journal of Happiness in February 2018. Her work encompasses the statistics of various information outlets to determine the overall issue of emotional disparity not just in Japan but in many nations around the world.

Niimi also states that the difference in levels of emotional disparity between Japan and the United States is that in the United States emotional disparity does not come from differences in income or labor positions, but from trying to understand one's own value in the world. Identity is the underlying problem of achieving happiness in the United States. People believe that once they find out who they truly are, then they will live a happy life or at least have a better understanding of their place in this vast world. Though women are still noticeably acknowledged less for their efforts than men.

If nothing else, if a Japanese woman does not make it into the work industry, they become housewives. Taking care of all the domestic responsibilities that come from being a wife, taking care of all the house chores and their children if there are any, with little to no support from their spouses. In Motoko Rich’s articles named, “Japan's Working Mothers: Record Responsibilities, Little Help from Dads,” that while more and more women are entering the workforce, they have a harder time being able to handle those responsibilities when domestic issues do not change at all. The husbands of these women relatively do less chores than their wives, with Rich stating that, “women who work more than 49 hours a week typically do close to 25 hours of housework a week. Their husbands do an average of less than five,” (Rich). Whether their husbands openly state their intentions or not, they seem content to be lazy around the house expecting their wives to not say anything to them at all.

Changes made to handle these kinds of issues come from even decades before some of these findings were published. Attention from the masses about these problems will always be the main pillar of support for massive change within the legal system of any nation. Several laws

throughout the years have been passed to create a more equal environment for all workers in whichever industry women are working in. That includes very serious Legislative Changes that had to be made in the wake of women being discriminated against just because of their gender in the workplace.

One such group is the International Labor Organization's Equal Remuneration Convention (ILO) as referenced in Ayaka Beniyama's article titled, "Barriers to 'Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value' for Women in Japan: Assessing the Potential for Change," is an organization that truly seeks the means to achieve the statement 'equal pay for equal work' for both men and women for their efforts. For over 50 years they have tried to and successfully in some cases passed legislation needed to bring about genuine equality.

Beniyama also mentions that the 2018 Work Style Reform Act is one such legislation that was assessed by the International Labor Organization and seeks to reduce the wage gap between normal working individuals and workers who do not follow the regular work routine. Beniyama explains in the abstract at the beginning of the article that it is the Japanese means of seeking equal pay for equal work, which they are trying to implement within the norms and certain practices of the Japanese workstyle. An opportunity the International Labor Organization's Equal Remuneration Convention sought to implement within regular workspaces. So that no matter what position somebody is in or how many hours they work they will receive the same benefits and income as anybody who works in that company.

The Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1985 makes it so employers cannot discriminate against a possible employee through recruitment, hiring, promoting, training, or when giving an assignment to complete. Depending on who the person is, no workplace can discriminate against anybody who is to be interviewed for a position at that establishment, or anybody who currently has a position, regardless of age or sex. It would be unfair and sexist to determine a person's worth solely on their sex without knowing if they truly have the qualifications that they are looking for.

Workplace discrimination for Japanese women does not only stem from whatever industry they are working in, it can also stem from a lack of education. If they are not receiving the right education or are being mistreated at whichever school, they attend this can also lead to a lack of skills.

Even though there have been measurements in place for quite some time, it seems that even in recent years Japanese women are still not receiving their due justice. Just several years ago, a major scandal occurred in which a large portion of the female demographic desired to enter the medical field career were completely left out of any opportunity of entering a certain University. Within the article titled, “A ‘Necessary Evil’? Keeping Women out of Medical Schools Won't Fix What Ails the Japanese Medical Profession,” by Chelsea Szendi Schieder it was noted in detail that the Tokyo Medical University purposely tampered with its own entrance exam scores just to make sure that most of the attending students would be male rather than female. It was a biased decision, “Apparently believing that women would not do as well in the medical profession, Tokyo Medical University systematically reduced their chances of admission for at least a decade,” (Schieder). Japanese women suffered for the fault of someone else abusing the system for almost ten years due to a massively incorrect perception of their work ethics.

Japanese women are being deprived of the chance for well-deserved education and their right to a job. On top of already having little chance of obtaining the future they want, from biased opinions about one's own ability to work, in a nation where jobs determine whether you survive or not makes it seem near impossible to thrive. Combine this with the fact that income is hard to come by depending on who the individual is working for, only seems to decrease the chances of them finding success within that industry.

Considering how massive institutions are fighting against women in their chance to obtain the career and future they want. What makes it worse is that in Schieder's article all it took for someone's career to become ever distant was bribery. Potentially decreasing number of future doctors that could have improved upon Japan's medical industry all thrown away due to corruption.

To conclude this paper, workplace discrimination against women in Japan stems from an idea that they cannot keep up with men. It seems to stem from this age-old idea that women are inherently inferior to men, in almost every situation. Constantly looking down on women, with little regard for their achievements or feelings. Causing them to either completely give up their careers or seek work elsewhere. Declining health from working too much and lack of any stable income only leads to the conclusion that they are being treated unjustly in their jobs. In a world that is always moving forwards Japan seems content in dragging themselves through the mud.

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