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日本女性員工於不同行業別所面臨之困境－探索性研究

Problems Faced by Japanese Female Employees in the Different  
Industries: An Exploratory Study

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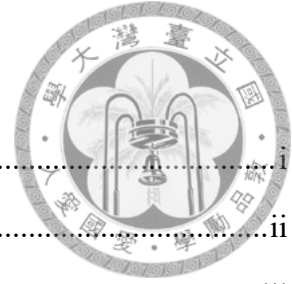
## Abstract



Companies with women on board deliver higher average returns on equity, lower net debt-to-equity, and better average growth (Catalyst, 2007). Women are keen on social responsibility, customer satisfaction, and corporate governance (International Labour Office, 2015). Socially conscious investors worldwide interested in ESG investment will invest in companies with women on board. Despite much evidence, women are still underrepresented in the workforce worldwide. It is remarkably seen in Japan. Japan lists 120th in the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2021). In 2017, among MSCI Japan Investable Market Index top 500 constituents, only 5 companies had over 30% of women on boards, and 287 companies had no female board directors (MSCI ESG Research, 2018). It shows that Japan's gender gap in business is significant. This study aims to reveal the key issues Japanese female employees face in different industries. The research interviewed ten Japanese female leaders working in Japan, asking about their experiences. Qualitative data analysis was attempted to understand what the interviewees experienced, how they felt, and what is needed to change the situation. The finding indicated that the critical factor hindering women's advancement is people's unconscious biases for many years. Changing the deep-rooted common sense and habits in society is not easy. However, some measures that can be taken were revealed. These measures found in the research should provide knowledge for the future study of organizational diversity.

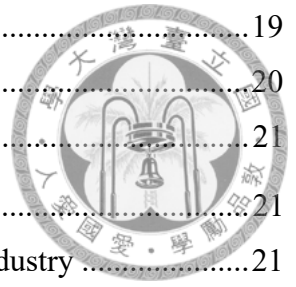
**Key Words: Female Leaders, Diversity, Gender Inequality, Japan, Childcare Leave**

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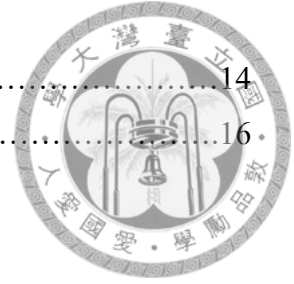
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# 1. Introduction



## 1.1 Background

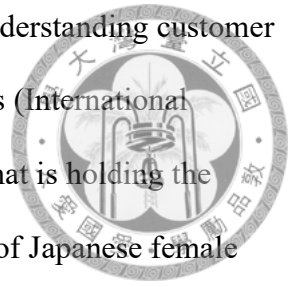
While the gender gap is closing in many developed countries, women occupy only 19% of board seats globally, and 13% of companies have gender-balanced boards of 40 to 60% women (International Labour Office, 2015). Women on board are rarely seen in Japan. Japan is still far from equality. Looking at the percentage of women on board in large publicly listed companies, Japan is only 10.7%, while there are countries such as Iceland at 47.1%, France at 45.3%, New Zealand at 43.5%, and Norway at 41.5% (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021).

Japan's population will decline by over 25% in the next 40 years. The rapidly shrinking labor force will be a severe headwind for future productivity and growth. Simulations by IMF point out there will be a significant decline in real GDP, consumption, investment, and real wages. The level of real GDP will decline by over 25% due to demographics. IMF research suggests increasing female labor force participation in Japan for growth. It is assumed to lift potential GDP growth by around 0.2% yearly over 20 years (Colacelli & Corugedo, 2018).

Japanese women still work with many obstacles. If talented women have the opportunity to show their high performance, companies with women leaders should be more profitable and gain corporate value. Companies with more women on board outperform their rivals by 53% higher return on equity, 42% higher return in sales, and 66% higher return on invested capital (Catalyst, 2007). Gender gaps cost 15% of GDP. If OECD countries increase female employment rates to match Sweden, it could boost GDP by over USD 6 trillion (UN Women, 2018).

## 1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

Gender-balanced boards have diverse perspectives leading to understanding customer preferences, ensuring greater due diligence, and making better decisions (International Labour Office, 2015). How can women leaders increase in number? What is holding the women back? Not many studies have been done to hear the real voices of Japanese female leaders. In this research, interviews were done to examine the issues they face. This study explores different working issues Japanese female employees face in the following industries. They are professional services, manufacturing (semiconductors, electrical equipment, consumer goods, and electronics), oil and gasoline, trading, and the financial industry.



### **1.3 The Structure of the Study**

Chapter 1 provides the background of women leaders, introduces the issues, and states the aim and objectives of this study. Chapter 2 will address the importance of female leaders in the business field. The historical overview and cultural overview will be discussed. Issues on hiring, training, and social influence will be identified. Chapter 3 will present how the qualitative methodology progressed. The research strategy, data collection method, interview participants, interview procedure, and data analysis will be explained. Chapter 4 lists the final results of the interview research. Chapter 5 will discuss the qualitative research findings and solutions. Limitations and recommendations for future research will be provided. Chapter 6 is the conclusion of this study. References and Appendix follows.



## 2. Literature Review



### 2.1 Growing Importance of Female Leaders in Business

The following literature review will introduce the scholarly literatures that focus on the importance of female business leaders and the workplace issues that limits female leaders today and in the past.

Trust is valued in today's high-visible world. Not only investors but the whole society are watching to ensure that a company and its leaders are acting ethically. Trustful companies can build a long-term, close relationships with customers and investors. Favorable consequences include customers' loyalty. Customers are more likely to buy new products or services and resilient to negative information about them. They even spread positive word-of-mouth (Keh & Xie, 2009). Failing ethical behavior can create a huge negative impact on a company. A damaged public reputation will lead to loss of customers and investors, financial loss, and worst-case bankruptcy.

Women members can focus on non-financial performance indicators such as corporate governance, customer satisfaction, and corporate social responsibility (International Labour Office, 2015). Despite much evidence, women are still underrepresented on boards worldwide, as 54 out of 1,000 CEOs in Fortune 1000 companies were women (Ismail, 2017). Women worldwide represent only 28.2 % in managerial positions (United Nations, 2021). Although the number of women leaders is increasing, the increasing speed is plodding.

In the 21st century, having female members on board is known to build a strong business. "If women equally participated in the global economy, they could generate additional GDP worth \$28 trillion by 2025. That amount is roughly equivalent to the size of the Chinese and US economies combined" (Devillard, S., Hunt, V., & Yee, L., 2018, p.5). In addition, McKinsey & Company (2020) found:

In our US and UK data set, companies with female executive-team representation exceeding 30 percent are significantly more likely to outperform those whose executive teams are between 10 and 30 percent female. Those companies, in turn, are more likely to outperform those with fewer than 10 percent female executive-team representation. As a result, there is a substantial likelihood of outperformance differential— 48 percent – between the most and least gender-diverse companies.

(p.17)

Noting this association between female leaders and performance, Goldman Sachs announced it would only take a company public if it had at least one diverse board member in 2020. The following year, they required two diverse board members; one must be a woman (Goldman Sachs, 2022.)

A study by McKinsey & Company has shown that when three or more women are in top management, the company scores higher than companies without any women in top management in the following criteria. Work environment, values, direction, coordination and control, leadership, external orientation, motivation, capability, accountability, and innovation (Desvaux, 2007). Today, it is clear that having more women executives leads to better performance.

## **2.2 Women in the Past**

To understand the importance of female leadership in the workplace, it is also helpful to look into the past. It is essential to investigate the history of working women. The following section explains how female labor increased globally and the issues that continue today. During the American Civil War in the 1860s, it opened doors for American women into offices. The labor shortage from the war and the general use of the typewriter in the 1890s moved women to work in clerical positions. They worked as file clerks, telephone operators, and bookkeepers. Women with secretarial training became typists and

stenographers. In the 1890s, there were schools to teach domestic servants and dressmaking. In the twentieth century, training for department store employees started. Later, schools opened to become teachers, social workers, and nurses. Very few women entered graduate schools to become lawyers or doctors (Kessler-Harris, 2018; Yellen, 2020).



During World War II, between 1942 and 1944, women were allowed to do men's jobs to replace the men who had been drafted. Many women did not want to leave their jobs after the war, but they gave up jobs in heavy industry as men returned. Women went back to less physical work (Kessler-Harris, 2018).

Although the number of women working for paid wages increased dramatically in the 1960s, jobs for women were limited. Even in the '70s, jobs were sex-segregated. Women earned less than 60% of a male wage. By the early 1990s, the labor force participation rate reached over 74% for women between the ages of 25 and 54, compared to 93% for men in the same age range. As more women increased their education, their working fields shifted from traditional nursing, teaching, social work, and clerical work to more male-dominated fields such as doctors, lawyers, managers, and professors. As women entered these new fields, discussion on gender equality increased, and the gap between earnings narrowed significantly. However, even today, regardless of having a similar background and experience, there is a wage difference of about 10% (Kessler-Harris, 2018; Yellen, 2020).

### **2.3 Japanese Cultural Environment for Female Employees**

So how does the Japanese environment compare? Foremost is a concept known as Confucianism. It has had a significant influence on the people of Japan. Confucianism emphasizes a harmonious society in a hierarchical structure. It teaches loyalty, piety, and respect to superiors and authorities (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). Women's role in the Confucian concept is childbearing and child-rearing; therefore, education is unnecessary. Since Confucian influence was strong in the Japanese society, very few women were literate

until the Meiji Restoration era in the 1860s. Schools for women before the Meiji Restoration taught sewing, weaving, tea ceremony, and household skills that were useful in daily life. After Meiji Restoration, men and women of all social classes were able to get an education (Fujimura-Fanselow, K., 2011).



In 1871, the Ministry of Education was established, and schools were built nationwide. The government was eager to eliminate illiteracy to modernize the country. The rapid expansion of the industrial economy led women into the workforce. Same as in the United States in the 19th century, women were mainly receptionists, office workers, telephone operators, and teachers (Fujimura-Fanselow, K., 2011).

During World War II, in place of drafted men, women were challenged to work in factories and farms. After the war in 1946, United States Education Mission made educational reforms to democratize and remove discrimination against women. Japanese education was reorganized, and equal educational opportunity for women was guaranteed in the new Japanese Constitution. During the mere twenty-five-year period from 1955 to 1979, women attending junior colleges increased eightfold, and four-year universities grew sixfold. As technological innovations advanced in the 1960s, industrialization and economic growth progressed. In parallel to the economic growth, the level of education also improved. More women participated in the labor force and promoted economic growth, but women were employed as cheap labor (Fujimura-Fanselow, 2011).

Despite the enhancement of women's education, full equality is not seen. Confucianism belief still exists, and people believe there are gender roles in society. Even educators denounced that the rising number of women attending four-year universities would lead to the demise of the country. When the number soared in the mid-1960s, some educators urged that women admitted to universities should be limited because women did not utilize their education for the benefit of society. Much dispute was done in the mass media at that

time (Fujimura-Fanselow, 2011). A similar debate was done in 2018 when breaking news of several medical universities manipulating the entrance exam scores of female applicants. This had been done for decades to keep the ratio of women below a certain percentage in each class. The reason behind this reflects society. The medical universities feared that accepting many female students would lead to a shortage of doctors. Female physicians tend to leave the profession at a higher rate than male physicians when they give birth and raise children. Female physicians make up less than a quarter of doctors in Japan. This number is the lowest among the 34 OECD countries studied (Tan, 2018).



If society supports working mothers, these women could continue their profession. Then, there would be equality in admissions to medical universities. Having diverse students in a class will advance medical studies. It is unwise to exclude potential female doctors. In an aging society like Japan, advanced medical care improves everyone's lives. In a study done by medical doctors, patients treated by female physicians had significantly lower mortality rates and readmission rates than those cared for by male physicians at the same hospital (Tsugawa, Jena, & Figueroa, 2017).

#### **2.4 Issues Faced by Female Leaders in Japan**

In 2020, 59.1% of female high school graduates entered a university or junior college (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2021). There is a high rate of Japanese women attending higher education, but very few become executives. They have the ability but not have become leaders. The best and worst countries for women to work are ranked in the Economist's "Glass-ceiling Index." Out of the 29 OECD countries, Japan ranks 28<sup>th</sup>. (The Economist, 2022). This implies there are difficulties for women to work in Japan.

In a public opinion poll by the Japanese cabinet office, over 70% of the people think men are being given preferential treatment in Japanese society. This number has been stable from 1995 till 2019 data. This reveals that across two generations, not much has changed. In

1995, 75.6% of the people said that men are being given preferential treatment. In 2019, 77.5% of women thought men are being given preferential treatment (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2020a).

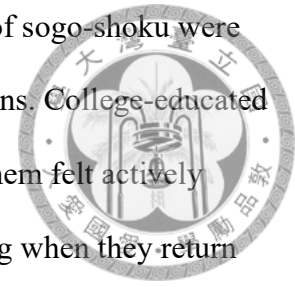


#### **2.4.1 Hiring System That Creates Inequality**

The following examines the issues in Japanese workplaces. European universities offer specialized education that is more relevant to the profession. U.S. universities provide liberal education on broad topics, and specialized education occurs at graduate schools. Japanese universities adopted the U.S. style to give intellectual foundations of knowledge that do not lead to specific professions. However, unlike in the U.S., graduate schools do not provide specialized knowledge and training. This is why most Japanese companies offer business training for new graduates. In this education system, European students will decide their future at an early age and take advantage of their careers, while Japanese students rely on their employers to develop their careers (Estevez-Abe, 2011). Japanese employers will have the power to decide whom to employ and what jobs to assign them. In societies like Japan, where gender discrimination exists, employers can segregate work by gender. This creates differences in job descriptions and wages.

The Japanese government enacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1985 (Parkinson, 1989). This law was made to provide equal labor opportunities for women. Despite this law, Japanese companies hire using the two-track system. Sogo-shoku (career-track) and ippan-shoku (non-career, clerical). Sogo-shoku is for the elite who wishes to pursue a career as male employees. They can climb the corporate ladder, receive a better salary, and have relocations away from home. Ippan-shoku is for those who do not wish relocations. They stay in the same office doing the same clerical work for many years with a lower salary. Female graduates must choose which track when they apply for a company. Many companies are hesitant to hire female sogo-shoku because many will leave when they

have children (Chanlett-Avery & Nelson, 2014). In 2011, only 11.6% of sogo-shoku were women. It means a limited number of women pursue leadership positions. College-educated women quit their jobs mostly from their unsatisfying careers. Half of them felt actively stymied by their managers and work environment. Some report bullying when they return after maternity leave, called “maternity harassment” (Chanlett-Avery & Nelson, 2014).



Workplace incentives have been shown to be important in motivating employees for promotion. Especially in the early stages of a career, it is adequate to give them challenging jobs for women who are eager to be promoted from the beginning. It is essential to provide long-term career prospects and development opportunities so they can continue working (Takeishi, 2017).

#### **2.4.2 No Training, No Role Model**

Since many women work in supporting jobs, they do not have the opportunity to be leaders. Employers do not provide opportunities for women to experience and grow. Without experience, they will not learn how to lead a team. They will not develop self-efficacy. Self-efficacy and self-esteem are essential to push them to become leaders (Nakamura et al., 2021). Corporate management has not thought about developing female leaders from the beginning, so they have no training programs for female employees. Male employees, on the other hand, receive training and more opportunities. They receive responsible jobs so they can grow and opportunities to experience as team leaders. They experience job rotations in which they can learn different jobs while building a broader network. Women employees rarely have job rotations. Especially if they are doing supporting jobs. Building a broad, diverse network will be difficult for them. Also, building a sustainable network is difficult because many women leave the workforce, and only a few remain after several years. Since few women are leaders and executives, women cannot find role models. They cannot find a mentor with whom they can discuss their problems (Nakamura et al., 2021).

### 2.4.3 Social and Company Culture Makes It Hard for Women



Many women leave the workplace because it is hard to work long hours while managing the housework, childcare, and elderly care. With the Confucian idea of women caring for the house and family, many women spend hours doing household chores. Stereotyped perception of gender roles still exists in Japan (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2020a). A survey asks if they agree or disagree with the concept of husbands being expected to work outside the home while wives are expected to take on domestic duties. In 1979, 70% of the respondents agreed. In 2004, the result reversed by a slight difference. Agreed with 45.2% and disagreed with 48.9%. However, there is a difference in perception by gender. Looking at the latest survey in 2019, women who agreed were 31.1%, versus disagreed were 63.4%. While 39.4% of men agreed versus 55.6% disagreed (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2020b).

Nearly 40% of men agree that the husband is expected to work outside the home while the wife is expected to take on domestic duties. This influences how much men do household chores. For families with children, time spent on childcare between gender is different. Married men spent 0.36 hours (weekly average) on household chores compared to married women, who spent 5.02 hours in a 2001 survey (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2002). Men with children under six years old spent 0.49 hours per day on childcare compared to women spending 3.45 hours only on childcare (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2020b).

The Japanese work style is characterized by long working hours and a standardized way of working. For women in their early careers to have long-term career prospects, it is necessary to shift to a working style that allows them to fulfill responsibilities outside of work while also allowing them to develop their careers and be active. In order to achieve this,



long working hours must be eliminated, and the realization of flexible work styles is needed (Takeishi, 2017).



For women to participate in the workforce, daycare centers are needed. The proportion of children at daycare centers in Japan is 13% for children under three years of age and 34% for those between three years and the age of enrollment in school. It is 29% and 99% respectively in France, and 54% and 70% respectively in the United States (Matsui, 2007). The usage of daycare centers in Japan is far lower than in other countries. One issue in Japan that must be urgently improved is the shortage of daycare centers. In 2017, the number of children on the waitlist to enter daycare centers was 26,080 (Statista, 2022). Many women could not return to working because they could not leave their children.

The above literature review addresses the importance of female leaders and the issues they face. Many existing studies discuss the factors of inequality and the result of a low number of working women in business. However, it lacks in-depth reasons behind the results. This study will interview female leaders and elicit opinions on how they feel. A qualitative research method will be used to find what is not addressed in the existing literature and explore different issues by comparing industries. The research questions will be, what issues do Japanese female employees face in different industries?

### 3. Methodology



#### 3.1 Research Strategy

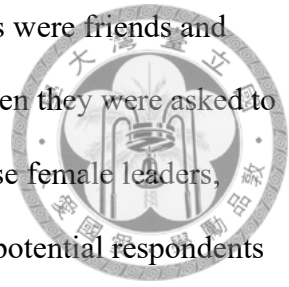
The research strategy and data collection method will be described in this chapter. This research is done to investigate employees' experiences and thoughts. An interview is suitable to understand what the interviewees experienced, how they felt, and what is needed to change the situation. Therefore, qualitative data analysis based on inductive reasoning will be attempted to build theories and reach conclusions from the interviews (Hair Jr., Money, Samouel, & Page, 2015). Qualitative research is the appropriate approach for this research objective because it involves psychological and cultural reasons that cannot be accessible using experiments or numerical results. The data are collected to 1) clarify what issues women employees face, and 2) find the differences between industries.

#### 3.2 Data Collection Method

Data collection is done by interviewing Japanese female leaders. The interviews are semi-structured interviews with open questions. Semi-structured interview questions are more general compared to structured interview questions. Semi-structured interview questions have the flexibility to change the sequence of questions or ask further questions in response to the replies (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It will not limit answers like surveys, nor will it be a free conversation without a topic. Open questions allow interviewees to think freely without limitations and withdraw their thoughts on their individual experiences.

The sampling type incorporated for this research is the non-probability snowball sampling. The snowball sampling is not random, for the population is unknown, and there is no accessible sampling frame. One downside of snowball sampling is that the sample may not represent the population. However, snowball sampling is not within a quantitative research strategy, and external validity concerns are not as significant (Bryman & Bell,

2011). In finding a potential respondent for an interview, initial contacts were friends and families who are or know someone who is a Japanese female leader. Then they were asked to refer anyone who could be potential respondents. There are few Japanese female leaders, meaning the population relevant to the research topic is small. Finding potential respondents is not easy. Therefore, the snowball sampling technique is the best way to proceed with the research.



### **3.3 Interview Participants**

To answer the research question, the participants must be Japanese female leaders working for a Japanese or a multinational company in Japan. The present place of residents does not matter because large companies have branch offices overseas, and female leaders are often working overseas as expatriates. It is preferable if she grew up in Japan and understands Japanese culture. Fortunately, all ten participants who cooperated in the interview met the above requirements. Total working experience ranges from 5 to 30 years. Their ages are from 29 to 53. A wide range of years of work and ages were chosen to hear various views. Half of the interviewees live in Japan, while half live abroad in Taiwan or Singapore. All the interviewees grew up in Japan and graduated from Japanese universities. They have received a four-year college degree or higher. Their first jobs after graduating are large Japanese companies. Two participants have changed jobs, but most have been in the same company for years. Four works for a manufacturing company, two work for a trading company, and others work in consulting, energy, bank, and auditing firm (see details in Appendix B). Different companies are chosen to hear from a wide range of views and to avoid any bias. Table 1 below, is the overview of the ten interviewees.

**Table 1: Interviewee Overview**


Interviewee	Job Position	Working years	Age	City	Type of Company
1	Manager	12	37	Yokohama	Consulting
2	Senior Engineer	12	43	Hsinchu	Electronics and Semiconductor Manufacturer
3	General Manager	30	52	Tokyo	Energy, Oil, Gas, and Metal Business
4	Partner	29	53	Tokyo	Audit, Consulting, Financial Advisory
5	Manager	7	29	Taipei	Trading
6	Vice General Manager	18	39	Taipei	Cosmetics and Pharmaceutical Manufacturer
7	Department Head	29	51	Singapore	Trading
8	Solution Team Vice President	7	29	Taipei	Banking
9	N/A	5	29	Yokohama	Electrical Equipment Manufacturer
10	Specialist	15	42	Fujieda	Computer Memory Manufacturer

### 3.4 Interview Procedure

Prior to the interview, an interview information sheet (Appendix A) was sent to the respondents for them to understand well of the topic, procedure, and to agree to be interviewed. After the interviewees agreed and had no further questions about the interview, the date of the interview was discussed. Interviews were taken place between May 9th to June 11th, 2022. Before the interview, the interviewee informed their name, job position, company name, working years, age, and city of residence. The interviews were conducted in Japanese and recorded upon consent to avoid missing or mishearing. Because the basic questions were sent in advance, the interviewees had prepared the answers that were listed. As the interview is a semi-structured interview, additional questions were asked during the interview. The first question is, “Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?” This first question was

asked to understand the interviewee's present situation and to know her better. From there, more detailed questions about her working environment were asked. The interview time varied from 40 to 70 minutes, asking 14 to 17 questions.



The interviews were conducted online by Zoom or Line due to Covid-19 safety, and more than half of the interviewees are not living in Taiwan. Two interviewees participated from her office. Others participated from their home. Interviewees who participated from home were either teleworking and participated during their working hours or after work. Lastly, interviewees were asked if personal information (name, job position, company name, working years, age, and city of residence) could be written in the thesis. Four interviewees wished to withhold their names and company name. For them, their names are written as anonymous, and the type of company is written in place of the company name. A complete transcript of the interviewee's responses can be found in Appendix B.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The qualitative analysis is based on the data collected from interview responses. The data were inductive coded, organized, and interpreted. Reliability is the degree of consistency in categorizing similar words and phrases to the same pattern or theme (Hair Jr., Money, Samouel, & Page, 2015). Manual analysis is done to categorize common phrases and themes across all interviews. This leads to finding meaningful themes and characteristics to answer the research question.

## 4. Results



### 4.1 Issues Japanese Female Employees Face in Different Industries

Research question asks, “What issues do Japanese female employees face in different industries?” This chapter will state the findings of the data collected from ten leaders in large corporations through interviews. The interviewees fall into five industry categories – professional services, manufacturing, oil and gasoline, trading, and finance. Table 2 below, summarizes the key workplace issues faced by the respondents.

**Table 2: Workplace Issues Faced by Japanese Female Employees**

Industry	Professional Services	Manufacturing	Oil & Gasoline	Trading	Finance	Total
Glass Ceiling	0%	40%	10%	20%	10%	80%
Training	20%	40%	10%	20%	10%	100%
Work Experience	20%	30%	0%	10%	10%	70%
Mentor and Network	10%	30%	10%	10%	0%	60%
Inequality During Student Years	0%	10%	10%	0%	0%	20%
Inequality During Job Searching	10%	20%	10%	10%	10%	60%
Japanese Men and Household Chores	20%	40%	10%	20%	10%	100%

Overall, 80% of all respondents experienced the glass ceiling. This includes respondents from the manufacturing, the oil and gas, trading, and financial industries. Only the respondents from the professional services industry did not face this issue. 100% of respondents said they have the opportunity to have the same training as the opposite sex. There are no differences in industries. Although all responded that there is equality in training, work experience slightly differs. 70% of all participants answered that the company offers work experiences equally regardless of gender. Interviewees from the professional services and financial industry answered that they experience the same as male employees, but other industry interviewees feel inequality.

Furthermore, 40% of all interviewees said they have no female mentors or networks. They are in the professional services, manufacturing, trading, and financial industry. 30% answered that the company organizes a supporting network system. Companies that offer supporting networks within the company are in the professional services, manufacturing, and the oil and gasoline industry. Senior female employees meet with young female employees and discuss any problems. One interviewee from the manufacturing industry has a university alum network inside the company. Two interviewees have a mentor or a network outside of the company. They have no female mentors inside the company because there is no woman in a higher position than them.

In addition, 20% of all respondents felt unfavorable inequality during student life. They are in the manufacturing and the oil and gasoline industry. During job searching, 60% of all participants felt there was inequality. Participants from all industries responded yes. 100% responded that Japanese men are not doing many household chores. Regardless of industry, all interviewees agreed that Japanese men do not.

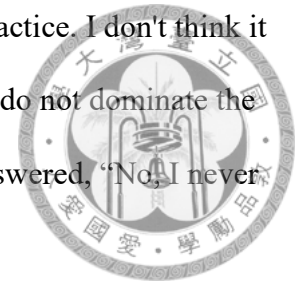
## **4.2 In-depth Analysis**

Next, a deeper look at some key points is discussed. More on how the participants experienced these issues are explained.

### **4.2.1 The Glass Ceiling**

As noted in chapter 4.1 above, eight out of ten respondents feel the glass ceiling. While there were some minor differences across industries, the experiences are mostly consistent and also consistent with the literature. Most interesting, though, were the two respondents from the professional services industry who did not feel any glass ceiling. First, interviewee 1 in the professional services industry states, “No. I don't feel any glass ceiling in this company. There may have been in the past, but as a consulting firm that deals with organizational transformation, we need to take the lead in diversity as a company. We have to

make proposals for our clients, so I guess we are trying to put it into practice. I don't think it is 100% yet, but I feel that women can work comfortably because men do not dominate the company.” Interviewee 4, also in the professional services industry, answered, “No, I never felt a glass ceiling.”



On the contrary, interviewee 7 in the trading industry asserts, “I feel it so much. It's hard to go any further; I've broken through the first glass ceiling and am now hitting the second one.” Some of the reasons the respondents feel the glass ceiling are 1) male employees dominate important positions, 2) there are no female managers in the company, 3) female employees are not evaluated equally, and 4) employees who return from maternity leave are not promoted, or promotion speed slows down. These issues are not found in the professional services industry because there are many female leaders in different departments. They are not evaluated by gender or whether they took childcare leave or not.

#### **4.2.2 Training and Work Experience**

All industries offer the same training for all employees, but some companies have training exclusively for female employees. Two interviewees in the manufacturing industry with a low ratio of female employees have training only for women. This training teaches how to write articles essential for promotion, get promoted, and become a reliable manager. Regarding work experience, interviewees from the manufacturing, oil and gasoline, and trading industries feel a difference in work experience by gender. Interviewee 4 in the oil and gasoline industry states, “I think there is a bias in some departments regarding work experience.” She explains, “there are positions such as sales and refinery departments where women are avoided from being department managers. I feel that it is not completely fair. For example, important positions are men.”

#### **4.2.3 Mentor and Network**



Nearly half of the respondents have neither a female mentor nor a network. Interviewee 8 in the financial industry speaks about her worries, “That is my worry. I have no women’s network in my company. I once participated in a training program for female sogo-shoku employees, but there was no one older than me. Outside the company, I was able to talk with senior university colleagues, but they quit their job.” On the other hand, few companies have a supporting system within the company. Interviewee 9 in the manufacturing industry explained, “There is a sister system. Since there are few women in the company, only female employees, regardless of department, are gathered to discuss their problems. You will get to know seniors in other departments. If you ask for advice, you will get it.”

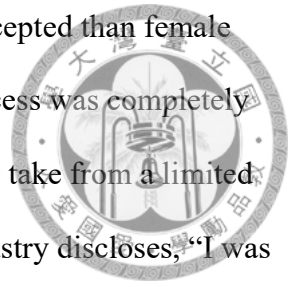
#### **4.2.4 Inequality During Student Years**

No one felt any disparity in the academic environment. The two interviewees who felt inequality during their student years did not feel it inside classrooms but during extracurricular activities. The respondent felt inequality when female students had the role of making lunch boxes while male students reserved seats at sports events. Making Japanese bento takes time. Female students have to wake up early to make them. There is a perception that girls cook and boys do not cook. Another example is inequality in the world of traditional arts. In some events, girls were not allowed to perform, nor could they be leaders. The interviewee thinks everyone can perform all art performances regardless of gender.

#### **4.2.5 Inequality During Job Searching**

Interviewees from all industries felt inequality when they were job searching. One reason is the hiring system. Female students were hired either as sogo-shoku (career-track) positions or ippan-shoku (non-career, clerical) positions that did not pursue a career. Male students were all employed as sogo-shoku. Female sogo-shoku students had to go through several interviews more than the male students. Only students from a few selected schools are hired as sogo-shoku for female students. The quota for the female sogo-shoku position is

small, so very few people are accepted. Male students can easily get accepted than female students. Interviewee 7 in the trading industry explains, “the hiring process was completely different. The number of interviews is different. The company will only take from a limited university if you are a girl.” As interviewee 9 in the manufacturing industry discloses, “I was told they do not hire female salespeople.” There are positions female students cannot apply for. Only a few female students are hired as sogo-shoku. As interviewee 8 in the financial industry states, “In the new employee training class, only five women were in a class of forty.”



#### **4.2.6 Japanese Men and Household Chores**

All participants agreed Japanese men are not doing many household chores. As interviewee 8 in the financial industry admits, “there is a common perception that housework is for women.” Even if the couple is both working, men do not help. Many agree that Japanese men do not do household chores, but there is a difference in generation. Interviewee 3 in the oil and gasoline industry conveys, “I think they don’t but it depends on the age. I think young people do.” Interviewee 4 in the professional services states, “Men in the past didn’t do it but not today. Many male coworkers cook.”

## 5. Discussion



### 5.1 Discussion of the Findings

This chapter discusses the findings, reasons, and opinions of the interviewees. Gathered data are about their experiences from hiring to the current working environment. The causes of the issues these women face are uncovered.

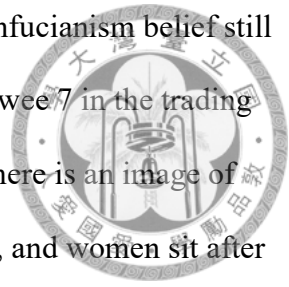
#### 5.1.1 Distinctly Different Experience for Professional Services Industry

The interviewees from the professional services industry do not feel the glass ceiling. The difference from other industries is that they have expertise and specialist knowledge. Interviewee 1 is a consultant manager specializing in organizational revitalization and transformation. Interviewee 4 is a partner who specializes in transfer pricing. Interviewee 1 states, “As long as you have a high level of expertise and produce good results, women can succeed in the company. There are female executives.” There are no promotion limits for these women. Another difference between the other eight interviewees is that they work for a foreign multinational firm. Foreign affiliated companies have different employment practices from local firms. They are open to diversity and inclusion in hiring and promotion. They seek highly skilled female workers (Mun & Jung, 2018).

#### 5.1.2 Traditional Values Causing the Glass Ceiling

Out of ten participants, eight felt gender inequality and the glass ceiling in the workplace. Despite the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in Japan, career opportunities for women are not equal to men. Several interviewees noted that men over 50 have a different mentality than the younger generation. Interviewee 7 in the trading industry explains, “I think it will change when people in their 50s and older retire because people in their 50s have been brought up with old values.” “There is no history of women at the top. Many men cannot imagine a woman in a higher position because they have not experienced having a female boss.” Men over 50 were raised with the old tradition, so they do not think women should be

leaders in an organization. As the previous literature review states, “Confucianism belief still exists, and people believe there are gender roles in society.” As interviewee 7 in the trading industry conveys, “I think cultural background is a significant factor. There is an image of women being supportive and men leading. Men’s names are called first, and women sit after men sit. Men are always first. It is imprinted from childhood.” Interviewee 5, also from the trading industry, asserts, “They (male managers) think that women will not be able to go on business trips or move to offices away from home after giving birth. They believe women cannot climb the corporate ladder.”

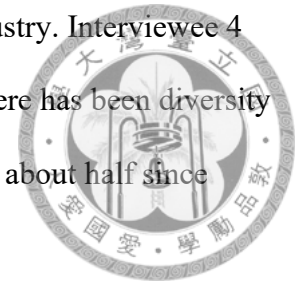


### **5.1.3 Diversity and Inclusion Training**

Implementing diversity and inclusion employee training is a solution for traditional industries to change into a gender-diverse companies. Training is suggested to understand the importance of diversity and to change into a modern company with diverse workers. A mindset shift is vital for both men and women. It may take time but eliminating the fixed thought that men work outside while women stay home to do housework and childrearing needs to change to increase the number of working women. Interviewee 9 in the manufacturing industry conveyed, “It will take time to change common sense; I think it will take 30 years. Even male employees in my generation (20’s) said, “I want my marriage partner to be a full-time housewife.” Regardless of gender and age, many still think housework and childrearing are for women. This leads to a heavy burden on working women, and eventually, the wives have to give up working. Men should also help if a couple works together.

Companies that have diversity training offer equal work experiences regardless of gender. Interviewee 1 in the professional services admits, “There are some workshops to promote diversity, not only about women but also about LGBT and cross-cultural management.” Respondents who answered that their company offers equal work experiences

were either from the professional services industry or the financial industry. Interviewee 4 from the professional services states, “I hear diversity a lot now, but there has been diversity in the company since I joined. The number of female workers has been about half since then.”



#### **5.1.4 Mentor and Role Models**

Many interviewees have no mentors because they are on the front lines and have no one ranked above them. Interviewee 7 in the trading industry discusses, “There is no female mentor in the company because no women are above me. In my private network, some people are about the same level. My mentors are the corporate legal advisor and accountant whom I met while working at a real estate management company.”

In the interviews, single women cannot imagine working after getting married and having children because there are no predecessors. There are no role models who successfully raised children and became managers. Female mentors and networks are essential for young female employees to envision the future and reduce uncertainty. If there are more working women, there will be more role models. If more role models exist, female employees will work long and climb the corporate ladder. It will lead to an increase in female leaders. The government policy targets to increase female representation in leadership positions by 2020 is 30%. In 2019, the percentage was 14.8%, not even half the target (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2020a). The government promotes the policy but does not enforce it. Since there is no compulsion, promotion is slow, and efforts vary from company to company.

#### **5.1.5 Career Development and Hiring**

Eight out of ten interviewees did not feel any inequality while they were students. None felt any opportunity inequality in the classrooms. Suddenly, when they encounter the workforce, they see gender segregation in job roles. The data revealed that significant inequality starts after completing their studies. Educational opportunity is the same, but


working opportunity is not the same in Japan. To solve this gap, Japanese companies should not hire students by gender or school. All jobs should be open for everyone, and job roles should not be segregated. The two-track hiring system of sogo-shoku and ippan-shoku should be eliminated for fairness. Regardless of gender, one can choose their job. Women do not have to do only ancillary work. Men can choose clerical jobs without relocation or long working hours.



The educational structure seems to be the underlying problem. The literature review states, "European universities offer specialized education that is more relevant to the profession. European students will decide their future at an early age and take advantage of their careers, while Japanese students rely on their employers to develop their careers" (Estevez-Abe, 2011). Therefore, career education is essential since many people work for one company for their entire lives in Japan. They should choose their company carefully. Whether staying in one company or changing jobs, many will consider their career at some point. Interviewee 8 in the financial industry admits, "Opportunities to think about career development are needed from a young age. Japan is a country where lifetime employment is the norm. Still, people want to know what kind of market value they will have when leaving the company. What kind of skills does one need in society." There is almost no opportunity to be educated and to consider career development before working. It means individuals do not have the initiative to create their early career life. Women can easily get lost when they choose to have children or not in their careers. Raising self-esteem is also essential in educating women, as interviewee 10 from the manufacturing industry advocates.

After hiring, the company's Human Resource Department should consult career planning and guide new employees. Individual consultation is needed for each individual's situation is different. Human Resource Department should also encourage young women to reach higher positions by showing the steps.

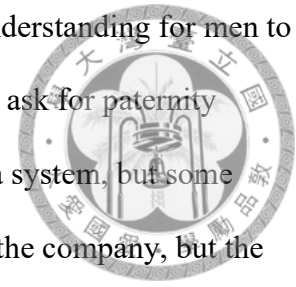
### 5.1.6 Male Employees



All participants agreed that Japanese men are not doing many household chores. There was no difference in the industry. As written in the literature review, “Married men spent 0.36 hours (weekly average) on household chores compared to married women, who spent 5.02 hours in a 2001 survey (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2002).” The number indicates that married men do fewer household chores compared to married women. Traditionally women stayed home to do household chores, and people took it for granted. The perception of women at home and men working outside had been the problem, but it is slowly changing. Interviewee 5 in the trading industry discussed, “there is a big difference in perception among those over 50. People in their 50s and older say women should be housewives. Men under 50 take care of their wives and do housework themselves. They do not think that only women should do the housework.” Three respondents state that young men help around the house but not older men. These older men can be obstacles to the younger male employees. As interviewee 3 in the oil and gasoline industry explains, “The culture is the existence of men who think it is natural for men to focus on work rather than housework and childcare. Even if young men want to do housework and childcare, pressure from superiors makes it difficult for them to devote time to their personal lives, so the working environment for men is lagging.” If male workers can leave the office on time, they can participate in helping wives with household chores, childcare, and eldercare. When this becomes the norm in Japanese society, more women can return to work. Interviewee 3 also comments, “If the boss is an old Japanese work-centered person, they are caught between work and home. These young men need to be saved. Otherwise, Japan will not change.”

Although the government promotes fathers to take paternity leave to 13% by 2020, it was 6.16% at private companies in 2018 (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2020a). Employees have the right to take paternity leave but some cannot use it due to a lack of

approval from their boss. Interviewee 3 explains that there is still no understanding for men to balance work and childcare and male bosses usually get mad when you ask for paternity leave. Interviewee 9 in the manufacturing industry conveys, “There is a system, but some people are asked not to take paternity leave. The number is not zero in the company, but the rate is low.”



One way to solve the working environment for men is to eliminate long working hours and have a flexible working style. Long working hours are a burden for both men and women. Work-life balance is vital. Every employee should have time after work for a hobby or cooperate in childcare, household chores, and eldercare. They should be able to take vacations, time off, and childcare leaves when they want to. They can refuse to be relocated to another city. Everyone should not feel guilty about expressing how they want to work. All the interviewees asserted that flexibility of working hours, workplace, and changing jobs is needed in Japanese workplaces. A sustainable working environment can be realized when both men and women can work comfortably.

### **5.1.7 Maternity Leaves**

Participants mentioned that when women returned from maternity leave, they were removed from the career track and demoted from their former position. Promotion is affected. Interviewee 7 in the trading industry confesses, “I went back immediately because I thought I would be penalized if I took longer.” She returned to work six months after giving birth but felt her promotion slowed down after maternity leave. Unless companies understand and support working mothers and fairly evaluate regardless of taking leaves or not, women will leave the workforce. This is one reason the female workforce notably drops in their 30s and 40s, the age of childrearing (Matsui, 2007). Some return after childrearing, but career experience is not considered if they quit the job. Their working condition is not the same as before leaving the workforce. Many will be treated the same as first-year employees. As



interviewee 9 in the manufacturing industry admits, “Those women over 50 are in clerical positions. They do simple jobs like making copies, making tea, sending mail, etc.”

Interviewee 1 in the professional services industry discusses, “Women who are now over 50 or so had quit the company because they had children.” Participants mentioned there are very few female workers over 50. If they had stayed, they would be in middle management now, and it would be easy for companies to raise the proportion of female leaders to 30%.

Unfortunately, there are few working women above 30s, making the companies struggle to find female candidates to become managers to meet the government policy.

Companies need to educate employees to understand working mothers. Lack of understanding puts mothers in a difficult position. They will always feel guilty about taking time off. They cannot perform their best in a situation where they have to apologize to other workers in the team. Watching mothers having a hard time balancing childrearing and work, many female workers give up marriage and having children. This leads to one of the problems Japan is facing with a declining birthrate (Parker, 2022).

### **5.1.8 Transition Period**

Nine out of ten respondents explained that their company is in a transition period. Some of the transitions mentioned were 1) endorsement of work-life balance, 2) increase in female employees, 3) having women play an active role, 4) promotion of women to higher positions, and 5) increase number of childcare leaves. Gradually improvements can be seen, and it must continue. Respecting an individual’s working style for both men and women will create a comfortable working environment for all.

All participants had expectations for a positive future. During this research, two landmark cases happened. It indicates that society is gradually shifting to increase female workers and leaders. In May 2022, the Financial Services Agency of Japan approved a proposal to require listed companies to disclose information to increase female leaders.

Information such as wage disparity between men and women, the percentage of male employees taking childcare leave, and the percentage of female managers will be added to securities reports that must be submitted (Kyodo, 2022). In June 2022, Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike announced a new nickname, “Ikugyo (Childcare Work).” for childcare leave. The former name had the image of “taking a break” and made people hesitant to take such leave. She asserted that childcare is not a break. She wanted to create a society where people could proudly say, “I am taking childcare work,” instead of apologizing and saying, “Sorry, please let me take childcare leave” (The Tokyo Shimbun, 2022). The top management and government must commit to overcoming challenges and changing the culture. They must continue to support women employees.



## **5.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

The study is based on interviews with Japanese female leaders. Listening to male voices is suggested. Interviewees in this study were all leaders in large corporations. They are highly recognized, successful female leaders. Interviewing employees from small companies and part-time employees should broaden the view of working women in Japan.

Another limitation is the number of interviewees. There were ten participants in this study but having more interviews will increase more opinions. Although there were ten interviewees, some points were repeatedly spoken. Additional interviews do not promise there will be multiple new ideas.

Recommended future research will be follow-up research after childcare leave. There are not many examples so research is not done, but there will be more who will take childcare leave in the future. It is necessary to follow up with employees who have returned to work and check whether they are working comfortably, if their promotions are not affected, and whether they continue to work for a long time after returning to work. Whether or not this

system works properly is very important for many people to be able to work while raising children.



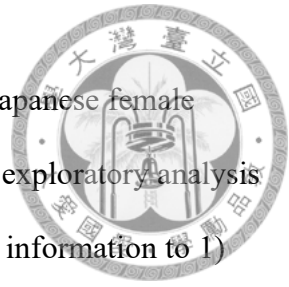
Furthermore, non-business sectors should also be studied—especially women in politics. Women’s participation in policy and decision-making process is meager; hence women’s empowerment takes time. The proportion of women in the House of Representatives is 9.9%, House of Councillors is 22.9% as of June 2020 (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2020a). The vast majority are male members. Policy-making will tend to favor men.

Many studies have shown that increasing female workers and decreasing the gender gap will increase profit and value in corporations and increase the world’s GDP. While most studies focus on SDGs, company profit, and feminism, this study has taken an approach to examine actual workers and hear their personal experiences. It is more focused on the insight of working in Japanese corporations. The content of this study should create awareness of the reality of female workers in Japan. It provides a better understanding of women’s difficulties working in Japan and becoming leaders. Continuous research should be done to increase the number of working women and leaders to change into a diverse society.

## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of the study is to explore working issues faced by Japanese female employees in different industries. This research conducted a qualitative exploratory analysis of Japanese female corporate leaders. The study findings have provided information to 1) reveal what issues Japanese female employees face in the workplace, 2) explore the different issues faced in different industries. Data collection was performed using semi-structured interviews to understand personal experiences. The results chapter reveals the issues faced by Japanese working women in different industries, and the discussion chapter explains measures to improve the working environment.

In the research, the common thread that many participants mentioned was that a mindset shift is needed. As they stated, it is not easy to change and will take time. Nevertheless, waiting for male employees in their 50s to retire is not wise. Immediate and sustainable action is required to improve working conditions for present and future workers. Continuous effort and research to support better working environment for employees are needed. Increasing companies with diverse employees with flexible working styles should make a better society for all.



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## Appendix A:

### Interview Information Sheet



My thesis focuses on increasing the number of female executives and their contribution to companies and society. Through my previous research, I have found that companies with active female board members excel and achieve excellent results in the following. ROE, sales growth, revenue from innovation, social responsibility, corporate governance, and customer satisfaction. In addition, many growing and sustainable companies have women on their boards, and ESG investors often invest in such companies. Although there are many benefits to be gained by appointing female board members, unfortunately, the number is still small, and the percentage of female board members is 19% worldwide.

Looking at Japan in particular, the percentage of female executives in companies listed in the first section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange is 7.5%, which is low compared to other countries, and the number is not increasing. It has been calculated that Japan's GDP could grow by 15% if the work environment for women were equal to that of men. It is said that many women lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and from a long-term perspective, the damage to Japan and its companies will be immeasurable. In order to break through the current stagnant Japanese economy, women's active roles in society, along with their consumption, are necessary.

In light of the above, I will explore what obstacles exist to women's advancement and consider ways to improve them.

The interview will be conducted online. The interview will take about 60 minutes. I would like to ask for your cooperation on two points during the interview.

1. The interview will be recorded. This is to avoid missing or mishearing the interview to write the paper. It will not be used for any other purposes.
2. In advance, please provide me your name, title, company name, years of employment, age,

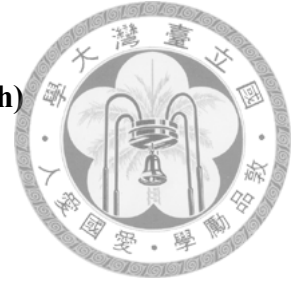
and city of residence in English.

Thank you.



## Appendix B:

### Interviews (Translated from Japanese to English)



#### Interviewee 1

Miyuki Kinoshita

Manager

Accenture Japan Ltd.

12 years of working experience

37 years old

Living in Yokohama, Japan

Interviewed on May 9, 2022. Time 9:00-10:10

1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. I'm working for a consulting firm. I am in charge of strategic consulting and organizational consulting. Doing organizational revitalization and transformation. The reason I chose this company is that 1) I can work remotely from home, having flexibility in my working style. 2) I can work with a global team. 3) I like to work with clients, and there is an environment to respond to various corporate challenges.

2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. There is flexibility in how I use my time. There is no restriction, such as working between 9 to 5. Also, I can choose where I work. It depends on the project.

My latest project I had required hard work. It all depends on the project and also who your boss is. Your work will probably be demanding if your boss is a single male. I got emails at 2 in the morning, and I didn't get enough sleep. Manager and above requires hard work.

Managers and above do not get overtime pay. Overtime payment is for regular consultants paid by salary under 40 hours per week. Over 40 hours, they can receive overtime pay.

Managers have to take over their work that exceeds 40 hours/week. You can choose the project and your boss, so some people prefer an easier job.



3. Is there an atmosphere that encourages long working hours in your company?

Ans. The company culture of working long hours still exists, but the company is trying to change that. The company is changing, but there are differences depending on the project. I feel the company is changing because we have surveys on how we work every month.

There are two management systems: the boss for the project, and a mentor, who is not part of the project but is a lateral supervisor who thinks about the person's career. If there is a problem with the way the person works, they can discuss it with the supervisor of the project, and the supervisor will talk to the boss for them, and the project will be changed. I actually saw a case who has a child. She said the work was too hard, and after discussing it with the supervisor, she was relocated to a different job.

Some male coworkers have quit due to mental health issues, and I think there are still a lot of turnovers.

4. Are there a seniority system in your company?

Ans. No. There is none. Some subordinates are older than their boss. I think it is a performance-based system. But there are no clear numbers like sales for this type of work, so it is hard to evaluate the performance. Maybe one way is the evaluation from your boss or coworkers. Since the company is growing, there are many positions and many opportunities for promotion, so you will move up the corporate ladder rather than be restrained if you are doing well. Unlike other companies where many employees compete to win a position, there are many positions at the manager level, senior manager level, executive level, and so on. So, there is an environment to increase female employees.

5. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. As long as you have a high level of expertise and produce good results, women can succeed in the company. There are female executives.



6. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. No. I don't feel any glass ceiling in this company. There may have been in the past, but as a consulting firm that deals with organizational transformation, we need to take the lead in diversity as a company. We have to make proposals for our clients, so I guess we are trying to put it into practice. I don't think it is 100% yet, but I feel that women can work comfortably because men do not dominate the company. But when I see a male boss, I honestly wonder if I would be able to work long-term with a child. If I were to work under a female boss, I might be able to do it even with a child. It might not be easy, but there is a culture that tries to support me, and female executives are always willing to talk to me if there are any problems. I think that if you have expertise and skills, you will be fine. However, the amount of work is enormous, so if you don't have the skills to do it efficiently, I don't think you will be able to make it work.

7. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. There are some workshops to promote diversity, not only about women but also about LGBT and cross-cultural management. I haven't seen anything that specializes in women. In the company's e-learning program, which is open to all, there are courses on women's management, women's education, and other subjects. There is also a chat group to activate the community for mothers who have joined the company after maternity leave. We are supporting men to take paternity leave and promote understanding for them.

8. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. No, my mentors are male.



9. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. No, I never thought about it.

10. How did you decide which department and university you want to go to?

Ans. My field of interest was sociology. I think it is the same now. I was in the International Studies Department of the Faculty of International Relations and Sociology, so naturally, many women were there.

11. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. I didn't feel it because I was searching for jobs in the advertising industry, where there were many women. I just chose companies I was interested in. I didn't search for manufacturing companies or traditional companies.

12. Who's influence did you receive from working as you do now?

Ans. My mother was working, so it was natural for me to work.

13. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. Yes. Even if couples work and have the same salary, women would do the housework.

14. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. Yes, I think so. I think there is a great need for house cleaning, and if I can invest in it, I want to use it. If I use it once, I will probably start using it a lot. When I was stationed in China, the company cleaned my room 3 times a week in the residence the company provided, even though I lived alone. It was nice.



About babysitters, if I had children, I would hire them. I was talking about this with a friend of mine, and she said that babysitters are still expensive in Japan. But mothers can be themselves during the time they go to work. It is much easier for them to work than to take care of their children. I think mothers would probably use a babysitter or a babysitting service if they are reliable. Even if you work from home, if you have a child by your side all the time, you might be bothered during meetings or other things. It would be very comfortable to have a babysitter even when you are at home. Also, if a babysitter could cook lunch for you or do some other housework for you, it would be very helpful.

15. Why do you think there are few women executives in Japan?

Ans. That's what the statistics say, and we are trying to increase it, but I heard there are very few women executives because there are few women managers over 50. I think women in the middle management layer had not been created in the past, so the portion is very small.

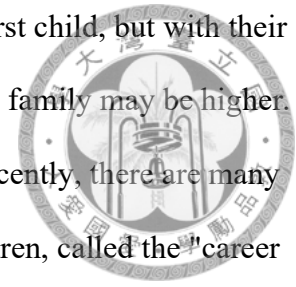
Women who are now over 50 or so had quit the company because they had children. It was still a very difficult situation to work and raise children at that time.

There are also people who did not quit working but instead slowed down their working speed, which slowed down their promotions and prevented them from moving up the ladder. I think the first thing that needs to be done is to increase women in middle management.

16. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?



Ans. Many women are willing to work as hard as they can with their first child, but with their second child, the speed of work is a little slower, and the priority of the family may be higher. I think it is essential to support working women who have children. Recently, there are many companies that are hiring mothers who have finished raising their children, called the "career back" system.



17. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. Each person's situation is different, so I think Human Resource Department needs to talk to individuals and understand their career planning. For example, if an employee returns from maternity leave and Human Resource Department see that she has full support to take care of her children and does not need to slow down her career, the company should give her a challenging task. For those who want to slow down, the company should support their work without stopping their career. I think this is quite important because it varies from person to person.

Also, if possible, I think it will help employees if the company provides some babysitting support, such as searching for a babysitter and subsidizing the babysitting cost.

I heard that recently, many young women don't want to become executives because they have been watching how hard it is to climb the corporate ladder for women. They don't want to work that hard. But I think we need to motivate them and show the benefits and rewards of becoming women executives. We have to encourage them and tell them it is not as hard as they think.

### Interviewee 2

Name: Anonymous

Senior Engineer

Semiconductor manufacturing equipment company

12 years of working experience

43 years old  
Living in Hsinchu, Taiwan  
Interviewed on May 19, 2022. Time 20:00-21:00



1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. I chose a company where you can work overseas. The number of overseas customers has increased, so overseas business trips has increased. Although I had not thought of stationing overseas, I ended up doing so. I worked in Belgium and Taiwan.

2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. The company as a whole works a lot of overtime, but I have a good balance. Before becoming a full-time employee, I worked 200 hours of overtime per month. I requested to move to a department without any overtime. There, it was basically no overtime. Later, I moved to Belgium. Belgians don't do much overtime. Taiwanese don't work much overtime either. My policy is to finish by the regular time.

3. What is it like working with management in your company?

Ans. Employees feel close to the executive team. Even the president is not called president but by the name. The executives in my company are friendly.

4. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. The ratio of women is low. I feel we are valued. The male employees don't know how to treat the female employees.

5. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. No, I don't feel a glass ceiling myself. I am not working to climb the promotion ladder. I look at the women around me and they quit before they reach the glass ceiling. Maybe some of the women in the head office are feeling it.



6. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. Yes, it's the same. If you are abroad, you will not have the opportunity for training.

7. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. I don't have any.

8. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. I felt inequality because women received favorable treatment. Men had to endure while women could be pampered. Women were able to become leaders. I felt lucky I was a woman.

9. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. During the "ice age of job hunting" (1993-2005), there was little hiring. Only men were getting jobs first.

10. Who's influence did you receive to work as you do now?

Ans. The time influences me than people. I was worried about not working because it was the time after the economic bubble burst. I have no one to entrust my life to. If I was a housewife, what would happen if my husband lost his job? I am worried.

11. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. I don't think Japanese men do household chores. I had felt why I'm the only one cleaning and cooking?



12. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. I think it will increase a little if service prices decrease. But many people would rather quit their jobs and do their own housework and childcare than pay to hire someone. I don't think that alone will promote employment.

13. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?

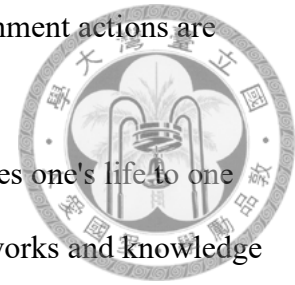
Ans. Isn't it a good excuse to quit? It is an opportunity to quit because there are few workplaces in Japan where people want to work for many years. There are only a few people who want to keep working.

14. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. The Japanese family system is influential. There is a long tradition that men work in one company till retirement and women do the work at home. There are roles for men and women. There has always been a division of labor. Housewife is considered as a job. In Japan, "housewife" is written in the occupation column.

15. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.

Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?



Ans. People say that the lifetime employment system, where one devotes one's life to one company, is not good, but I think Japanese people actually like it. Networks and knowledge will become stronger. Considering the division of roles, men work outside the home and women support their hardworking husbands. This is possible because of the lifetime employment system. But we have to change the fundamental way of working. We cannot increase the employment rate of women unless we change the structure, such as to make it easier for them to change jobs.

The number of women in management positions is low because the population of working women is small. The only way to increase the number women in management positions is to increase the number of working women. Families can make a living without wives working because of the dependency exemption system. If we don't change that tax system, people will not work.

One idea is to have three generations live together and take care of their grandchildren. If three generations live together, there will be tax benefits. Then, people will feel comfortable leaving their children with their parents and going to work. It is difficult to take care of newborns or sick children, but if their parents look after them, they can return to work sooner. In Taiwan, many people work while their parents watch them. Other measures include increasing the number of telecommuting jobs. If mothers can work from home, more mothers will work.

16. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. Childbirth is the key. There is no difference between men and women in the company, but if there is a difference, childbirth and child-rearing are hurdles. Employees with children

tend to get late, leave early, or take time off because of child-related issues. But we need to educate everyone that this is a natural thing. It is an ideal environment if the people around them are understanding.



Also, there are health issues that are unique to women. In Japan, it is difficult to take time off. It would be better if we could create an environment where it is easier for both men and women to take vacations and time off.

### Interviewee 3

Name: Anonymous

General Manager

ENEOS Holdings, Inc.

30 years of working experience

52 years old

Living in Tokyo, Japan

Interviewed on May 20,2022. Time 12:30-13:30

1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. I joined the company because of its gender equality and high salary level. I can make use of my strengths in English and chemistry. I liked the atmosphere at the interview. It is an excellent company. I was lucky to work for this company, and it was an ideal company for me.

2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. Non-management employees (union members) have a good work-life balance. You can take vacations and there is no overtime but some departments are busy. It changes when you become a manager. There is a lot of overtime work when you become a section manager.

Department managers have a lot of drinking parties.



3. What is it like working with management in your company?

Ans. The board members are all male. There are women on the outside board. They have old-fashioned values.

4. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. Maternity leave and telecommuting work have been implemented. They are trying to make it easier for women to work. If you don't pursue your way up the ladder, it's an excellent environment to work in. But if you want to be a manager, there are some unpleasant things such as drinking parties. There is no discrimination based on gender, as the company wants women to be active as well.

5. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling? If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. I have never felt it. If you are aiming for an executive position, probably yes. For PR and accounting departments, a female manager is ok, but there are positions such as sales and refinery departments where women are avoided from being department managers. I feel that it is not completely fair. For example, important positions are men. At the upper management level, evaluations are based on likes and dislikes, not abilities, so you have to get along with executives to move up.

6. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. Basically yes. I think there is a bias in some departments regarding work experience.

7. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. There is. The company has a support system. You meet with them on a regular basis. I have talked to younger girls. We talk about general work concerns.



8. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. I had never felt this before high school, but I did when I was a university student. There were roles such as girls were supposed to make lunch boxes.

9. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. I felt it because the difference of hiring was obvious at the time. There was a separation between sogo-shoku (career track) and ippan-shoku (clerical position). They did not hire girls for sogo-shoku or girls were not welcomed.

10. Who's influence did you receive to work as you do now?

Ans. None in particular. I took it for granted that I would be working in a sogo-shoku job, not an ancillary job. My father expected his children to work hard at a job they loved. He never thought his children would become a housewife or work as ippan-shoku job.

11. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. I think they don't but it depends on the age. I think young people do.

12. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. I think it will increase. Japan is expensive, so only those who can make money can hire.



In Singapore, maids are cheap, so everyone works.

Japanese spends a lot of time on housework. The standard of housework is very high.

Nowadays, you can buy many things at convenience stores, and retort pouches are increasing, so it can be simpler. But because we try to match the standard that our parents used to do, the hurdle is high and the burden of housework is heavy. People who don't want to cut corners don't work, so we have to change that mindset.

Today, it is hard for young men. Women think that men and women are equal, so they expect men to shoulder the same burden of housework. It is hard for men to work in a company with an old system. If the boss is an old Japanese work-centered person, they are caught between work and home. These young men need to be saved. Otherwise, Japan will not change.

13. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?

Ans. Because of the heavy burden of full-time work. The workload is so heavy that it is hard to manage both.

In the past, men's salaries were higher, so they could make a living even if the women quit.

There were not many disadvantages for women leaving the company. Many men wanted women to concentrate on raising their children. Both sides agreed that women should stay at home. Now, many don't quit. There is a system that allows women to work shorter hours.

Men also want their wives to work because salaries are not as high as they used to be. Japan is changing now. My sister is also working hard while raising three children.

14. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. We are in a transitional period where society is changing, but I think the obstacle is that there are still social systems in place that are built on the assumption that housewives are primarily present. For example, it is normal for full-time sogo-shoku employees to give top

priority to their work. The standards required for housework are high. The old generation still has the old cultural consciousness. The fact that various systems are built on this basis is an obstacle.



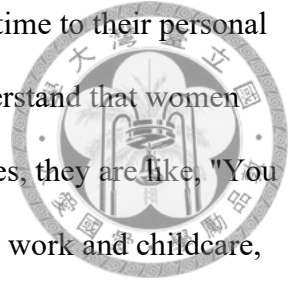
15. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.

Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?

Ans. Increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to 30% is a very high goal. It takes time to train people. It takes 30 years to develop people for management positions. There are not enough candidates. It is impossible to increase the number of women leaders because the number of working women is small to begin with. Listed companies set targets and present them to investors, but it is a form of reverse discrimination. Women are being promoted without skills because there are not enough people to fill the positions.

ENEOS is doing its best and allowing men to take paternity leave. I think a large company can do so, but it is difficult for a company that is short on staff. I had one of my subordinates take three months of paternity leave. He said he was able to spend precious time taking care of his child during those three months. But it's really hard to give them time off. The government's goal is pointless because companies can say they allowed paternity leave; even one took it for just a week. I think childcare leave is meaningless unless you take it for a year. The listed companies have good systems for childcare. The problem is not the system but the culture behind it. The culture is the existence of men who think it is natural for men to focus on work rather than housework and childcare. Even if young men want to do housework and

childcare, pressure from superiors makes it difficult for them to devote time to their personal lives, so the working environment for men is lagging. Male bosses understand that women want to balance work and housework/childcare. But to male subordinates, they are like, "You are a man, aren't you?" There is an understanding for women to balance work and childcare, but there is still no understanding for men to balance work and childcare. In a company survey, when asked if there is sexual harassment or power harassment, many respondents answered that there is paternity harassment. Male bosses usually say, "You're going to take three months off!" when you ask for paternity leave. We must change the working environment for men. I think this is an important point, although it does not come to attention.



16. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. As for the systems, it is implemented in large companies, so there needs to be a change in awareness. Specifically, the assumption that men are the primary workers and work is the top priority needs to be eliminated. We must be conscious that it is not natural to live a company-centered life, and it is not customary to be relocated frequently. Japan can be changed by creating a system that respects the individual's will rather than focusing on the ease of work for women. Some men also want to cherish their private time. If a system that respects individual wishes, such as jobs without overtime or transfers, will result in a society where all women can work comfortably.

#### Interviewee 4

Kaoru Fukazawa

Partner

Transfer Pricing Service

Deloitte Tohmatsu Tax Co.

29 years of working experience

53 years old

Living in Tokyo, Japan  
Interviewed on May 23, 2022. Time 12:00-12:50



1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. While I used to work for Mitsubishi Corporation Ltd., I worked in the tax department. Mitsubishi was a client of Deloitte, so I worked with them. Deloitte seemed to be nice company. I wanted to pursue tax, so when my boss changed, I decided to go to Deloitte. I asked them, and I got the job.

2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. I entered as a manager. It was busy at first. I worked four times more than at Mitsubishi Corp., but now, I am a partner so I can manage my time and workload.

3. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. There are many women in this industry. The male-female ratio is about 50/50. There are more males at the partner level, but the senior manager and below are about 50/50.

Everyone takes maternity leave and comes back. I never heard of anyone who quits during maternity leave.

4. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. No, I never felt a glass ceiling.

5. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. Yes. I hear "diversity" a lot now, but there has been diversity in the company since I joined. The number of female workers has been about half since then.



6. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. There is a women's network in the Deloitte group but I never joined. Recently, the company implemented a mentor system. I was appointed to one female employee but I only talked to her once.

7. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. No. I was in the faculty of law. My friend in the faculty of engineering said there was no female restroom in the building, so she had to go to a different building.

8. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. There were a few differences, but I didn't hate it. At Mitsubishi Corp., women are hired for clerical positions, and only Kyoto University, Tokyo University, and Tsuda University graduates were hired as sogo-shoku (career-track) positions. Interviews were done in both Kansai and Kanto areas. Since I was a Kyoto University student, I had an interview at Kansai. Male students were interviewed one time but I had to go to Tokyo to do my second interview because female students had to do an interview at Tokyo as well. But I felt lucky that I could travel to Tokyo.

9. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. I guess so. I think there are guys who do housework though. Men in the past didn't do it but not today. Many male coworkers cook.

10. If the price of babysitters and home helpers becomes cheaper, do you think more women will work?

Ans. I think so. During the Covid lockdown we had to work from home, the company provided babysitting subsidies. I think more people would work if there were subsidies because babysitters are pretty expensive.



11. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?

Ans. Watching mothers, raising children is a lot of work. When working online, I can hear kids running and screaming. I can imagine it is hard to work and raise kids. Fathers should do more child-rearing.

12. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. I never felt any obstacles. Rather, people will remember me because I am a minority. Wherever I go, I am the only woman.

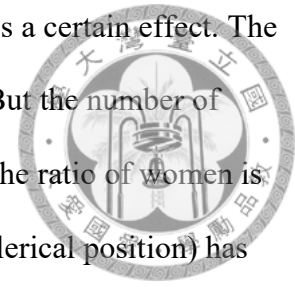
I think there is still a traditional way of thinking that women should do all the housework. Especially men have to change their minds.

13. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.

Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?

Ans. I think it will be effective. Companies will take action because they must show the government they are doing it. Small and medium-sized companies, companies that are not

public, may not be doing so. But large companies implement, so there is a certain effect. The speed is slow because of the cultural background, so it will take time. But the number of working women is definitely increasing. Looking at clients, I feel that the ratio of women is increasing. The hiring of sogo-shoku (career-track) and ippan-shoku (clerical position) has also disappeared.



14. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. I think it will change because rules and systems are improving. The mentality of each one of us is the primary aspect. Men's mentality is challenging, but women must also change their thinking.

#### Interviewee 5

Wakano Ito

Manager

Kowa Taiwan Tsusho Co., Ltd.

7 years of working experience

29 years old

Living in Taipei, Taiwan

Interviewed on May 31, 2022. Time 10:00-10:50

1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. Kowa established in Owari, Aichi Prefecture in 1894. Expanded business in spinning. Became a military factory during World War II. After the war, it started to produce pharmaceuticals. There are two different admission offices. Pharmaceuticals and the trading division. I chose to enter the trading division. I studied abroad in an English-speaking country, so I wanted to use English. I wanted to work for a company where I could go on overseas business trips and be stationed. I searched for trading companies and logistics companies. In my company, female sogo-shoku (career-track) positions started in 2000 so it

was late. There is only one female executive. We are in a transitional period. I am the first female sogo-shoku (career-track) position in the sales department. My boss told me he didn't know how to handle me.



2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. Pharmaceutical sales where I was assigned is well balanced. Typical work hours are 9:00 to 5:30. Usually, everyone was home by 6:30. I hear the textile department is hard work, usually working until 9:00 P.M. Salespeople who visit drugstores work until 10:00. It depends on the department.

3. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. There are no precedent women because the company started to hire sogo-shoku (career-track) positions in 2000. I was allowed to go to an overseas office in an early career, so I was lucky. There are government guidelines, so I can sense the company is trying to promote women.

4. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. It was not me, but there was a woman who became pregnant in the department next to mine. At a sales meeting, before she went on maternity leave, her boss said to her in front of everyone, "You can't go back to sales anymore because you're going to have a baby. You'll work in the back office". I was stunned to hear that. I had only been with the company for a couple of years, and at that time, I felt like there was a glass ceiling.

5. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?



Ans. Training is given equally. We are in a transition period and have changed in the last 5 years. Some are now returning to sales after maternity leave. Transfer and job rotation are the same for men and women. But in the past, I heard they could not send women to India for safety reasons, so we might have been deprived of opportunities because we are women.



6. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. No, I don't.

7. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. No. I studied in public schools from elementary to university, so maybe that is why.

8. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. No, I didn't.

9. Who's influence did you receive from working as you do now?

Ans. There is no specific person. When I was studying in Canada, I made friends with people of various races and wanted to work with people abroad.

10. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. People up to 50 years old are very understanding, but there is a big difference in perception among those over 50. People in their 50s and older say, "Women should be housewives.". Men under 50 take care of their wives and do housework themselves. They do not think that only women should do the housework.

11. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. Even if housework services become less expensive, I don't think the number of people working will increase easily because Japanese people are concerned about what others think. But I would like to use a housekeeping service when I get married.



12. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after having children?

Ans. The company's understanding has not caught up. As I mentioned earlier, there are those who say, "You can't go back to sales even if you return to work." Since they are now at the management level, it will not change as long as they run the company. They think that women will not be able to go on business trips or move to offices away from home after giving birth. They believe women cannot climb the corporate ladder. Even if you try to persuade them, you will not be able to change their mindset because their heads are so entrenched. I think there are a certain number of women who want to go on business trips after giving birth. However, many companies do not allow women to go on business trips, saying it is impossible.

13. Is it easy to take childcare leave?

I have not heard of any male employee who has taken paternity leave in my company.

Women come back after maternity leave. An environment that allows women to return is being created. Recently, the company acquired the Kurumin Mark. Shortened working hours are available for mothers. There is no in-house daycare center.

14. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. The understanding of working women is not catching up. Especially, over 50s are the bottleneck.



15. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.

Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?

Ans. I think it is impossible to raise the rate of female managers to 30%. The company is working to do it, but promoting women to management positions regardless of their ability is not right. This is creating adverse effects. This is not a problem that can be solved by numbers. It is difficult because the percentage of women in the workforce is small to begin with. Reverse discrimination is occurring. I think the rate of paternity leave is increasing more significantly. In the last couple of years, I have heard a lot about it in the news. I think the government's efforts have a certain effect. I hope that when the men who took paternity leave become managers, the company will change to one that is easier to work for.

16. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. There are very few politicians who really want to improve the working environment for women. As was the case with former Prime Minister Mori's gaffe at the Olympics, I don't think it will be possible to implement policies while there are over-80-year-old men in the upper echelons of politics. They are too hard-headed to understand that things are different from the past. We need to lower the age of politicians.

Interviewee 6

Akane Okamoto

Vice General Manager

Noevir Taiwan Inc.

18 years of working experience

39 years old

Living in Taipei, Taiwan

Interviewed on June 2, 2022. Time 13:30-14:10



1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. It has been my dream to work hard since I was a child. I chose Noevir because of the personality-oriented interviews and because I could see women playing an active role in the company. After I entered the company, it lived up to my expectations. I was expected and recognized as I wanted.

2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. Paid holidays are highly respected. Head office 100%, sales 60,70% take paid holidays. I usually finish work around 8:00 P.M. I normally work 11-hour/day. I am satisfied.

3. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. In the past, major positions were held by men, but this has changed with the times. Even young people and women can be placed in important positions. This is a company that provides opportunities. It is up to the individual whether they can continue. It doesn't matter what year or gender you are. This has been the case for the past ten years or so.

4. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. It has improved but it is still there. Clients are older and more experienced than the salesperson in the company. The clients can't trust young girls. It is more common in Taiwan than in Japan. Sometimes I am dragged down by these experienced clients. There is jealousy among women. There is also pressure from seniors.



In order to get over this, you have to show your performance by your ability. It is difficult to look at people objectively, so you are judged by numbers, performance, and actions.

5. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. Yes.

6. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. There is a gathering of general managers and vice general managers of Japanese companies in Taiwan. I receive advice on my work from the senior members of the gathering.

7. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. Yes. There is inequality in the world of traditional arts. I have been playing taiko (Japanese big drum) for a long time. Women cannot be leaders. There are events that only men can participate. But I have never felt discrimination at school because I attended a girl's school.

8. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. No.

9. Who's influence did you receive to work as you do now?

Ans. From my father and older sister. My father was a hard-working salesman. My sister sold cosmetics. I wanted to become independent at an early age. I didn't want to depend on others. I wanted to make a living by myself.



10. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. They don't.

11. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. I think it will increase. But not without a change in values. Some men will say not to rely housework on paid services. Price alone is not enough to make progress.

12. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?

Ans. People think that is how it is. Nowadays, people want to make time for their children.

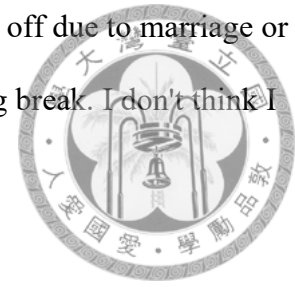
13. Is it easy to take childcare leave?

Ans. I have never heard of men taking childcare leave. There was a time when it was difficult for women to take it. When women took it, some of them were demoted from their positions. Others had no positions available. The company is trying to change and improve. Now there are people who became branch managers even after returning to work. In the past, they were removed from the career track after returning to work.

14. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. Women can only work and live independently on their own in large cities. People who are married and working together also work in the cities. There are no jobs in rural areas for

both men and women. Some people cannot take the choice to take time off due to marriage or childcare. I gave up having children because I didn't want to take a long break. I don't think I need to get married because I will not have children.



15. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.

Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?

Ans. There is the downside of only following the numbers. Policies are being taken just to raise the percentage in terms of calculation. For example, men who used to be branch managers are demoted and young women are made branch managers, but the actual work is being done by men. Reverse discrimination is occurring.

In the construction industry, it is difficult to increase the number of women because physical strength is required.

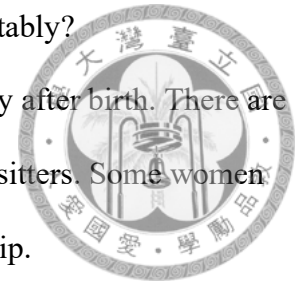
In pharmaceutical companies and dispensing pharmacies, qualified pharmacists don't stay long in one company. They quit when they get married or have children because they can work again anywhere and anytime. Consequently, men work longer and it is inevitable that men take up higher positions.

It is good for the government to set and promote numerical figures, but looking at the current situation, they are only chasing numbers, which is not in line with their original purpose.

What the government says is too extreme. Perhaps it would be better not to have numerical targets because it makes things go wrong.

16. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. Review of the system. There is no nursery school to leave the baby after birth. There are also financial issues to leaving children in the care of nursery and babysitters. Some women choose not to get married or have children because of economic hardship.



The flextime system should be introduced widely. Even though it has been said, it has not been realized. Some people with children arrive late, and women have menstrual periods and hormonal imbalances more than men. We need a way of working that allows adjustment of hours. There is no hourly flexibility. We have to use the paid holidays. But paid holidays should be for taking time off in a planned manner to refresh and get back to work properly.

The flextime system should be easier to use.

#### Interviewee 7

Name: Anonymous

Trading Company

Department Head

29 years of working experience

51 years old

Living in Singapore

Interviewed on June 6, 2022. Time 13:40-14:40

1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. I joined the company in 1993. I joined the Chemicals Group. I chose this company because I wanted people worldwide to know how good Japan is. When I entered the company, there were no women stationed overseas yet. Even for the sogo-shoku (career-track) positions, they did not consider sending women overseas. I thought that if I stayed at this company, I would not be able to convey the good qualities of Japan to people overseas as men do. While thinking about how I could go abroad, I happened to meet a group of female seniors on the street. They returned from an in-house selection process to study abroad at



business schools. They told me that there was an option to go to business school and that I should take it too, so I decided to take it the following year. I was working in corporate restructuring at the time, so I suggested to the selection committee that it would be a good idea to expand the business of investing in companies and revitalizing them. The committee members were interested in the topic, so I was able to go to Columbia University.



When I returned to Japan, I found that the Financial Big Bang was happening in Japan. The company had set up a financial division to start a financial business. I went on an internal secondment there, invested in Lawson, and created a new business. I also did real estate investment and corporate investment. Now, I am in charge of real estate, corporate, and infrastructure investment in the Urban Complex Development Group of the Singapore branch.

2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. There are differences between the head office and the Singapore branch. Compliance is vital, so it is easy to take a vacation. But when you are stationed overseas, you have to deal with visitors from Japan even if you want to take a day off. But generally, I think it is easy to have a good work-life balance.

3. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. Working as a woman is not recommended. The company is like a boys' junior high school crowd. It is difficult for women to join that group. There is no overt discrimination or sexual harassment, but the company is like a boys' school. You can't experience the real fun. Women end up in a support role. Many women tend to be in the back office, not in the front line. Opportunities are not the same. It is different from foreign companies. There is no history of women at the top. Many men cannot imagine a woman in a higher position because

they have not experienced having a female boss. The speed of promotion for women is slow. Especially during maternity leave, it was slow. Women are promoted quickly up to the position of section manager, but after that, the promotion slows down.



4. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. I feel it so much. It's hard to go any further; I've broken through the first glass ceiling and am now hitting the second one. Women think that if they are diligent, bosses will evaluate them correctly, but in reality, this is not the case. Many women are reserved and don't say that they want to be evaluated correctly. I have been trying to be clear about this for the past five years.

5. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. The company is a Boys Club, so you must work harder than other men to have the same experience.

6. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. There is no female mentor in the company because no women are above me. In my private network, some people are about the same level. My mentors are the corporate legal advisor and accountant whom I met while working at a real estate management company. These women were supportive. They taught me many things, took me to many places, and introduced me to people.

7. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. When I was a student, I didn't feel much. Girls at the University of Tokyo were treated as not being girls. When I joined the company and paid for my meal, I was shocked to see the difference in price between girls and boys.



8. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. I wasn't dissatisfied, but the hiring process was completely different. The number of interviews is different. The company will only take from a limited university if you are a girl. I was surprised at the difference.

9. Who's influence did you receive to work as you do now?

Ans. A senior colleague of the university's tennis club. He was a strong tennis player who threw all his strength into tennis, but when he started working, he forgot about tennis and concentrated on work. If this company had something that people get so enthusiastic about, I wanted to work in this company.

10. Do you have a female family member who was working?

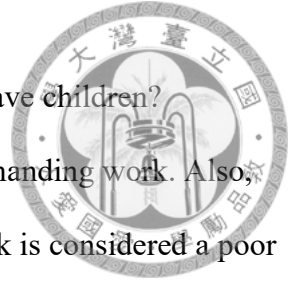
Ans. No female relatives worked.

11. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. They don't. My husband doesn't either.

12. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. I think young men these days are cooperative so they may not use the service. I was satisfied using the support and I think some people would use it.



13. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?

Ans. Primarily because of the burden of housework. It is hectic and demanding work. Also, in Japanese society, a mother who leaves her child at childcare and work is considered a poor mother and is called a "demon mother." Being called like that was the toughest part for me. I got by with the help of my mother and babysitters.

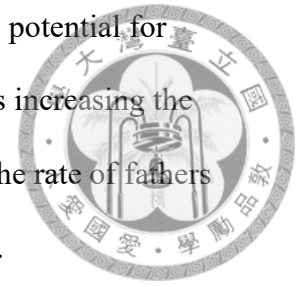
14. Is it easy to take childcare leave?

Ans. Women take maternity leave. Men sometimes take it too. I went back to work six months after giving birth. I went back immediately because I thought I would be penalized if I took longer. It affects promotions. A mom at the same daycare center working for Goldman Sachs started working three days a week, then four, and gradually increased. For me, going back gradually like her is better than taking a complete break.

15. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. I think cultural background is a significant factor. There is an image of women being supportive and men leading. Men's names are called first, and women sit after men sit. Men are always first. It is imprinted from childhood. In Singapore, age and position are important, not gender. Things are changing little by little, but the company has not changed. I think it will change when people in their 50s and older retire because people in their 50s have been brought up with old values. It is difficult because Japan is a monoethnic country. They will compete on the same level if they are of the same race. They have a strong sense of not wanting to lose to women. It is easier to be accepted if you are from a different ethnic group.

16. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.



Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?

Ans. There are no women in that position now. The population is small because many women left during difficult times. Reverse discrimination is occurring now because women who have not been trained for the job are getting higher positions. When things don't go well, people say, "Women can't do it after all." A vicious cycle is taking place. This is a challenging problem to solve, but we have to start somewhere. It is a transition period, so we must take a long view.

Men should take paternity leave because they can learn from experience. But it doesn't solve everything. In Japanese companies, it is not customary to take a leave. If you are a woman, people will understand you take maternity leave, but if you are a man, you are asked why you need to take some time off.

Government encouragement is better than nothing because if they don't do it, it won't change. It is not a versatile solution, so everyone must work hard to change.

17. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. Get rid of the mindset of men first. Start with little things such as the order of names and the order of sitting. Try not to be conscious of men or women. Have more women in the workplace. If it becomes the norm, no one will say anything.

Interviewee 8  
Saaya Maeda

Solution Team Vice President  
Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation Taipei Branch  
7 years of working experience  
29 years old  
Living in Taipei, Taiwan  
Interviewed on June 7, 2022. Time 14:00-15:00



1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. I have been working for seven years at SMBC. Three years in the Taiwan office. I am working on a new business reform connecting Japanese and Taiwanese companies. Mainly planning and sales. I joined SMBC because I wanted to help Japanese companies become more competitive in the global society and contribute to the community by bridging Japan and the rest of the world. I chose a bank because I get bored quickly, and employees transfer places every three or four years. Also, finance is an industry that exists anywhere in the world. I had seen people in the Waseda University Athletic Club who had gone to SMBC, and I thought it would be a good fit for me. I didn't expect that even though SMBC is a large company, many of its operations are manual.

2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. I think it is relatively better than other companies. In an overseas branch, you can take ten consecutive days of vacation (normal 5 days + 5 consecutive days) and a spot vacation (1 day) once every two months. It is easy to tell your boss when you want to take a break.

Working hours are to be reported in writing. Supervisors will point out if you work too much overtime. I think there is a good work-life balance. Financial companies are required to take paid holidays, so everyone takes them.

3. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. It depends on the type of job. I work as a sogo-shoku (career track) position with nationwide relocations. There are situations where it is easy to work and situations where it is difficult to work. I am the first female expatriate in Taipei. There are fifteen expatriates in Taipei, but I am the only female. So, sometimes I have to adjust to men. There are times when the conversation goes on in the smoking area or at drinking parties. I can't get information that was spoken in these places. It is hard for women to be invited to the entertainment table.



4. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. Yes, we all get promoted together until 30, but it changes in our 30's. I have never seen a female manager, so I cannot imagine how I will be promoted. I can't see the path how I will be promoted after I give birth and raise my child in the future. I don't feel a glass ceiling now, but I think I will hit one in the future.

5. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. I think my company is flexible. When I joined the company, I worked in Osaka. I requested to go to Tokyo and overseas, and I was able to make them happen. The company recognizes you if you demonstrate your ability, and it doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman. I think men are disadvantaged when they get married because they are relocated to a smaller regional office. I believe this is because it is difficult to refuse a relocation when you have a family to support.

6. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. That is my worry. I have no women's network in my company. I once participated in a training program for female sogo-shoku employees, but there was no one older than me.

Outside the company, I was able to talk with senior university colleagues, but they quit their job.



7. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. There was very little. I was a rugby manager. When we recruited managers, only female students came. There was a subconscious assumption by everyone that managers were women. It is strange but I did not feel it was unequal.

8. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. I think there is. I wanted to go to Dentsu Inc. The hiring ratio was 30% women and 70% men. I heard that 80% of that 30% are chosen based on connections and looks.

The number of female sogo-shoku employees at SMBC is also small. In the new employee training class, only five women were in a class of forty. From the perspective of continuous employment, it is easier to hire men. It must be convenient for the company.

9. Who's influence did you receive to work as you do now?

Ans. My father. My father is a banker. I have two siblings, and my oldest brother is also a banker.

10. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. I don't think they are doing it even though they can. If the husband was working and the wife was not, I could understand the wife doing the housework, but in Japan, there is a common perception that housework is for women.





11. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. I think it will increase. Mothers want to return to work after childbirth but don't have a place to leave their children. It is difficult to return to work if there is no one to help. If there were places that would take care of children, like Taiwan, I think the number would increase.

12. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?

Ans. Priorities change when you have a child. Working from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. every day after having a child will be physically challenging. I think it will be difficult to continue working unless there is a reliable place to leave children and food is ready when returning home. My friends around me say that the way they work has changed since they had their children. They can't work the same way they did before they had children.

13. Is it easy to take childcare leave?

Ans. There is a paternity leave system. I have heard that some people in my company have taken it, but I have never seen anyone take it. None of my friends have taken it either.

Women are taking maternity leave. They are returning to work, but some quit within a year of returning.

14. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. 1) There is no culture of continuing to work after marriage. There is a term called "kotobuki taisha" (resignation from work due to marriage). People think it is not easy to work after marriage and childbirth. Creating a culture to continue working regardless of marriage and childbirth is an issue.

2) There is also the issue of the childrearing environment. There are no vacancies in daycare centers. There is a shortage of nursery school teachers. It is difficult for parents to work because they have to pick up their children when they are sick. A generous support system is needed.



3) Opportunities to think about career development are needed from a young age. Japan is a country where lifetime employment is the norm. Still, people want to know what kind of market value they will have when leaving the company. What kind of skills does one need in society. Other questions are whether they have the skills to work after a childcare leave, how one can improve their skills during childcare leave, and how they can become an immediate asset when they return to work after childcare leave. I want to be educated immediately after joining the company. I don't know how much knowledge I need. I want to learn what I want to do and what my core strengths are.

15. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.

Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?

Ans. It makes me wonder if companies are seriously working on it. They are forcibly promoting women. They are only looking at numerical figures, and there is no concrete idea of what needs to be done. I think this policy is not going well because it is left to each company. Efforts vary from company to company. It is difficult for small and medium-sized companies. It does not mean there is no effect because large companies are moving, but companies can also ignore the policy. In Taiwan, it is not up to each company to take care of

children after birth, but there is a culture in the whole country, and there is a concept of protecting children in society. Japan does not have this.



16. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. 1) Need a flexible working system. For example, my colleague's wife was working in Japan and wanted to continue working but came to Taiwan reluctantly due to her husband's transfer. It is necessary to create a system of cooperation among companies and introductions so the wife can work in Taiwan.

(2) Improvement of the childcare environment. There is a problem with the availability of daycare centers. It is necessary to provide a place for children. When someone takes childcare leave, the workload is shifted to the remaining employees in the company. When someone leaves, a flexible support system is needed.

(3) Career development for each individual. Prepare career development that allows employees to work after a blank. In-house training is practical only for that company, but universal training that can be used anywhere is needed.

#### Interviewee 9

Name: Anonymous

Electrical Equipment Company

5 years of working experience

29 years old

Living in Yokohama, Japan

Interviewed on June 9, 2022. Time 21:00-21:50

1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. I am engaged in after-sales operations for thermal and geothermal power plants that we have delivered to overseas customers. In addition to my desire to sell products of Japanese

manufacturers overseas, I was attracted to the job of power generation, which supports society. I also liked the friendly atmosphere of the employees I met during the hiring process. Before joining the company, I hoped to go on overseas business trips and station myself overseas. Now I go overseas once every two months for about a week.



2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. It is up to the department to decide if paid leaves can be used. As far as my department is concerned, overtime work increases during busy times, but there is an atmosphere of flexibility to take paid leave and working hours. Average overtime is 20 hours per month. It can exceed 30 hours during busy times, but this happens about once a year. It is satisfactory. On the other hand, when I look at the design department and salespeople who are in charge of construction projects, some of my peers seem to be suffering because they work a lot of overtime, work on holidays, and do service (unpaid) overtime.

3. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. The majority in our company are elderly men, and women are a minority. Although we are usually not conscious of being a minority, there are some people who I feel have a male-dominated mindset.

4. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. I have not experienced this myself at this time, but I feel it when I look at the generation above me. There are no women in the power generation sales department that is a manager and above. There is only one female section manager. There are very few women in their 50s and above. Those women over 50 are in clerical positions. They do simple jobs like making

copies, making tea, sending mail, etc.



5. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. Training is equally available to men and women. Rather, there is training for women only. The training teaches how to write articles necessary for promotion. Up to the executive level, promotion is done by examination. Once you become an executive, your promotion is determined by evaluation from the top.

Employees can request to be transferred to other departments. Accounting and other financial departments are always transferred to avoid collusion. Sales and technical staff are basically not transferred. I think work experience is basically equal, but there is an atmosphere that women are not allowed to go on business trips to dangerous areas.

6. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. There is a sister system. Since there are few women in the company, only female employees regardless of department, are gathered to discuss their problems. You will get to know seniors in other departments. If you ask for advice, you will get it. I can't change the male-dominated mentality of male workers, but I feel better after talking to the members of the sister system.

7. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. There were none. There were times when pretty girls were given preferential treatment.

8. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. I didn't feel it but when I visited a company to practice my hiring interview, I was told they do not hire female salespeople. I didn't have an intention to work there in the first place

so it was ok.



9. Who's influence did you receive to work as you do now?

Ans. There are no individuals. From high school, I wanted to work abroad that would benefit society.

10. Do you have a female family member who was working?

Ans. Since we were a single-mother family, my grandmother did the housework and my mother worked.

11. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. Yes, I think so from Twitter and listening to my friends. I often hear that only woman do the housework even though they are both working. My husband is an exception. We split fifty-fifty.

12. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. I think that families who earn some money and can afford it will use the service, but families with lower incomes will not use them. Some men think it is a waste of money because they have a free housekeeper at home. There are also wealthy people who don't want to work, so they don't use it either. But those who want to work can have more options.

13. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?

Ans. Many people take that for granted. There is no option of working together and raising children. It is normal for one of the couples to be in the home. Long working hours in Japan

were possible because one person was in the home to do the housework.



14. Is it easy to take childcare leave?

Ans. Women are easy to take. Many of them are working hard after returning to work. But I know someone who returned to work, but she was given only simple clerical work. Even though she insisted she wanted to do more, it didn't change, and she ended up changing jobs. For men, it depends on the department whether they can take it or not. There is a system, but some people are asked not to take paternity leave. The number is not zero in the company, but the rate is low.

15. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. I think there is unconscious male chauvinism, and this is an obstacle. Because it is unconscious, it is difficult to change.

16. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.

Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?

Ans. I think it is because the unconscious common sense that has been ingrained for many years does not change immediately. It is difficult to change long-held common sense. I think it would be effective if the government institutionalized it into law with penalties. It is because of penalties, like the legalization of overtime work, that things have changed. The Japanese are a people who follow the rules.



17. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. I think a shift in common sense and the establishment of systems of work methods is necessary.

It will take time to change common sense; I think it will take 30 years. Even male employees in my generation said, "I want my marriage partner to be a full-time housewife." There are women who want to be full-time housewives as well, even those in their 20s, so the situation will not change until this generation retires.

Numerical targets are needed for the work system. Also, long working hours should be eliminated.

#### Interviewee 10

Satomi Higashibata

Specialist

Kioxia Corporation

15 years of working experience

42 years old

Living in Fujieda City, Japan

Interviewed on June 11, 2022. Time 19:30-20:20

1. Could you share a little about your current job, especially why you entered, your goals, motivations, and what expectations you had before entering?

Ans. When I joined the company, I was an engineer developing semiconductor process technology. Now I am doing market research for semiconductors. The reason I joined the company was that I majored in physics and searched widely for a place where I could make use of it. My goal was to get involved overseas through semiconductors because I was interested in overseas markets. Currently, I can communicate with foreign countries, and I was stationed in Belgium for three years. My wish to do market research has been fulfilled, so things are going well.





2. Could you share a bit more on the work-life balance in your company?

Ans. When I was an engineer, I worked a lot of overtime. It depends on the department. My present department is not so busy, so I usually go home on time. It is difficult to take paid holidays if others around you are not taking them. No one uses all of them. Overtime work is common in the company. Some people work 100 hours a month. The average is 40-60 hours per month. They are told to go home on time, but there has been no improvement.

3. What is it like being a woman in your company?

Ans. The semiconductor industry is an industry with few women. It used to be 5%; now it has increased to 20%. Toshiba's semiconductor division split and became Kioxia Co. An electrical manufacturer like Toshiba is concerned about the company's image because the end-users are general consumers. The company actively hires women and appeals that women are active in the company, so it is not difficult for women to work for the company. There are cases of reverse discrimination where women are given preferential treatment.

4. Have you ever felt a glass ceiling?

If you have, what do you think caused this? How did you overcome this?

Ans. You can go up to a certain extent but stop at a certain point. In the mindset of people in their 50s and older, they don't like women to be above them. They have never experienced having female bosses. Therefore, I think it is challenging to become a board member. The only women who hold positions are those who act like men. I don't believe the number of women will increase unless the company can promote all types of women.

5. Does your company offer training and experiences equally regardless of gender?

Ans. Electrical manufacturers are equal as the industry actively utilizes women. There is also training just for women—training on how women get promoted and how to become a manager. There are more female managers than in the past. There are female managers but no executives.



6. Do you have a female mentor or a network of female leaders? How do they help you?

Ans. We have a network of university connections within the company. We give advice.

7. Did you feel gender inequality when you were a student?

Ans. There wasn't much.

8. Did you feel any inequality when you were job searching?

Ans. I did not feel inequality because it was the time when they started trying to utilize women. Few women were studying science, so women in science were preferred over men.

9. Who's influence did you receive to work as you do now?

Ans. My boss influenced me when I was a new employee and a male supervisor who promoted the utilization of women five years ago.

10. Do you have a female family member who was working?

Ans. There is none. I worked because it was the norm for women to work.

11. Do you think Japanese men are not doing many household chores?

Ans. I think it depends on the person. But I don't think they do more than people overseas.

From what I hear from my friends, men in the sciences do, but not men studied in the

humanities. Many men in the same workplace do housework. I think men in the sciences help more with childcare too.



12. Do you think more women will work if the price of house cleaning services and babysitters is lower in Japan?

Ans. I think more women will work when prices are lower. It will help them.

13. Why do you think many Japanese women quit working after they have children?

Ans. The shortage of daycare centers is a significant problem. Children cannot get in even if they apply. Other reasons are if men work overtime, their wives cannot work. If a man's income is high, his wife does not have to work. Some women do not want to work. Very few people around me quit after having children.

14. Is it easy to take childcare leave?

Ans. Women are taking maternity leave and returning to work. Very few men take paternity leave. If they do, it is only for a day or two. According to the company rule, they are supposed to return to their previous positions and workplaces after returning to work.

Promotion will be delayed because there will be a gap after returning to work. Promotion is affected.

15. What obstacles do you think working women have in Japanese society?

Ans. Many women have low self-esteem. I think women's awareness is also an obstacle.

16. In 2014, the Abe administration identified women as having a large potential for economic growth strategies. The government promoted policies such as increasing the

percentage of women in leadership positions to about 30% and lifting the rate of fathers taking paternity leave to 13% by 2020. These are still far from the goal.

Why do you think these goals are hard to reach? Do you believe government actions are practical to change the labor environment?

Ans. In the first place, there is no system in the company. The company is only promoting it, not enforcing it. The only way is to enforce it.

I think the government's efforts are effective. Once it becomes a rule, we have no choice but to follow it. We can catch up on the content later. Otherwise, it will take time.

17. What is a necessary change in Japan for all women to work comfortably?

Ans. Women are a minority in every company. Minorities are at a disadvantage. Many things are decided from the male perspective. Working within the rules determined from the male perspective is inefficient for women and makes it difficult for them to achieve results. It is necessary to increase the ratio of women in the workforce, even if only by force. In addition, women's self-esteem should be raised. I think the working environment for women has been changing dramatically recently, and it is going in the right direction. I believe it will become easier to work. Companies used to hire women to improve the company's image, but now we are entering a phase where we must respect a wide variety of people. I hope that the working environment for women will improve further.

