



## The Barriers to Gender Equality in Japan: From a Historical Perspective

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**Abstract** – Although gender is a well-known concept, its introduction in Japanese educational research began only in the mid-1980s. What is the background? Is this change happening only in Japan or globally? This study examines these issues from a historical perspective, centered on Japan. When comparing international gender gaps, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index stands out in four subsectors- business, education, health and politics. Ranking extremely low on the index, Japan has been notorious in recent years for gender disparities across fields. Japan ranks 120th in 2021 out of 156 countries on the list. In stark contrast to the four subsections, Japan ranks highly in health. However, the most interesting subsector is the education index, as Japan pays little attention to its 92nd position. Japan ranks higher in education than economics and politics, but still below the global average. Japan leads the world in achieving gender equality in literacy and primary school enrollment. For example, its 92nd position in education can be attributed to its secondary and tertiary enrollment rates – 129th and 110th respectively (World Economic Forum, 2021). By looking at statistical data – mainly from government publications on education after the Second World War – Japan's situation is analyzed from a gender perspective.

*Keywords* – Education, Gender Bias, Japan, Inequality

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Japanese Constitution promulgated in 1947 stipulates that equality between men and women and human rights need to be upheld and guaranteed. This record was once developed earlier than the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights. So that would possibly be a step forward. However, Japanese society is very unequal from a gender perspective. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, Japan ranks 111th out of hundred and forty-four nations in 2019 and 114th out of one hundred forty-four nations in 2020.<sup>1</sup> This distinction is evident in the diplomatic and political fields, as nicely as in the job market for management positions. In the diplomatic sphere, solely three percent of ambassadors are

women, in contrast with 10 percent in the House of Representatives. If this is the case, women's voices are now not represented in society, which should lead to serious human rights violations.

The gender hole is one of the most serious and chronic challenges in dealing with the Japanese labor market. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1986 aimed to obtain gender equality in the labor market by offering equal possibilities and cure to guys and ladies in all components and ranges of employment. Since then, it has been amended in quite a few instances to expand its rigor, accompanied by the aid of encouraging women's participation in the Workplace and Career Development Act 2015. This regulation acknowledges the want to tackle work-life stability

itself and they want to tackle the challenges ladies face in the world. profession at work. However, no matter these legislative efforts, there are nevertheless many variations between guys and girls in the Japanese labor market, which include participation rates, working patterns (regular or part-time), wages, the proportion of managerial positions, schooling, and expert occupations.

The Women's Workplace Empowerment and Advancement Act, which got here under pressure in April 2016, support the Abe administration's method to empower women in the workplace. Accordingly, organizations with greater than 301 employees, as well as federal and neighborhood governments, have to boost and submit plans to make bigger the share of females in managerial positions in accordance with the set targets: the goal is to fill 30% of all managerial positions by means of 2020 relationships.<sup>2</sup> This goal suggests that the illustration of girls in senior government roles in each of the personal and public sectors is presently properly under 30%. There are some concrete examples: In 2017, the share of lady civil servants at a country-wide degree used to be 19%, and the share of females in managerial positions was once solely 3%.<sup>3</sup>

## II. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF JAPANESE WOMEN IN JAPANESE SOCIETY

Women in Japan proceed to earn 74% of what guys earn and are a minority in high-paying occupations, making it hard to bridge the gender wage gap. The intention of International Women's Day 2022 is to extend recognition of the accomplishments and troubles that females face throughout the world. Given the cutting-edge scenario, numerous Japanese firms have made figuring out and addressing gender disparities their purpose. In 2020, the common month-to-month wage in Japan for full-time personnel was once 251,800 yen (\$2,190), in contrast to 338,800 yen for men. Japan's Equal Pay Day, which represents how many women will have to work to earn the identical as guys in the subsequent year, additionally indicated a good-sized disparity. In 2018, Japanese ladies had to labor an extra 112 hours.

A range of variables make contributions to this issue. Women are a minority no longer simply in administration roles, however additionally in high-

paying expert jobs such as medical doctors and attorneys. Women make up simply 21% of physicians in Japan, the lowest percentage of any OECD country. However, every year pay for kindergarten teachers, dietitians, and different female-dominated occupations are frequently decrease than the 4.87 million yen country wide common in Japan. Despite the reality that the woman labor pressure participation charge in Japan was once above 70% in 2018, 54% of employed ladies would be in casual occupations through 2021, in contrast to 22% of employed males. In Japan, the gender pay hole is a purple sign on account that it is negatively related to employee productivity. If the restrictions that now avoid many girls from rising in the job are now not eliminated, the united states of america dangers lacking out on future prosperity. Several of the impacted Japanese companies are already dealing with the trouble.<sup>4</sup>

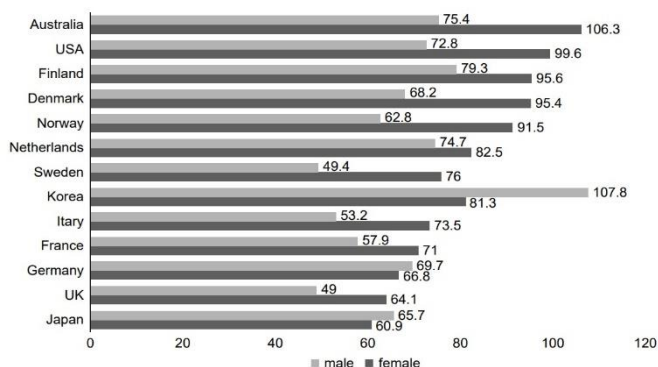
Women held simply 4.4 percent of administration roles in 2017, down from 1.9 percent in 2008. This shows that around 20% of girls who entered the public carrier in 2008 have been predicted to be unit deputy administrators in 2018, however solely about 5% had been.<sup>5,6</sup> If the association has woman executives, the ratio of woman executives to male executives will be uneven. Here are quite a few examples: The share of girl managers in corporations with extra than 5,000 people is 6.2%, whilst the percentage of lady managers in companies with 300 to 999 personnel is in a similar fashion 6.2%.<sup>7</sup> Women had 10 percent of the seats in the decreased residence following the October 2017 generic election, ranking Japan 158th out of 193 nations.

## III. CURRENT HIGHER EDUCATION

Regarding gender variations in college enrollment rates, the variations between European international locations and Japan are proven in Figure 1, which is a shock to the Japanese. They anticipate extra men than women to enter university, so the reverse disparity in countless western nations is surprising. In many Western countries, the share of women in greater schooling is considerably greater than in Japan. For example, in all Nordic nations greater females than men in entire tertiary education, solely guys in Japan, South Korea, and

Germany are greater probable to attend tertiary schooling.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 1: Higher education enrollment roles



Source: OECD Family Database (2022), Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office

Gender issues in the education system have changed dramatically in Japan in 1945. According to previous research, males before World War II and women can study together in preschool and primary school, but in Technical secondary school and above, separate men and women.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

Certainly, after World War I, increased educational opportunities and improved secondary education for women were mentioned. In practice, women's enrollment remained limited, with a few exceptions, until the 1920s, and secondary schooling was only partially remodeled despite the establishment of public and private vocational faculties for women. Until the end of the Second World War, the gender-separated faculty system was maintained at the secondary level, and females had a lower stage of education than men.<sup>12</sup> As a defeated kingdom after the Second World War, Japan initiated gender equality in all systems, including enacting a new democratic constitution. The academic gadget used to be no exception. Post-Second World War reforms have been pushed through the Ministry of Education, the Education Reform Commission, and the Civil Information and Education Section of the occupation forces organized with democratic and liberal standards with the aid of the United States. Democracy in schooling careworn equal cure and equal possibilities for all students, as a consequence promotion of co-education in secondary and greater education. However, a Japanese gadget in which each man and woman should obtain an identical

stage of secondary training used to be created, however, in addition to co-educational schools, separate secondary faculties for men and women remained. Women had been allowed to attend universities, however, new universities for females solely have been additionally established, for that reason mixing co-educational and gender-separated schools. Japanese post-war instructional reform emphasized the want to promote women's education, generally from the standpoint that education was once imperative for ladies to play a vital function in society as better halves and moms.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, universities and junior faculties had been established. In Japan's post-war academic reform, a range of new types of greater training structures has been created due to the fact of the preceding greater schooling system's multiplicity. From the late 1960s to the early 1980s, many Japanese girls have been attending junior colleges, majoring specifically in Home Economics. Simultaneously, many ladies have been disappearing from the job market.

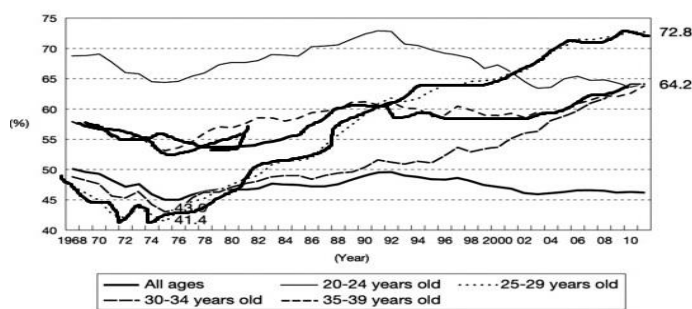


Figure 2: Trend in employment rates of women by age group in Japan

Source: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (2020).

Figure 2 indicates the style in women's employment through age group, with two noteworthy points: First, from the 60s to the 1970s, the Labor pressure participation price declined amongst girls of all ages. Second, participation quotes of girls in their late 20s and early 30s declined, indicating that younger girls extensively disappeared from the labor scene. Many women attended junior colleges and left the labor force at the same time, owing to Japan's postwar economic recovery and changes in social structure. The mid-1950s to the early seventies are acknowledged as Japan's length of excessive monetary growth; the US overcame the war's devastations, and the common annual monetary boom increased. People moved from rural

to urban areas, increasing the scale of the most important cities such as Tokyo and Osaka. As the economic system grew, workers' wages elevated overall. During this period, labor unions demanded that corporations pay a wage that would allow a man to provide for his spouse and children. The best used to be for the husband to earn money and the wife to focus on domestic and family matters in addition to working. Workers' needs for greater wages have been realized as a result. Women's labor-force participation rates, particularly among those who raised children, fell in Japan as the single-male earner machine developed for the duration of postwar financial reconstruction and the high-growth period of the 1970s. In contrast, throughout the 1970s, the female labor force participation rate increased to overtake Japan's, which had previously been higher.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Equality Ranking<sup>14</sup>, Japan's gender gap ranking has been below one hundred for the past eight years. The GGI is described by women's contributions in the following four areas: (1) economic participation and opportunity, (2) curriculum attainment, (3) health and survival, and (4) policy influence. Japan's ranking drops by 10 elements every four years and has since reached number 121 in 2019 thanks to unique drops in fields (1) and (2). In 2011, the Japanese authorities launched an aid program for the promotion of favorable action, with the goal of making 30 scholars participate in the business world by 2020. However, this goal has not yet been achieved, and its main mode is Japan's GGI, which has been further reduced since 2011. According to the Fifteenth Survey of the Association of National Universities of Japan, which covers most geoscience majors in Japan, four percent of universities nationwide graduated 30 percent of the faculty. The frequency ratio increased from barely 13 percent (2011) to 17 percent (2018). The change is quite slow and the alternative payment does not increase over time. In STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), the ratio of women to men in 2018 was 12.3% (agriculture), 9% (natural sciences), and 6% (engineering). The number of female college and University students in the natural sciences has gradually decreased from 28% to 25% over the past decade, while the number of women earning Ph.D.s has increased as a result of some empowerment programs. There have been several discussions

about the slow growth of the proportion of women and the low value of Japanese STEM fields. According to statistical files compiled with the help of the Japan Inter-Society Association for Promoting Men and Women's Equal Participation in Science and Engineering<sup>15</sup>, the central motive appears to be unconscious bias. The modern case of managing gender equality during medical school admissions is an example of unconscious bias. In 2018, at least ten Japanese universities managed the gender ratio of students by artificially reducing the distinctive elements of female academics because they considered women more likely to drop out, although there is no statistical evidence of this.

#### IV. EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND GENDER INEQUALITY

In Japan, all residents have nine years of compulsory education. Children start primary education at the age of six and acquire many skills such as essential academic skills; literacy/research skills, foundations of knowledge; basic math/spelling/reading/writing, social skills; time management, collaboration, and prioritization. Some of this potential is read verbally and visually by teachers, and some is actually acquired through socialization with peers. In relation to gender, young people develop their ideas about gender roles, gender expectations, relationships and justice through university education and the university environment, regardless of the social influences of their teachers, family, and peers.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, to combat current and future issues of gender inequality in Japan, it is imperative that schools teach equality, gender diversity, and gender identity at every stage of education.<sup>17</sup> In reference to this, Japanese education consists of many gender equality initiatives, such as the unnecessary categorization and labeling of university and college students with endemic teaching methods and the use of male-centric teaching materials. Many of these practices were influenced by Japan's postwar norms of equality and sexuality. In addition, post-war education in public colleges was essentially a single-sex education and was based specifically on the ideology that the instruction of girls was to make them "good" mothers and wives. It was once immediately changed to mixed-sex schooling and released with democratization insurance arranged through the US training mission. Furthermore, for many years in Japan's ultra-large schools, home

economics was absolutely compulsory for female students, and physical education such as judo and wrestling was exclusively for male college students.<sup>18</sup> Although many of these gender differences have receded, there are still educational traditions that are no longer gendered and refer to established gender categories. In 2018, a pair of research universities were caught falsifying the results of entrance exams for female applicants. This resulted in a disproportionate 11:30 ratio of male to female students having the opportunity to become doctors at these universities. Such incidents affect the motivation of young students aspiring to work in such fields to understand that these gender binaries and discriminatory practices are institutionalized.<sup>19,20</sup> Other traditions, such as the requirement that college students be in their natural interactions at conventions and any event that moves lecture halls, additionally create an unconscious segregation based entirely on gender. Such unconscious everyday actions emphasize an unnecessary gender binary and force students into a subordinate gender identity.<sup>21</sup> Another situation in Japan's compulsory education is that sexuality and gender education no longer requires teachers to skip civil company exams, so teachers no longer have the traction and are no longer useful to teach a great discipline that can transform students' gender stereotypes.<sup>22</sup> This results in sex education that does not influence students, and educates about gender diversity, leaving University students with their very personal ingrained gender biases and stereotypes. For example, one Japanese textbook used in liberal arts colleges around the world compared 21 women to 565 men. In addition, only 11 of the 21 women attended regularly.<sup>23</sup>

There are certainly more than eleven women who deserve recognition and recognition from the superior generation. However, this is not surprising since many of these textbooks are mainly written by male authors.<sup>24</sup> This allows female university and college students to be completely restricted.

## V. CONCLUSION

A higher proportion of men than women attend university in Japan. However, if junior colleges are included, there is no difference between men and women. However, not as high as in Europe and the United States. The number of women in higher education is high and growing. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that female students at junior

colleges have competitive learning motivations, as noted by researchers investigating female junior colleges in the 1990s.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, girls' junior colleges used to be an active measure to guarantee the advancement of female students. Importantly, the gender gap in Japanese university enrollments disappeared in the 1980s. The proportion of women in higher education in Japan exceeds that of men. Although female students in Japan were more actively studying in the 1980s, especially at universities, their admission to girls' junior colleges did not help narrow Japan's economic and political gender gap, as many junior colleges focused their education on supporting women's roles as women superior. Housekeepers and caregivers. Japanese junior colleges are binary, encouraging women to pursue higher education while keeping them at home.

Since the 1990s, the number of junior colleges in Japan has been declining, and more and more female students are attending college. In addition, the employment rate of women is also increasing now. It will be interesting to see how gender equality develops in Japan in the future. In 2018, however, an important event about gender occurred in Japanese higher education. The Japan Times exposes several university-affiliated hospitals discriminatorily manipulating university admissions test results in favor of men. In the year since the article was published, admissions rates for many female medical students have risen, again showing that discrimination is real. The article stated that medical schools want to avoid a shortage of doctors in affiliated hospitals, arguing that female doctors often quit or take long vacations after marriage or childbirth. Since the 1990s, the number of junior colleges in Japan has been declining, and more and more female students are attending college. In addition, the employment rate of women is also increasing now. It will be interesting to see how gender equality develops in Japan in the future.

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