

A STUDY ON CONSCIOUSNESS TOWARDS WOMEN WORKERS

MISATO YAMAZAKI

I. INTRODUCTION

II. GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

1. Number of Female Employees
2. Wages
3. Occupation
4. Promotion
5. Consciousness and Attitudes Towards Work

III. CONCLUSION

I. INTRODUCTION

More than ten years have passed after 1986, when "The law concerning the promotion of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment and Other Welfare Measures for Women Workers" was carried out. In the meantime, women workers have entered into many fields, and some have got managerial positions. Seeing this, the level of women workers' conditions seems to have had gradual progress.

Nevertheless, there have been less and less opportunities for both sexes to get jobs in Japanese companies after the burst of Japan's bubble economy. Particularly job scarcity could have often been seen in women workers.

Actually the number of women workers has steadily increased for these ten years. Still many differentials between men and women in employment can be seen in many ways. Seeing these facts, what kinds of problems should we consider in order to get the real 'equal opportunity' for women workers in their companies? In this paper, some considerations will be done

reflecting the terms written in 'Equal Opportunity Law', in comparison to men workers.

II. GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

1. Number of Female Employees

According to the report of Women's Bureau of Ministry of Labor in 1996, the number of female employees including part-time workers has steadily increased over the past twenty years. This increasing rate exceeds that of male workers. The ratio of female employees to the total of men and women employees was 32.0% in 1975; 38.8% in 1994.

2. Wages

Referring to this point of wages, the statistical comparison will be of help. The differentials of wages between men and women can simply be seen in the following table 1. The ratio of women labor wages was 62% of men's wages in 1994. This rate had increased only 3.4% from that of 58.6% in 1984. This wage differential between two sexes clearly shows the fact that the women's wages are usually forced to be lesser than men's

Table 1

FIXED WAGE DIFFERENTIALS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN (*1)

(The Ratio of Women Workers' Wages Proportional to Men's Wages)

unit : percent(%)

Year	Percent	Year	Percent
1980	58.9	1988	60.5
81	58.9	89	60.2
82	58.6	90	60.2
83	58.7	91	60.7
84	58.6	92	61.5
85	59.6	93	61.6
86	59.7	94	62.0
87	60.5		

wages. Women often claims that although they have worked for 30 years, they only earn as much as a man in his 20's. As wages have a big influence to the incentives of work, careful consideration should be requested.

Table 2
CHANGE OF TOTAL CASH EARNINGS (*2)

unit : yen

Year	Monthly Fixed Cash Earnings by Month		
	Female	Male	Differential Between Men and Women out of 100%
1960	10,129	23,303	43.5
65	17,760	36,496	48.7
70	34,482	66,710	51.7
75	84,431	149,549	56.5
80	123,880	227,002	54.6
85	148,878	280,517	53.1
90	168,074	327,426	51.3
92	183,130	347,272	52.7

3. Occupation

The differentials between two sexes could also be seen in an occupation map. According to the following table 3, female employees are more often seen in the fields of the lower wages than male employees. Actually, the number of the divisions in which two sexes are placed has gradually increased since 1989. Specifically, women are seen in more than 90% of those divisions such as human resources, education, general affairs, and accounting.

On the contrary, the ratio has reduced in those divisions of production; from 77.0% in 1989 to 73.2% in 1992. Also, there is a low increasing rate of the ratio of female employees in those of sales and management. In these sales and management divisions, additional allowance is often paid

to their members in accordance with their performance or achievement. This suggests that women are apt to be placed in lower wage divisions in comparison to men.

Table 3
THE COMPARISON OF THE RATIO OF DIVISIONS
WITH THE TWO SEXES IN 1989 AND 1992 (*3)

unit : percent(%)

Job Divisions	1989	1992
Personnel, Education, Accting*, Affairs*	67.3	90.5
Planning, Public Relation, etc.	48.3	81.5
Research, Development	37.2	64.9
Data Processing	65.4	84.4
Management	45.0	57.1
Sales, Service	58.8	73.9
Production	77.0	73.2

* Accting means Accounting; Affairs means General Affairs

Although it is not only in Japan that the wage differentials between two sexes can be seen, the differentials in Japan is the biggest in the developed companies from the statistic of the ILO 1995 of the table 4. Prompt action to reduce the differential should be requested.

Consideration should also be done for the part-time workers concerning the lower waged occupations. The ratio of part-time workers among the female employees suggests the serious conditions and environment for female employees. Particularly, the number of the part-time workers who work less than 35 hours a week has dramatically increased in female employees: the percentage of the female part-timers was 8.9% in 1960; 32.5% in 1994. As a result, one out of three female employees works as a part-timer. The average increasing rate of the female part-timers has been 0.7% a year since 1960. This rate is twice as high as that of total female employees.

Regarding the treatment of the part-timer, there seems to be a big

differential in comparison to a full-time worker, especially in wages. This can be said as one of the biggest causes for the wage differentials between the two sexes.

The reason that female part-timers have increased can be concluded that companies could easily adjust their workforce with part-timers in accordance with the economic conditions. Another reason may be that contrary to full time workers, part-time workers can be hired with a restricted term. In addition, there is tendency to believe that men and women look forward to improving, as well as, enjoying their life styles. Thus, working more to receive more money.

Table 4

INTERNATIONAL WAGE DIFFERENTIALS
BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN (*4)
indicator unit:percent(%)

State	Indicator
Australia	89.9
France	80.8
U.S.A.	76.8
Germany	74.2
U K	71.2
Belgium	64.7
Japan	62.0
Korea.	56.7

Japan: monthly fixed wages in 1994

Other States:Averaged wages from ILO 1993

According to the survey of 'Total Actual Status of The Part-Time Workers' done by the Ministry of Labor in 1990, 60% of the part-time workers had a hope to keep their jobs. But there are many differences in occupations between the one they want to do and the one they can find. Some of them who do not want to have a simple job or assistant job tend to change their jobs.

At the same time, the ratio of the highly educated female employees who want to be reemployed after special occasions such as child-birth, etc. has become higher. For this reason, it would be easily assumed that the number of the reemployed female workers who want to work for a specialized job or a technical job would be greater. Careful consideration and gradual amendment in employment systems are necessary.

4. Promotion

There are distinctive differences between the two sexes in promotion. According to the survey 'Basic Statistical Survey of wages' done by the Ministry of Labor in 1994, the ratio of titled female executives in total executives was 3.86% (7,804). On the contrary, the ratio of female employees of all total employees is about 40%. This difference should be carefully noticed. In the USA, the ratio of female executives is 41.6% from the survey of ILO in 1993. Japanese female executives seems to be very few in comparison to international standards.

Furthermore, the job title would be the question. Kakarichos (assistant manager) are 6.4% of all total executives in corporate Japan ; women kachos (manager), 2.6%; women buchos (director), 1.4%. The ratio of female assistant managers of total female executives is more than 60%. But actually, it is generally said that the title of assistant manager could not be seen as an executive. Excluding the number of female assistant managers from that of total female executives, the ratio of female

Table 5

THE RATIO OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES' POSITION
IN 1984 AND 1994 (*5)

unit : percent(%)

Year/Position *	Asst. Mngr.	Manager	Director
1984	67.9	25.0	7.1
1994	64.8	28.4	6.9

* Asst.Mngr.in Position means Assistant Manager.

executives would be only 1.4 % of the total executives. From this calculation, the number of female executives in Japan would be said to be very small. Most women encounter the 'glass ceiling' syndrome. It is possible that talented women workers might change their jobs simply because they have not been treated fairly in their companies.

Japanese wage system is said to be based mainly on the workers' age, years of service, and attributions to their companies while European wage systems are based mainly on job achievement. In Japan, 'Japanese Workers' attributive abilities' has an interesting meaning. It was first intended for men workers who were the fathers or the oldest sons in their families to support their household. Therefore, Japanese wages were based on sums of money for the workers' families, not solely for the individual. On the other hand, female workers were considered to be working in order to help or assist their husbands or father. This traditional way of thinking on women workers has been kept until now. Therefore, there are few female executives who manage personnels.

The differences of the years of service also remains a serious problems between the two of sexes: the average years of service of female workers is shorter than that of male workers. This is one of the biggest causes for a wage differences between two sexes under the system of seniority-based wages. The main reason for this involves the lack of child caring system in companies. Female workers often have to bear heavier burdens than male workers in cases of marriage, child-birth, and child care. There have not been so many child care systems in the companies which leads to the fact that women must quit their jobs during these times. Companies' traditional way of thinking against female workers reflects this fact. It is used as an excuse on why they cannot trust female workers as persons in charge of the important jobs. If there had been enough child-care systems in the companies for women workers to keep on their work, how many women workers would not have quit their jobs? This has been cultivated for long years as basic understanding

against female workers in the companies' overall attitude towards them. This way of thinking is definitely not due to having enough experiences with female workers.

Table 6

CHANGE OF THE YEARS OF SERVICE FROM 1990 TO 1994 (*6)
unit : year

Sex/Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Male	12.5	12.7	12.5	12.6	12.8
Female	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.6

A similar result can be seen in the research of 'Female Executive Survey' (*7) compiled by the Women's Bureau in the Ministry of Labor in May 1990. From this research, the ratio of companies which already have female executives and would like to develop more female executives in their companies was 53.9%. 31.6% of companies without female executives were also willing to develop more female executives. The companies which had female executives had more positive attitudes to develop female executives than those of no female executives. This is a clear example that companies hesitate to dare doing things for women only because they have no experiences.

It can not be overlooked that female employees had missed chances of promotion because they were female. Promotions should be decided according to personnel capabilities or performances with careful understanding of equal opportunity in employment for both sexes.

5. Consciousness and Attitudes towards Work

According to the survey of "Consciousness Against Work" done by the Prime Minister's Office in 1992, young workers (in their 20's) did not value their jobs as strongly as the older workers did. Taking a look at table 7, the distinct differences can be seen in accordance with the workers' ages ; the ratio of the persons who see their work meaningful was the highest with workers over 60. Those persons who found meaning

Table 7

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION OF 'WHAT ARE
YOUR AMBITIONS IN LIFE?' (*8)

unit:percent(%)

ANS. / Age	Absolutely Work	Prefer Work	Something Other Than Work	Undecided	No Ambition	Don't care
20's	8.1	17.1		25.5	5.0	0.1
30's	14.7	21.1	37.0	20.5	5.5	1.1
40's	25.1	21.3	28.4	19.0	5.5	0.7
50's	33.6	23.9	19.0	16.9	5.3	1.4
~64	37.8	26.6	18.1	12.2	4.3	1.1
65+	39.2	28.4	14.4	9.3	7.7	1.0

Table 8

LOYALTY (DEVOTION) TO THE COMPANIES (*9)

(A) Male Workers

unit : percent(%)

How it is. Generation	Will Devote Much	Will Devote Some	Won't Devote Much	Will Devote Little	Don't Know
20'S	12.6	66.1	16.5	1.6	3.1
30'S	19.0	66.8	10.7	2.4	1.0
40'S	22.5	68.8	5.8	0.8	2.1
50'S	36.5	55.0	5.8	0.5	2.1

(B) Female Workers

unit : percent(%)

How it is. Generation	Will Devote Much	Will Devote Some	Won't Devote Much	Will Devote Little	Don't Know
20'S	4.6	76.9	10.2	3.7	4.6
30'S	15.5	67.6	8.5	1.4	7.0
40'S	19.0	72.0	7.0	2.0	0
50'S	32.3	59.7	4.8	3.2	0

in activities outside their jobs was highest in the 30's.

From table 8, the difference of loyalty against their companies are seen not because of the difference of their sexes, but the difference of their age/generation.

Table 9

FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OCCUPATION IN 1984 AND 1994 (*10)

unit : percent(%)

Consciousness / Year	Will Go On Work After Child- Birth	Quit For Child- Birth, Then Reentry	Will Work Until Child- Birth	Will Work Until They'll Marry	Prefer Not To Have Occupation	Don't Know
1984	20.1	45.3	10.6	11.1	6.1	6.9
1994	32.5	39.8	10.8	7.4	4.1	5.3

According to table 9, the female awareness of child-birth have dramatically changed; the ratio of female workers who wanted to keep their working after their child-birth increased to 32.5% in 1994 from that of 20.1% in 1984. This might have come from the diversification of the living styles, change in mindset, and employment system changes after 1986. Still, more than 60% of female workers feel that they have been treated unequally at their companies. (the report by zaidan hojin 21seiki

Table 10

COMPARISON OF CONSCIOUSNESS AGAINST
PROMOTION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN (*11)

(A) The Ratio of Workers Who Do Not Want Promotion unit : percent(%)

Sex/Age	20's	30's	40's	50's
Male	10.2	9.8	10.0	10.6
Female	23.1	25.4	20.0	19.4

(B) The Ratio of Workers Who See Their Promotion Hopeless unit : %

Sex/Age	20's	30's	40's	50's
Male	4.7	2.4	5.8	4.2
Female	8.3	4.2	11.6	9.7

shokugyodan).

In relation to this consciousness status, it is interesting to see the differences of work-consciousness against promotion in table 10.

Reflecting the survey result seen in this paper on promotion, there are less chances for female workers to be promoted in the companies than male workers. The number of female workers who do not want to get a promotion or who think it impossible to get a promotion in spite of their eager challenge, was twice as many as that of male workers in each generation. The main reason for this fact was that female workers have less promotion willingness than male workers. This might come reflect the idea that female promotions are much more serious than male promotions. They could not hope for a their promotion under these conditions. There are many examples of female workers in their companies who have enough talents to be promoted but have no higher positions to move to. The question, careful examination, and appropriate solution to revise this condition, is necessary in order to promote female positive work consciousness and incentives. If this action is not taken, talented women workers might change their work places. This may result in a substantial loss for the companies.

There are still other severe employment conditions for female employees. The Ministry of Labor reported that over fifty percent of the companies actually insist female workers to retire before their retirement age; in spite of the fact, it is prohibited to do so in the Equal Opportunity Law. It would be very difficult for female workers to continue their working after such retirement advice. Instead of dealing with the problem of fighting with the company, most women unwilling retire. This is one of the serious reasons that the female years of service is shorter than men's. It would be strongly hoped for companies and male colleagues to reconsider female workers' conditions and employment systems; and for female workers themselves to challenge to overcome these irrational conditions.

III. Conclusion

Female workers have made their ways into many fields of industries, but they have not received real equal opportunities and fair treatment from men and companies in employment yet. This might partially come from the fact that as history tells us, female workers have been assistants for their male partners. In other words, the employment system itself had been built only for male workers at first. The history of female workers itself is shorter than that of male workers. Therefore, there are still many unequal problems in employment for female workers. For the same reason, there have been scarce data and studies done on female workers. But the Ministry of Labor and the Employment Problems Research Center made some indices indicating the positions of women in four categories; education, culture, employment and work. This will be of great help for women to understand and reconsider their position in these categories such as physical data.

As seen in the chapter of promotion in this paper, there is only one or two female executives in 100 all total executives today. The ratio of female executives is less than 2% of all total executives in Japan. The number indicates the severely unfortunate conditions for female workers. Are female workers inferior to male workers as much as these statistical results show? The answer should be simply 'No' from the point of view that men and women are equal in every field of life. For this reason, many systems including employment should be reconsidered, by not only women, but men and society. This does not mean neglecting femininity. But equal opportunity and treatment in employment should be progressed furthermore without any sexual discrimination. In addition, women should challenge these obstacles as well.

Although it is true that some jobs are better performed by a certain sex, all job opportunities should be given to both sexes equally without any restriction on sexuality. For instance, intelligence and reason would

be necessary for both men and women.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Law has several 'doryoku gimu kitei (recommended obligatory regulations)' and penal regulations, but it has no real legal punishment against discrimination practices. So obviously companies may not take this matter seriously. It sometimes depends on companies' consciousness or awareness for women workers. For example, some companies have tried to obey this law positively; others have not tried or have neglected it. Companies' various attitudes against this law might have made female workers' problems more difficult and complexed.

Of course, it is important for female workers themselves to overcome these difficult conditions without hesitation. They should absolutely have a positive mind-set to work in the companies. But as seen in this paper, there are many burdens and barriers for female workers, so that it would be much more required for the companies and the male colleagues to change their awareness for female workers at first. For this purpose, initially, men must fully understand and realize these unequal conditions to women workers fairly, and should try to remove those barriers. They also have to realize the fact that improving women workers' abilities would be of great help for their companies' advances. In order to achieve idealistic working conditions in the companies, equal treatment would be the most necessary.

Generally speaking, recent consciousness of equality between men and women in everyday life has been world-widely spread. However in companies or in working environment, these ideas have not been achieved yet. Scarce examples of equality between men and women can be seen in working systems or companies. Positive revolution of consciousness for this should be requested in both companies and male colleagues for the sake of female employees.

The level of equality in Japanese men's consciousness for women would be said to be rather low from international statistical data. Taking an

example from table 11, Japanese men help women's housework the least of the three nations. It is a clear example of unconscious non-understanding seen in Japanese men.

Table 11

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF HOURS SPENT ON ASSISTING
IN HOUSEWORK BY MEN (*12)

unit : hour, percent(%)

Kind of Housework	Japan	U S A	U K
	Hours / The ratio of Cooperation	Hours / The ratio of Cooperation	Hours / The ratio of Cooperation
Cooking	0.14 / 2.15	2.41 / 27.71	3.16 / 32.18
Cleaning, Laundry	0.21 / 4.11	3.09 / 37.50	1.38 / 17.95
Miscellaneous	1.38 / 29.17	5.01 / 153.60	5.57 / 175.90
Shopping	0.56 / 23.53	2.13 / 61.29	2.27 / 56.76
Child-Care	0.28 / 12.12	1.24 / 27.27	1.38 / 35.00

* The ratio of occupation : women's hour is 100%

In addition, some relations could be seen both in the awareness against equality, and wage differences between men and women. More wage differences between men and women could be seen in the companies where they are less aware of equality between two sexes than the companies where they are more conscious of it. For this reason, Japanese distinctive awareness of equality between men and women should have been recognized especially by men and the companies. They had better be more positive to remove many barriers for their female colleagues.

The unemployment rate announced by the Prime Minister's Office in DEC. 1996 was 3.4%. Under these severe circumstances, it might be difficult to have an active support for effective coordination of female workers. But from the long-term point of view, more efficient use of female workers should be required in the future. And in order to promote more efficient use of female workers, it would also be necessary to support the women with more helpful working systems such as increasing

nursary facilities and establishment/revision of parental leaves.

Female employees should be advised that it is not the same to work in equal employment conditions and to take advantages only because of being women. On the other, women tolerate physical or mental barriers such as sexual harrasment in the employment environment. It would be a key for the companies to educate their employees about these problems for the future of their company.

In conclusion, there are still many problems for female employees to overcome in order to be given the same working conditions as male workers'. It should be again stressed that companies and male workers' awareness against women workers would be of the greatest help. In order to develop various talented workers in the companies, barriers should not be seen.

In corporate Japan, from long-term vision, shortage of workforce would be broke out. For this reason, companies should reconsider female workers as their expected workforce. This is why concrete and positive policies stood at long-term vision would be necessary.

FOOTNOTE

- 1 The Ministry of Labor. 1994 nendo Chingin Kozo Kihon Tokei Chosa (The Basic Statistical Study on Wage Structure in 1994), Tokyo, 1994.
- 2 Inoue, T. and Ehara, Y. Josei no Deta Bukku Dai 2 han (Women's Data Book, 2nd ed.), Yuhi-Kaku, 1995.
* The data in Table 2 were from the result of survey in the examined companies which have more than thirty employees.
- 3 Inoue, T. and Ehara, Y. Ibid.
- 4 Inoue, T. and Ehara, Y. Ibid.
- 5 The Ministry of Labor. Ibid.
- 6 The Ministry of Labor. Ibid.
- 7 Rodosho Fujinkyoku. (Prime Minister's Office, Women's Bureau). Joshi Kanrishoku Chosa (The Survey on Female Executives), Tokyo, 1990.
- 8 The Prime Minister's Office. Kinro Ishiki ni Kansuru Yoron Chosa (The Public Opinion Poll on Attitude to Work), Tokyo, 1992.
* All of 2,380 respondents are the employees over 20 years old in Japan.
- 9 The Prime Minister's Office. Ibid.
* All of 1,168 respondents are regular employees who have their families in Japan..
- 10 The Prime Minister's Office. Sorifu Yoron Chosa (The Public Opinion Poll in 1995), Tokyo, 1995.
* The numbers shown in Table 9. were extracted from the answers of female respondents.
- 11 The Prime Minister's Office. Ibid.
* All of 1,168 respondents are regular employees who have their families in Japan..
- 12 Nihon Hoso Kyokai. (NHK). Seikatsu Jikan no Kokusai Hikaku (The International Comparison of Time-Spending in Everyday Life), Tokyo, 1995