

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

Mizuho Terada
Saitama University

THE GENDER GAP IN THE JAPANESE HOUSEHOLD

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

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

Even today women take on many burdens at home, compared to men. According to one questionnaire, many women feel they have to take more responsibility as to decision making in family matters, which make them spend a great deal of time completing housework. It inevitably narrows down the number of available opportunities for them in terms of employment opportunities.

I would like to ask this: is this gender gap common in the world? Of course, the answer is no. An investigation shows that Japan is one of the lowest countries as to equal treatment and opportunities to women.

Statistics show that 67% of Japanese women do not want to enhance their career. 43% of women think they could perform better if they were men, and 25% of women do not talk to others about their work or household problems. These concerns prevent women in Japan from promoting their own advancement in society. In order to do away with the gender gap, all people must think about this problem more seriously and take actions to expand women's possibilities in society.

References

Takeuchi, Ikuko. (2020, Nov 5). *40% of women are confident that "if I were a man, I would have a high career. Gender inequality is more prevalent at home than at work," Business Insider*. Retrieved on January 9, 2021, from <https://www.businessinsider.jp/post-223459>.

Hayama, Syo. (2020, Mar 6). Raising Children without Saying "It's a Girl" Gender Equality Starts at Home. *Asahi Newspaper Edu A*. Retrieved on January 9, 2021, from <https://www.asahi.com/edua/article/13183481>.

Osabe, Renge. (2019, Dec 19). Gender education starts with gender equality in the home. *Nikkei Dual*. Retrieved on January 9, 2021, from <https://dual.nikkei.com/atcl/column/19/122300049/122500003/>.