



The Attitudes of Japanese University Students toward Domestic Labor and their Implications for Gender Parity

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Abstract

In the annual Global Gender Gap Report, which tracks gender parity in education, health, politics, and economic participation, Japanese women consistently rank far below those in other Asian countries such as the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand in spite of governmental policies such as former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's "Womonomics" initiative to encourage Japanese women to enter the workplace. Although the number of working women has increased, most are not engaged in career-track jobs; the number of women in executive or managerial positions, as well as high level government jobs, lags far behind that of other industrialized nations. Similarly, compared to their counterparts in other developed countries, Japanese men participate far less in household labor. Research suggests that the less than stellar labor market outcome for Japanese women may be in part because they are choosing part-time or lower-level jobs in order to balance employment with non-work obligations. Japanese working women who are married with children still bear the brunt of childcare, housekeeping, and caring for elderly relatives. Furthermore, they are left with little time for career development activities which might lead to advancement. In this study, we conducted a survey to investigate the attitudes of current Japanese university students toward domestic tasks and determine whether there has been a generational shift in attitude toward who is responsible for domestic work.

Keywords: domestic labor, Japan, gender, housework, survey