

Gender Gap And Work-Life Integration in Japan

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Abstract

The Japanese society is undergoing transition and transformation through modification and improvement of working conditions. According to the Gender Gap Index by World Economic Forum 2024, Japan remains sluggish at 118th place among 146 countries in the world with political and economic challenges. It is the legacy of the nation's employment system of sex division of labor, having mostly males in the mainstream and women on the periphery of the labor market in its high economic development period. However, after the enactment of Equal Employment Opportunity Act in 1985 (enforced in 1986), this situation has been gradually changing, and more women seek employment on an equal basis with their male counterpart. The government has also enacted the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace in 2015 (enforced in 2016) to integrate more women in the mainstream of the business community as part of all the nation's active involvement. As an unprecedentedly aging society, Japan is now facing a serious lack of workforce due to the population decrease and starting to diversify the human resources in the business community. The government has set out on its workstyle reform by improving childcare support policies as a social infrastructure to support working parents, so that it would create a better working environment for existing employees in the labor force. Women who used to opt out of the labor

force for their childrearing responsibilities, are promoted to get into the labor market and this may help resolve the gender gap. The objective of this presentation is to unravel the society's gender gap issues in terms of work environment and women's perceptions, focusing on the present situation as well as some of the social infrastructure, work environment improvement policies and actions that the government and companies are taking. I herein present the current Japanese women's working situations as to women's advancement in the community and how some of the Japanese women perceive them. I examined the background of work-life integration and Japanese women's advancement, to facilitate women's advancement in the business community, work-life integration is critical. With women's consciousness-raising and employment support for better working conditions, some of the unique aspects to promote women's career and work/life are unraveled.

Keywords: women's career, work-life integration, Japanese society, childcare support