

Chapter 9 - Opportunities for Working Life

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(Pg. 160-166)

Health & Social Security

Like the United States there is a social security system but is often under-used by the population.

The reasons?

- Families take care of unemployed and aging members
- When in need of help people often seek people within their *uchi* group rather than government help.
- Even when in hospitals people often bring someone to attend to their personal needs.
- Aversion to putting oneself in hands of strangers (the government)



Population usage of National Security System

The National Security System was introduced in the post war era and it mainly operates as a last resort for many people when they cannot find any help from others.

There is a split in terms of those who use it:

- People often avoid taking welfare payments and would “rather sooner die on the street than take money from the state”
- People who are happy to take advantage of the system

The Boulder has a discussion question!

Why do you think many day labourers in Japan (according to the book) are reluctant to using the Social Security System. How does that compare to the United States for example?



What is the Social Security System

It provides daily payments for unemployed citizens but doesn't cover most immigrants/foreign workers

One other reason the system is underused is because its administered at a local level. Meaning there are a multitude of public and private schemes for social insurance, health coverage, personal pension plans, and etc that many find the system too complicated and avoid it.



Universal System

In 1961 a **National Health Insurance** was put into place for basic **pensions** and **health insurance**.

It was later **revised** in the 1990s to take into the account of a declining average birth rate, aging population, and changing role in the workplace.

A **basic** pension was introduced to offset the decline number of contributors to the system and the age of retirement was pushed from 60 to 65 to keep long term contributors part of the system longer.



Universal System

A new **Gold Plan** for elderly was created which included: home-helpers, home-visit nursing care, and the day-care centers.

Another part of the 1990s reform was to encourage parents to have more children again. The **Angel Plan** was a plan implemented to increase number of nurseries, day-care facilities, after-school clubs, and etc. It was added in 1994 & revised in 1997.

One aspect of the **Angel Plan** was to encourage fathers to take greater part in raising children. This type new type of men is known as a **Ikumen** or “Child Rearing Men”.

Another aim of the program was to help both parents to balance raising children and work.



Discussion Question

Why do you think that the new plans for the Social Security System puts so much focus (recently) into couples/families to have children?

Discussion Question

Do you think that the Japanese government's attempt at having families produce more offspring is not working due to the social & economic pressure of working has on the population?

In essence is the government's attempt at raising the population failing because staying home and having children is not economically viable?

Women's Careers

Due to previous issues with gender inequality in workplace before 1980s, law was passed to incentivise equality.

Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOC) was enacted in 1964 to put pressure on employer discrimination in workplaces.

In large companies men and women are employed but in different regards. Many companies make a 2 track system for employees (where women are seen to funnel into).

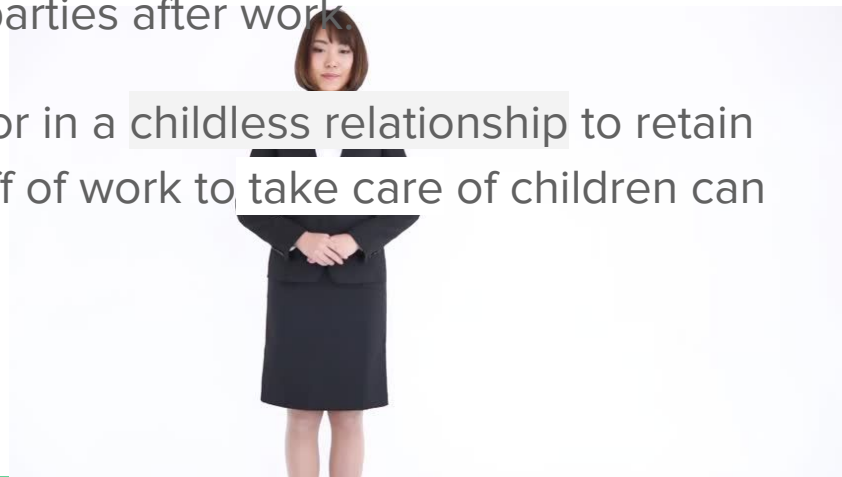
1. Regular Clerical work with little pay, training, and advancement in career but less worry about overall responsibilities
2. Managerial work with high pay and career advancement but more responsibilities.

Women's Careers

This system was created since most companies assumed that most women would eventually marry and therefore be reluctant to choose a managerial track and therefore pick the lower pay / low risk job.

If a woman does however take the managerial track they face equal pressure as men to work longer hours and go to drinking parties after work.

More women nowadays are going single and/or in a childless relationship to retain these high level positions. Since taking time off of work to take care of children can lead to regression in company position.



Women's Careers

In terms of education to workplace transition women (according to the text) fall into these categories:

- 2 years of College Educated Women - Become “office ladies”, and work until they have children.
- Junior / High School Educated Women - work on factory floors or regular low end positions at a company. Even if they have children can return back to work without issue with position.
- Highly Educated Women - Who work high end positions at companies

However all women do not fit into these narrow categories. Some work in retail to bring extra income to the house, some work selling crafts from home, and etc.

Discussion Question

Compared to other countries how does Japan compare/contrast in regards to pressure to work or be stay a home wives? An example is how Iranian women are socially forced into becoming stay at home wives.



Backup Link: <https://youtu.be/zWLSSk8H4sc?t=15>

Women's Role in Society

In terms of women's role in society, it varies. Some become stay at home mothers and others work full time a high paying jobs.

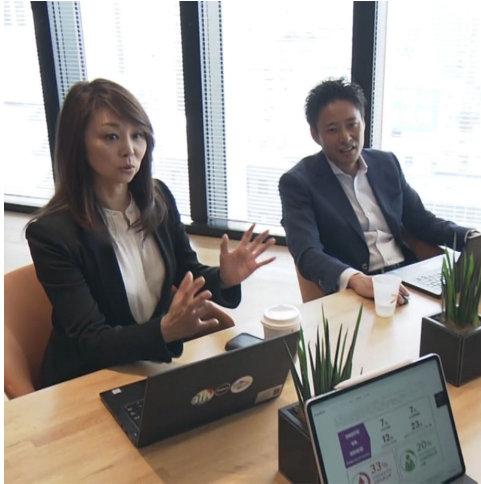
In terms of stay a home mothers they usually make financial decisions for the house and are responsible for: cooking, cleaning, & etc.

Japanese society puts a large amount of pressure on women to marry.

If they become committed however, they usually take a very serious role as a wife/mother. Some women are so serious about motherhood that they treat it as a profession.

Women's Role in Society

Whatever their upbringing, Japanese women tend to think very carefully about what lifestyle they want to have and the best way to achieve it. Some women become housewives, others managers, part-time workers, and etc.



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Backup Discussion 1:

Do you think that the Japanese put too much emphasis on work life? Do you think a moderate work-life balance could exist in modern day Japan?

Backup Discussion 2:

Do you think that in modern day Japan women are gaining more equal rights than they did even a decade ago? Why or why not?