

Abstract

Gender inequality in the workplace is a high-profile issue. Presently, Japanese women face a variety of issues in terms of gender inequality, particularly in the workplace. The concept of work-life balance has been used to understand the linkage between women's participation and advancement in the workplace and Japan's low birth rate. It has been discussed by the government, media, and companies and utilized as a mantra since the early 2000s. Since then, the government has provided and developed the state's system of childcare leave and policies to support parents raising children. The expansion of childcare leave and benefits reveals Japan's concerns about the country's decreasing birthrate and aging population.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was implemented in 1986. Since then, the number of women gaining college degrees and participating in the labor force has increased significantly. Today in Japan, gender-based discrimination is prohibited by labor law and women have equal rights to access education and equal opportunities to work. However, gender inequality persists, such as the gender wage gap, the percentage of men taking childcare leave, and female representation in management positions. This thesis thus aims to clarify the sociopolitical and cultural backgrounds of gender inequality in the workplace and explore how Japanese companies handle these measures with a focus on the promotion of childcare leave for male employees.

Keywords: childcare leave, gender inequality in the workplace, promotion of women's participation and advancement in the workplace, work-life balance