When Asian Women Consider Career Options
-A View from Japan-

Introduction -Japan-

Japan is the third largest country in economy in the world. However, Japan ranks 104th out of 142 countries on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index in 2013.

Introduction -Purpose-

Why Japanese women have a difficulty when they try to consider their career options?

This report aims to examine reasons for the difficulty.

Three Angles -Regulations, Environment & Mentality-

This report examines the reasons from three different angles.

• Regulations in Japan
• Work Environment for females in Japan
• Mentality of females in Japan

Regulations -Act for Equal Opportunity and Treatment in 1985-

Act on Securing Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment was established in 1985.

Female workers legal conditions in Japan was drastically changed after the establishment of the Act.

Regulations -Scenes before 1985-

Female workers were protected by many paternalistic regulations before 1985.

• Females were not allowed to work overtime.
• Females were not allowed to work at night time.
• Females were not allowed to work on holiday.
Regulations –Scenes before 1985–

These regulations substantially removed an opportunity to get a job with future promotion from females.

- Females had to be satisfied with a routine work job.
- Females had no chance of promotion to the management level.
- No female executive existed.

Regulations –Act for Equal Opportunity and Treatment in 1985–

Act on Securing Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment was established in 1985.

It was established for Japan’s ratification of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985.

Regulations –Scenes after 1985–

The paternalistic regulations were abolished by the Act.

- Females can work overtime, at night and on holiday.
- Females have a chance to get a job with future promotion.
- Female executives have gradually appeared.

Regulations –Statistics before and after 1985–

According to a governmental statistic (ratios of employee who does not change its work place), however, the actual effect of the Act was not so strong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Male 1982</th>
<th>Male 1997</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>76.06%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>23.12%</td>
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Regulations –Statistics before and after 1985–

An important incident for the females’ behavior is whether or not she married. Unmarried females’ ratio is not so different from unmarried males’ one.

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Regulations —Statistics before and after 1985—

But married females’ ratio is far different from males’ one. And married females’ ratio was decreased after the Act.

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Work Environment for Females —child-care—

Married females with child(s) tend to quit their job in Japan. The phenomena is partly caused by lack of enough number of child-care facility. A babysitter is not common in the Japanese society. Many mothers have to quit their job because they cannot find a child-care facility around their home.
Due to the Act in 1985 and some additional regulations, employers are legally obliged to give her maternity-leave and child-care-leave. Ironically, many employers hesitate to continue to hire her. The mother is implicitly required to voluntarily resign by herself and struggles under pressure in her work place.

To get married means a possibility to have a baby in the near future. Many employers hesitate to continue to hire her only because she married. The married female is sometimes implicitly required to voluntarily resign by herself and struggles under pressure in her work place.

Under the Japanese tax regulations, income tax will be deducted if his wife is a full-time housewife. The tax regulations are a strong incentive or a pressure for the married woman to quit her job.

At the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2014 in Davos, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe identified Japan's female workforce as the country’s most underused resource and stated his intention for 30% of all senior leadership posts to be occupied by women in 2020.

The governmental attempt to change will be successful? The attempt to change will be welcomed by Japanese females?

Prime Minister’s present attempt was seriously criticized by people who strongly respect a traditional concept of value in Japan:

A female should be a good house keeper.

The concept has been governing for a long time in Japan.

• There has been many women's colleges which was originally established for making them a good house keeper.
• "OL" (an office lady with casual works) has been regarded as a fashionable young woman's style.
• 46.2% of the female readers of a business magazine “Nikkei Woman” answered that they did not want to be an executive.
**Mentality - Free from the Traditional Concept:**

In other words, many Japanese women do not want to widely consider their career options.

The traditional concept of value is an obstacle when Japanese females try to widely consider career options.

It might be the most difficult, however, for Japanese females to be free from the traditional concept.

**Conclusion**

In sum, Japanese females are equally treated from the legal viewpoint. But the actual work environment and the traditional concept in the Japanese society are obstacles for females to widely consider their career options.

Now many business corporations have tried to change their work environment by the recent governmental request.

To be free from the traditional concept. It is a key issue now.