



GENDER DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT POLICIES OF LARGE CORPORATIONS IN JAPAN

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The population of Japan has been shrinking dramatically due to the low birthrate in recent years that leads to the decline in working population of Japan also. To solve this problem, this country has been trying to encourage female residents to join the labor force. However, the problem of gender inequality at work has been visible in this country for centuries, which has prevented Japanese women from working. The major aim of this thesis is to examine the diversity management policies to balance the gender diversity in large Japanese corporations. In order to examine the situation of the whole of Japan, three companies that are not in the same industry were selected to be analyzed, which are Hitachi, Ltd., Shiseido Japan, and Dai-ichi Life Insurance Japan.</p> <p>The data and information that is used in this thesis are completely based on secondary data in Human Resource Management studies that are related to the subject. The information of these companies was gathered through their annual reports, previous theses and researches and interviews conducted by other organizations.</p> <p>The key finding of this thesis is to prove the fact that even though both the Government of Japan and these three companies have been putting a lot of effort in dealing with gender diversity in the workplace, this problem is still a long-term challenge that cannot be easily solved completely in the near future. Nonetheless, in a country that cultures have been dominated by male for centuries like Japan, if they still keep their determination in dealing with gender diversity at work like they have been doing, significant changes will be achieved in the future.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the research

Due to the cultural backgrounds, diversity was not as usually noticed as a fundamental aspect of management until recent years in many Asian countries, such as Japan. In most Western countries, people tend to focus more on the diversity of race and ethnicity. However, in Asia, especially in Japan, organizations tend to put more attention on how to balance the gender diversity.

Japan has always been known as homogeneous and highly respecting the ethnic and cultural background, and also highly male-dominated society, which has mostly been the main reasons that lead to the serious imbalance in the distribution of their workforce. Japanese women have been known for suffering such prejudices and serious stereotypes for centuries. With economic development changing rapidly in recent years and the economic downturn in the late 1990s, the workforce of Japan has suffered from a dramatic change too. The percentage of female workers in the workplace has increased dramatically, coming along with the number of male workers in Japan has declined considerably due to the consequence of low birthrate. To get acquainted with the new situation of the economy, more and more organizations in this country have been trying to restructure their workforce and adopted new policies for their female employees. However, gender diversity in the workplace is still one of the unsolved problems that most Japanese organizations put the most effort in.

Many big organizations in Japan started to make their management practices become stronger by boosting firm competitiveness, which led to a dramatically increased awareness for diversity management. There have been many diversity management policies that have been put out by big Japanese organizations in recent years. Among these diversity management policies, there are several initiatives that have been put into practice with the hope to maintain gender diversity at work, such as empowering women at work and social welfare dedicated for women at work.

In this research, the author analyzes the effectiveness of gender diversity management policies in three big organizations in Japan. As a result, the author aims to find out if these organizations have put out the policies that are compatible and helpful for their countries' current working women or not and explore the differences and similarities between the policies of these organizations.

1.2 Research aim

The research aim is to show the importance of gender diversity at work in the male-dominated cultures like Japan. However, since there are many aspects of gender diversity that are related in the business-related environment, in this paper, the author will only discuss equality for women issues and social welfare for women at work. Besides, the author mainly examines the efficiency of the policies to deal with gender diversity in the workplace in Japanese international organizations as well as to see how different are these organizations compared to each other. Through the whole research, the author discusses the other diversity dimensions, yet still, focuses on the only main dimensions of diversity in this paper that are gender diversity.

1.3 Problems and Hypotheses

There are countless studies conducted on gender diversity in Japan as Japan is now facing the biggest diversity ever in their workforce when their working population is becoming older now but their birthrate is one of the lowest ones in the world, which is the reason why they have to have more women in the workplace. In recent years, many policies for gender diversity management have been put into practice in order to keep up with the pace of diversity expanding in Japan. However, not many studies have argued the effectiveness and pointed out the differences and similarities between these policies.

The main focus question of the research is **“What policies do Hitachi, Ltd.; Shiseido Japan and Dai-ichi Life Insurance Japan have in order to manage gender diversity at work?”**

The study would be useful for the companies that are included in the discussion; however, it can also be a good source for people who want to have more knowledge and un-

derstandings about gender diversity in the workplace in Japan, and how big companies in this country deal with it.

1.4 Description of material

To give the readers a clear picture of what diversity, diversity management, and gender diversity are and how to balance gender diversity in organizations, the author used the information found in different academic course books together with online sources such as e-books, e-journals, articles, and magazines. Basically, all of the theory in this report is based on Human Resource Management course book that is listed in the list of books and journals below. This report includes three parts.

The first part of the study is all about the theory of diversity, conceptualizations of diversity, diversity management, and gender issues in diversity. In this part, the author will divide into three sub-parts, including the concept of diversity, gender diversity dimension, and work-life balance theory implementation as an initiative to balance the gender diversity at work.

The second part is to point out the current situation of women in Japanese workforce, the impact of culture and history in women at workplace and Japanese legislations and national policies to prevent gender inequality at work.

The last part is to analyze the gender diversity management policies of Japanese organizations. In this report, the author chose three companies from Japan, which are Hitachi, Ltd.; Shiseido Japan and Dai-ichi Life Insurance Japan. The organizations involved in this report are not in the same business field since the author hope to examine the situation of Japan in general.

1.5 Description of method

In this report, the author will use the source from the mentioned-above organizations' latest annual reports and some interviews and articles about diversity management conducted by other researchers and magazines to support for the company cases. Because this report is built as an extended-literature-framed thesis, there is no primary data collected. Therefore, no exact research methodology is used in this research.

This research is based completely on secondary data. The data was collected through surfing the Internet websites, academic journals, course books, interviews conducted by magazines and academic organizations and other relevant academic reports in the same or equivalent topic to acquire relevant information for this research.

The main reason why the author builds this research as an extended-literature-framed thesis is due to the language and geographical barriers. Besides, as being a Bachelor degree student, the connection with these large corporations of the author is not strong enough to contact the female workers of these organizations to make surveys about their opinions towards this issue and it is still difficult to get their actual thoughts since Japanese people are quite shy and reserved while being asked about their personal issues.

1.6 Limitation

This research cannot absolutely be able to cover all of the issues of gender diversity in the workplace in Japan. And all the information in this research is based on basically secondary sources, such as journals, internet interviews and course books about Human Resource Management and Diversity Management. Therefore, if fellow researchers want to use this study as a trustworthy source, the author proposes that more convincing studies should be made in order to support the final findings of this study. Furthermore, the final conclusion of this study is made based on the analyzing process of the author with the organizations involved, hence, this study may not be suitable for other companies that are not involved.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The concept of diversity and equality

2.1.1 Diversity and equality definition

Diversity at work has been still uncertainly defined through a lot of studies for many years. Dessler (2011) defines diversity as being diverse in the workplace. In the situation of diversity, there are always two or more groups of employees that are diverse in race, ethnic, age, gender, national origin or culture, etc. in the workforce.

From another point of view, Foot and Hook (2011) give a clearer view about the definition of diversity. In their opinions, diversity is the main dimension to figure out the differences of people, including staff and customers at the workplace. This should cover all aspects of difference, not just only including color, race, religion, gender, age, etc. but also about education background, personal opinions, characteristics, thoughts, and viewpoints.

Neugebauer (2014) defines equality as the perception that every single individual has the rights to have the same opportunities at work. There are three categories of equality as below:

- Equal chance means all individuals are possible to have the same opportunities that are related to their work.
- Equal access is that under any circumstances, everyone shares the same possibility to enter a working area.
- Equal share means that every single individual should share equivalent responsibilities and benefits with the rest of the other members of the groups and the organization.

The limitations of equality can be clearly seen as this concept tends to focus on individuals, however, each individual is completely different from the others. Therefore, forcing everyone into the same equality context may probably become the root for inequality happening in the workplace. As a result, to make it more efficient, line managers decide to balance equality concept with diversity concept. The main idea of this action is

to make use of diversity to find out and adapt differences at work. Through the balancing of equality and diversity, the purpose is still to create the possibility for everyone to have same opportunities through maximizing their differences. (Neugebauer, 2014)

2.1.2 Conceptualizations of diversity in the literature

According to Millmore et al. (2007), diversity is generally conceptualized based on the differences of individuals at the workplace. These differences are usually related to those individuals' identity, e.g. gender, age, race, marital status, sexual orientation, etc. There are two main categories found in this literature, which are the diversity management approach and the equal opportunities approach.

2.1.2.1 The management of diversity approach

a. Diversity management definition

There are several of different definitions of diversity management that have been found in different Human Resource Management course books. In the concept of diversity management, the workforce can comprise a varied population of individuals which have differences that can be found both inside and outside. Through maximizing the advantages and minimizing the drawbacks of these differences, diversity management is expected to create a modern working environment where everyone feels valuable for their jobs and suitable for their positions. (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998)

On the other side, according to Torrington, Hall, Taylor and Atkinson (2011), diversity management approach focuses more on individuals than groups. In this case, not only the minority groups would have that concentration but all individuals tend to have more opportunities. For that reason, diversity management is considered to get everyone attached to and be beneficial to everyone. However, one of the downsides of diversity management is that there will be no specific treatment under any circumstances.

Generally speaking, diversity management at the workplace is the concept that is related directly in every aspect of Human Resource Management, e.g. compensation and benefit, talent retention, welfare management and even managerial-level leadership, etc. (Torrington, Hall, Taylor and Atkinson, 2011)

b. Critiques of diversity management approach

Even though there are a lot of advantages for organizations to embrace diversity management initiatives, there are still a large number of debates around this concept. One of these critiques is the concern about its complexity. As the author mentioned in the previous part, diversity management mainly focuses on individuals. Each of individual difference should be identified and analyzed in order to have the most effective diversity management initiatives (Torrington, Hall, Taylor and Atkinson, 2011). As being too complicated to be applied, many economists think that the literature of diversity management approach is largely based on theory, and not be practical enough for today's market (Redman and Wilkinson, 2013).

According to Beardwell and Claydon (2010), even when the top management people try to put diversity management policies into practice, formal policies is not tight enough to prevent everyone from unequal treatment. There are many different ways that allow managers, even personnel or HR managers, who are expected to be the one to protect the equal rights of everyone else in the organizations, to have inequitable treatments. And even if managers are complying with the procedures, there are still hundreds of unspoken agenda for unfair treatment existing.

Diversity management, due to being complicated, is not an easy task for every organization to deal with. Furthermore, diversity management is a very sensitive topic when it may affect the direct benefits of employees and even the employers. Under any circumstances, to make a perfect diversity management program for own organizations, managers always have to be sensible towards different aspects such as cultures, genders or religions, etc., which is the reason why the matter of managing diversity is still not easy to be done completely. In a different way of speaking, diversity management is usually described as a “double-edged” sword (Syed and Ozbilgin, 2015).

2.1.2.2 Equal opportunities approach

a. Equal opportunities approach definition

According to Torrington, Hall, Taylor and Atkinson (2011), the equal opportunities approach tends to avoid discrimination at the workplace through changing individuals' attitudes by the application of legislations. This approach is considered moral and ethical that mainly popularizes the possible fairness of society. However, this approach fo-

cuses more on the equality of opportunities that one can receive rather than the equality of final outcome. According to this theory, equal opportunities approach will play the role of controlling and eliminating the discriminations at work that are caused by irrelevant principles.

On the other side, Pilbeam and Corbridge (2010) indicate that the major focuses of the equal opportunities approach consist of the minor groups, fixed situations, potential positive attitudes and solutions for discrimination.

b. Critiques of equal opportunities approach

One of the most well-known critiques of equal opportunities approach is that it is regarded as being too simplistic to prevent all of the potential discriminations that can happen at the workplace. (Torrington, Hall, Taylor and Atkinson, 2011)

If ethical policies are applied and well managed in the workplace, equality of outcome would be attained, which means that equal opportunities approach would make everyone in the same working environment have equal rights and benefits. The rhetoric of this approach theory makes individuals belonged to minority groups believe that they are exempt from the unfair treatment at the workplace if equal opportunities approach is applied. However, as being mentioned above, equal opportunities approach focuses more on groups than on individuals, which may make the attempt of applying this approach at the workplace may, nonetheless, lead to inequality since the situations of each individual and their perspectives are various even though they might belong to the same minority groups.

2.1.2.3 Comparison of equal opportunities and managing diversity approaches

Equal opportunities approach is externally directed through legislation and policies. Therefore, equal opportunities approach is characterized as being costly, functional, group-focused and process-focused. The basis of this approach is viewed as being ethical and moral. On the other side, diversity management approach is indeed more internally driven, having a clear strategy and also potential returning plan for the spending costs. The theory of this approach focuses mainly on individuals and outcome of the process in the base of business benefits. (Pilbeam and Corbridge, 2010)

*Table 1. Comparison of equal opportunities approach and managing diversity approach
(Source: Torrington, Hall, Taylor and Atkinson, 2011)*

Aspect	Equal opportunities	Managing diversity
Purpose	Reduce discrimination	Utilise employee potential to maximum advantage
Approach	Operational	Strategic
Case argued	Moral and ethical	Business case - improved profitability
Whose responsibility?	HR/personnel department	All managers
Focuses on	Groups	Individuals
Perspective	Dealing with different needs of different groups	Integrated
Benefits for employees	Opportunities improved for disadvantaged groups, primarily through setting targets	Opportunities improved for all employees
Focus on management activity	Recruitment	Managing
Remedies	Changing systems and practices	Changing the culture
Monitoring success	Changed processes	Business outcomes

2.1.3 Diversity's potential Pros and Cons

2.1.3.1 Diversity downsides

Diversity at work can result in a lot of different downsides. However, the most considerably well-known downsides caused by diversity are stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

Dessler (2011) lists five behavioral barriers as disadvantages caused by diversity at work as below.

- Stereotyping is a generalize belief towards other individuals or groups in an undoubted way based on biased images which that person or group may seem to have (Torrington, Hall, Taylor and Atkinson, 2011). Prejudice is the way of judging other people based on their personal traits (Parekh, Bell and Weintraub, 2012). However, stereotyping and prejudice at the workplace can be quietly harmful, since people usually do not express these traits outside through their words and actions.
- Discrimination is the way people seem to judge other individuals according to specific criteria. When the word 'discrimination' is used in the workplace, peo-

ple usually mean unfair treatment as discrimination (Beardwell and Claydon, 2010). The main difference between discrimination and stereotyping and prejudice is that discrimination is recognized by the behavioral treatments from one person towards other people or groups, which means that discrimination can be seen through others' behaviors and actions.

- Tokenism is also a mistreatment at work. It happens when a small group of women or minorities in an organization, instead of being recognized true potential working capability and right positions for them, are assigned to high-profile positions by the management classes. (Dessler, 2011)
- Ethnocentrism is the mindset that is generally acknowledged by the way individual view other social groups with the standard of one's own group and by that show less favorably fond of the social groups that have been viewed. (Starr et al., 1997)
- Last but not least, Dessler (2011) mentions discrimination against women as one of the major diversity downsides. In his opinions, female workers have been always facing many different types of gender-role stereotypes, which is the thought that women are only suitable for some certain working positions and jobs.

2.1.3.2 *Diversity benefits*

There are many different points of view about what benefits diversity can bring to business. Green et al. (2014) point out in their report differences benefits that diversity can bring to employers. One of the most important benefits that diversity can bring to organizations is productivity growth in the way of respecting individual differences. Furthermore, having diverse workforce can also be a way for organizations to have more marketing opportunities, open to recruitment, creativity and a new way to develop the business image. To sum up, diversity can be considered as a tool to develop flexibility and creativity, the keys to competitiveness in today's market. As the market started to grow day by day, the role of diversity in organizations becomes much more visible.

On the other hand, Bedi et al. (2014) list in their paper three different benefits of workplace diversity for employees in general.

- **High level of productivity:** As the author mentioned above, diversity at work can lead to high level of productivity if diversity can be managed properly by the way of diverse people working together.
- **Exchange of varieties of ideas and teamwork:** The diverse workforce will result in different types of people with different perspectives and experiences working together at work. This results in the team members will be more open to different ideas to have a broader view of the problem. Furthermore, as being diverse in a teamwork can help individuals have more diverse experiences during working together.
- **Learning and growth:** Diversity at work can help individuals to know more about other different cultures or social groups. After experiencing new concepts and perspectives, the findings of this can lead to the acknowledgment and awareness of the individuals about their own positions in the global working environment.

2.1.4 Diversity dimensions

According to Sayers (2012), diversity displays the unique characteristics of each individual through different dimensions such as age, gender, origin, family status or education background, etc. These dimensions are categorized into three classes, which are primary dimensions, secondary dimensions, and tertiary dimensions (See Figure 1).

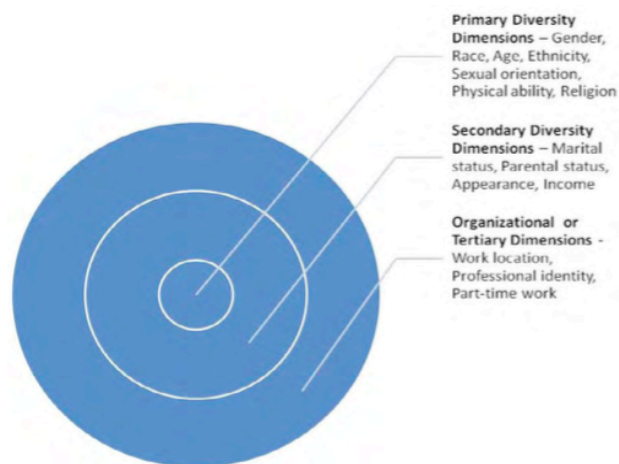


Figure 1. Diversity dimensions' diagram.

(Source: Sayers, 2012)

First of all, primary dimensions contain the most easy-to-see dimensions which include age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, personal characteristics and mental or physical capacity, etc. In these primary dimensions, gender diversity in the workplace is always the top-priority-to-focus one for every organization. (Ali, 2015)

Secondary dimensions are the ones that are less easily noticeable than primary dimensions. Secondary dimensions might consist of: education background; first language; family status; work experience; financial status; communication style, etc. All of these dimensions can easily become the roots of discrimination in society. In this class, two of the most relevant concepts that are often discussed are appearance and attractiveness discrimination. People are usually attracted by and have good impressions on good-looking people. In a different way of speaking, ‘attractive’ people seem to be attached with positive characteristics at first glance which make them become more favorable than their peers. (Sayers, 2012)

Tertiary dimensions (or also known as organizational dimensions) of diversity are usually attached to the organization. These dimensions can be work location, professional positions, colleagues, etc. These dimensions of diversity can happen in every organization, whether it is hierarchical or horizontal. Managing tertiary dimensions of diversity is the major necessity to develop employee satisfaction at the workplace.

In this report, the author will mainly discuss the most relevant dimension with the topic that is the gender diversity dimension.

2.2 Gender diversity at work

2.2.1 Gender equality concept in the workplace

Gender diversity at work is one of the main dimensions of diversity that every line managers consider to be the most top-priority one to find a solution to deal with. In reality, every line manager tries to find the best initiatives for dealing with gender diversity in the workplace that balance both managing diversity approach and equal opportunities approach. One of the most outstanding issues included in gender diversity in the workplace that every line manager has to deal with is gender equality.

According to Ali (2015), gender equality at work is the concept that all employees, regardless of genders, would have equivalent responsibilities and share the equal opportunities at work and therefore, they will have equal compensations and benefits if working in the same positions with the same working ability. In the case of gender diversity workplace, women and men are not meant to be the same in every aspect. The nature of this theory is to make sure that the benefits, rights, responsibilities and potential to have opportunities at work of women and men will base on their working ability, not their gender. In gender equality concept, all features, such as characteristics, needs, and preferences of both genders are measured carefully to perceive the differences and then categorize these differences into diverse groups. Gender equality is considered as a basic human right issue as well as the foundation for people-centered business strategies.

There are many reasons that can lead to inequality at work. One of the most basic ones is gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are identified as groups of traits that are typically thought of representatives for gender categories (Hays-Thomas, 2017). Women are generally considered weak, emotional and indecisive whereas men are often seen as being strong, decisive and good at management.

2.2.2 Women in today's society

2.2.2.1 Women's emancipation and development

In the past, women were expected to fulfill their roles as taking care of the family, including all the house chores, cooking, laundry, etc. and also looking after and educating children. They were identified as the ones who were always at home waiting for their husbands coming back from work and never getting involved in any other things except for their household stuff. However, societies have been changing dramatically. Nowadays, women have made a big revolution to change their traditional roles in society. Globally, the world workforce has undergone a dramatic restructuring change, which results in more and more women actively involving in the world economy. (April, Dreyer and Blass, 2007)

Based on the statistics of the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2006), 40 percent out of 2.9 billion workers of the world are women, which means that women are now contributing to a considerably large part of working population of the world and the

roles of women at workplace becomes much more important than ever (Kiaye and Singh, 2013). Many organizations have also tried to put many new initiatives to encourage women to work, e.g. the flexible working time and place concept or the family-oriented management programs. In addition, the number of women that have college degrees or training experiences also increases significantly. As getting more chances and supports to work, the number of female workers in labor force have much expanded, even in some male-dominated cultures. In today's world, women have more power in their public identity. They are given the equal opportunities to create a balancing society by voicing their thoughts and expressing their opinions.

Nevertheless, regardless of a lot of policies and initiatives to ensure the equal rights for both genders, there are still a lot of old stereotypes towards women, especially in Asia such as gender-role stereotypes, unequal payment and the "glass ceiling" concept.

2.2.2.2 Women and the "glass ceiling" concept

Nowadays, women have already escaped from the perception that they always have to be at home and not involve in anything except for household things. However, in most developed countries, women still rarely make their appearances in the top management positions of big corporations even though it is proved that most of the purchasing processes are made by women. (Singh, 2007)

The "glass ceiling" concept was introduced since the 1980s, known as an unseen ceiling that prevents women from getting through to reach the top management positions. There are still few female workers that are not affected by this "glass ceiling" and have the ability to reach the top management positions. However, the amount of this group is still the minority. In recent years, it is proved that the glass ceiling is about to move into a higher level in management than before due to the fact that women have managed to get through to around one-third of middle management positions in many big organizations around the world. (Betchoo, 2015)

According to Singh (2007), the reasons that women are blocked to access leadership positions are various. They can be either women's own problems, e.g. their personal issues or their own working abilities or the problems coming from the organizations. However, many of them are mainly the traditional stereotypes towards women when

they are believed to be not decisive and eligible enough for leadership positions.

2.2.2.3 Barriers for women as leaders

Even when women are getting through the glass ceiling to access to managerial positions, there are also hundreds of barriers that can affect women as leaders. According to Lau Chin (2007), the majority of women at managerial positions often have to deal with a complicated set of issues that comprise of different points of view and expectations that make them not comfortable with their roles and then lead to a limitation in their leading tactics.

It is proved that women in managerial positions often suffer from the general stereotypical views of being ineligible at leading other people, which will lead to the insecure feeling of women that they are not taken in a serious and formal way, therefore, they will not share equal opportunities with their male peers in the same fields of work. These opportunities can include either network, especially in male-dominance cultures, or the chances to get access to materials that are helpful for their work. (Mascia, 2015)

Last but not least, most of the women are seen as making barriers for themselves as being leaders since they tend to worry about much more different things than men. In this case, women may themselves build a wall in front of their chances for eliminating the gender inequality in the workplace.

2.2.3 Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is identified as how much different are women's equivalent earnings hourly compared to the earnings that men can make hourly with all aspects that are the same. (Kirton and Greene, 2016)

According to statistics of OECD (2017), worldwide gender pay gap in 2013 is around 15 percent (see Appendix 1). The gender pay gap has been narrowing down rapidly in recent years since more and more women are currently playing such important roles in today's innovative business world. However, the gender pay gap in different countries can be greatly different from others, especially in highly male-dominated cultures, e.g. South Korea and Japan.

Gender pay gap is under influence by many different factors. These factors can be various, for example, gender-role stereotypes or the probabilities of being attached to the work of women and men. In addition, other potential factors are as below (Australian Government, 2017):

- There are male-dominated industries and female-dominated industries. However, historically, the female-dominated industries are usually the ones with lower wages, e.g. registered nursing or librarians.
- There is still a large shortage of women in managerial positions, in together with the fact that the concept of flexible senior positions has not been into wide practice yet. Due to lack of support for balancing work and life, women often choose to work part-time which will make it difficult for further development at work.
- Women often feel uncertain for their jobs mostly due to the prejudices they have to hold about the dual responsibilities of work and family.
- Gender pay gap is also affected by the diversity in education background, working experience, and other personal aspects.

There are three situations in which men and women are considered to have the same pay as below (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010):

- Life work, the work that is considerably the same.
- Work that is identified as equivalent that will give the same results in which there is no bias in the working process.
- Work that is valuable in the same scale even though the basic nature of them are not the same.

2.3 Work-life balance concept implementation as a potential strategy for supporting female workers

In most of the studies about gender inequality at work, women's disadvantages are mainly due to their dual role. This is also the main reason why women often choose to focus on low-paid and part-time employment despite the fact that some of them are wasting their working abilities for these works (Dickens, 1998). Furthermore, in most Asian countries, the percentage of women, who drop out from their working positions after marriage or having children, is still very large. To overcome these issues, top man-

agement people are coming up work-life balance concept, one of the initiatives of diversity management, to help women balancing their work and family (Doherty, 2004).

Work-life balance is a considerably large concept. The origin of this concept is related to the multiple roles that women hold in society (Syed, 2015). Work-life balance was originally created to solve the work-family conflict. It is defined in a simple way as the concept in which individuals are supported to gain equal satisfaction by fulfilling their roles for both work and family. (Shobitha and Sudarsan, 2014)

Since there are many different aspects of work-life balance concept, in this report, the author only discusses the two main aspects related to gender diversity management, which are flexible working concept and childcare and nursing care support concept.

2.3.1 Flexible working concept

There are many reasons that lead to barriers to women's progression. One of the major ones can be considered as the problem of long working hours.

The flexible working concept has been launched into working environment in recent years in order to solve those problems of women. In the flexible working concept, employees are granted the chances to work in anytime and from anywhere. The flexible working practices have been becoming much more important as potential specs for attracting workers. Many different flexible working practices are offered to create a flexible working environment that would probably produce benefits for both employers and employees. The most common benefits that can get from the flexible working practices are better employee self-satisfaction through the ability to schedule their work according to their preference and personal contexts and that lead to higher productivity. (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014)

As being offered the rights to choose to work in a flexible way, male workers consider these practices as one of the most important aspects that make them stay with their current work, whereas to women, flexible working practices play a very important role in their working life since they make women find a better way to balance their dual-role at work and family. Women are considered to take flexible working practices more important than men since they are often attached with motherhood and the responsibilities for household more than their male partners.

2.3.2 Supporting systems on childcare

As engaged in the duties of motherhood, women often have a lot of worries about their children, i.e. pregnancy and small children care that may become a great barrier for their work. As a result of it, the maternity protection concept has come into practice around the world as childcare supporting ways. The maternity protection is defined as “the fundamental human rights” that every single person all over the world should have. This concept is also the most important factor that contributes to the foundation of work-life balance concept at work. (ILO, 2014)

ILO (2014) analysts name some key aspects of maternity protection in their Convention No. 183 and Convention No. 156. These aspects consist of different policies that guarantee the rights for workers such as maternity leave; paternity leave; leave in case of childbirth-related illness or complications; health protection at work for child-bearing women before they take maternity leave; protection and policies for breastfeeding women; etc. In this report, the author will only discuss the maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave concepts. (ILO, 2014)

Maternity leave is the time that women are granted by their working organizations to be away from working positions before and after their childbirth. Paid maternity leave is one of the most fundamental key issues that women prioritize first when they consider having children. This concept is also crucial at work in order to make sure that the safety of female workers and their children are guaranteed. In most countries, the maternity leave is always considered as one of the most important things for female employees when they choose to work at each organization (ILO, 2014). The minimum duration of maternity leave is 14 weeks for member countries in ILO (Convention No. 183, Article 4(1), ILO Report, 2014). Good maternity leave policies will also lead to the decrease in the turnover rate of women after childbirth due to the fact that too short maternity leave duration can result in women may not feel ready to return to work.

Paternity leave is the benefit for men to take a short leave immediately while childbirth (ILO, 2014). The main purpose of this policy is to encourage fathers to take some days off to help the mothers recover after childbirth. The concept of maternity leave is quite new and according to ILO (2014), there are still no specific standards existing in regards to this concept yet. And due to the fact that men are still framed to be the breadwinners

of the families, many of them are still holding the thoughts that paternity leave is unnecessary for them.

Parental leave, on the other hand, is a duration that is granted for all employees to take long-term leave to take care of infants or young children. This duration is usually right after the maternity or paternity leave period. (ILO, 2014) There are also no specific policies that are directed to this concept. However, parental leave is also a fundamental policy that most organizations around the world grant to their employees in their diversity management strategies. There are always far more women using this parental leave than men.

Even though maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave are the policies that are applied everywhere in the world, the exact amount of time off and the ratio of salary that employee can get when they take these leaves is various in each country (See Appendix 2).

3 WORKING WOMEN IN JAPAN

3.1 The current situation of female workers in Japan

According to McCurry – The Guardian (2016), Japan is currently in urgent needs for more workers as the percentage of over-65s become beyond expectation and the birth rate is always in the top lowest of the world (Figure 2). The number of workers in Japan is foreseen to drop 7.9 million, or 12.9 percent, by 2030 (The Japan Times, 2015).

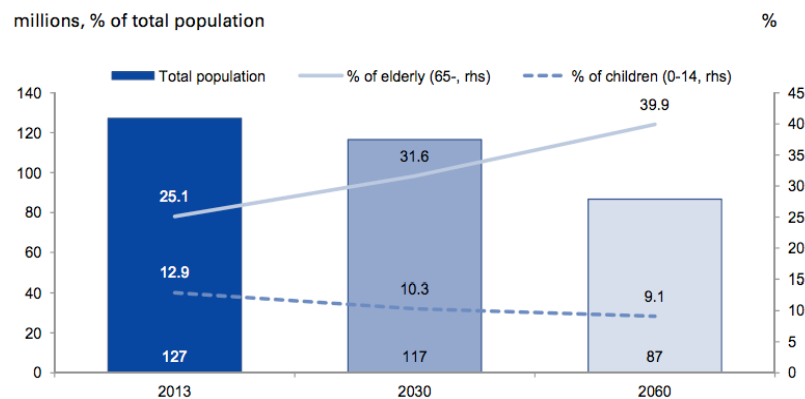


Figure 2. The Outlook of the percentage of Elderly and Children in Japan by 2060
(Source: Goldman Sachs, 2014).

To solve this problem, Shinzo Abe, the current Prime Minister of Japan, wants to encourage more female residents to join the workforce. In his opinion, balancing the ratio of men and women in the labor force is very important. Many different researches from Goldman Sachs have proved that if the ratio of women in the workforce increases and also reducing the unreasonable differences between male and female workers in employment would result in the positive rising of Japan’s economics. (Price, 2010)

Thanks to the enactment of Equal Opportunity Law (EOL) 1986 and Abe’s “womenomics” in 2013, the number of female workers in Japanese workforce have been increasing steadily. According to Matsui (2016), this number increases from 15.48 million in 1985 to 24.36 million in 2014. The percentage of women in Japanese current workforce is 43 percent, increasing from 36 percent three decades ago. However, there are around 66 percent of women in working ages from 15 to 64 participating in the workforce, which is much lower than that percentage of men in the same group, i.e. 81.5

percent. Even though this ratio is much lower than some other developed countries, it still surpasses that of the U.S. in recent years (see Figure 3).

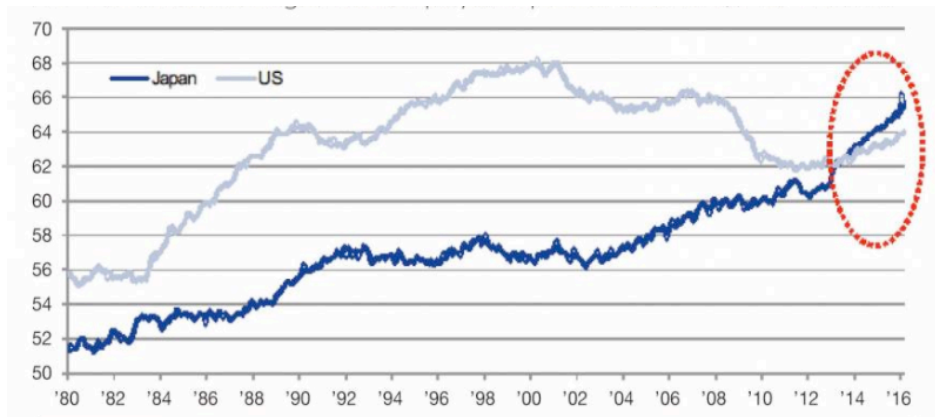


Figure 3. Japanese female labor participation surpasses that in the US (percentage of women between ages 15-64 employed in part/full-time work)

(Source: Matsui, 2016)

Japanese women are offered a higher level of education than most of other countries around the world. At all levels of education in Japan, women have been achieving much development and now getting closer to those of men. However, the improvement in women's education level does not come to the result that they will have more power or priorities when coming to employment (Cooke, 2013). In fact, women in Japan are still facing a lot of prejudices and gender stereotypes after they leave university and enter the business world. In an aide in July 2003 to Junichiro Koizumi¹, Mariko Brando² said that "Japan is still a developing country in terms of gender diversity" (Koshal et al., 2004).

Due to many different cultural and historical reasons, women tend to be restricted when working. According to Lam (1990), 70 percent of Japanese women decide to quit their work temporarily in long-term duration after their first child, much higher than 30 percent in America. Out of those 70 percent, quite a large amount of them choose to leave work permanently. In most Japanese companies, there are still many employers that of-

¹ Junichiro Koizumi was the 56th Prime Minister of Japan from 2001 to 2006 (The Economist, 2006).

² Mariko Brando is the president of Showa Women's University in Tokyo as well as the director of the Japan National Committee of United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (Kawaguchi, 2010).

ten try to put much pressure on pregnant women that they have to choose either to quit or to be demoted which lead to “maternity harassment” becoming so popular in this country (The Japan Times, 2016).

There are many reasons why women leave their work in the middle. The most common one is that women tend to face the “glass ceiling” for their whole working durations. According to The Japan Times (2016), the percentage of women in managerial positions in Japan is merely 9 percent, a very low rate compared to 40 percent of the employees in Japan are women.

According to a research about why Japanese women which high education backgrounds quit their jobs, most of them stated that they confront dissatisfactions with their jobs due to the feeling of being stuck with “dead-end” roles (The Economist, 2014). It is very difficult for married women to balance their dual roles at work and at home when they start to have their first child in such male-centric society like Japan, which put women in tough decisions for either continuing work or quitting work to take care of their families. Compared to other developed countries, the percentage of female workers in birth-giving ages in Japan drop much more dramatically (see Figure 4).

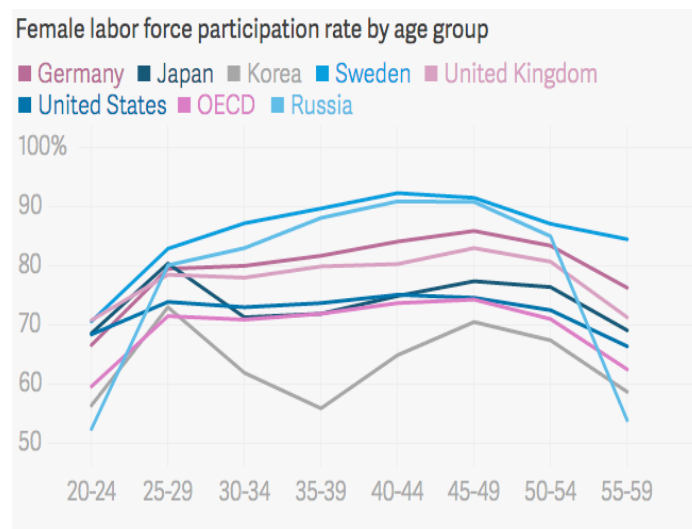


Figure 4. Female workforce participation rate by age in 2015.

Another important reason why Japanese women are easily about to leave their job is due to the large gender pay gap in Japan. According to Nohara – Bloomberg (2015), the gender pay gap in Japan is considerably high, i.e. around 30 percent (Figure 5). In the Global Gender Gap Report 2016 published by the World Economic Forum, Japan ranks

111, right after Nepal, which is considered very low compared to other developed countries. (World Economic Forum, 2016)



Figure 5. Gender pay gap of Japan.

(Source: Bloomberg Markets, 2015).

Nowadays, many Japanese companies still hold the prejudice that women tend to get married and leave the working positions after they give birth that makes them choose to put women into part-time or temporary contracts (Richko, 2016). This results in the percentage of women working in irregular positions taking part in 53 percent of employed women (The Japan Times, 2016).

3.2 Impacts of cultures and history on female workers

As in most people's acknowledgment, Japan has always been recognized since long time ago as a hierarchical society. Additionally, as the same as most East Asian countries, Japanese perceptions and perspectives have been long affected by Confucianism that men are always favored in all aspects of life over women (Luther and Smith, 2014). Until today, in many Japanese people's point of view, the traditional roles of women are to take care of the family, while men are acknowledged to be the one that should be the breadwinners of the family (Luther and Smith, 2014). Besides, in today contemporary world, even women have been allowed to enter the labor force, many still hold the assumption that women have to quit their work to take care of their family after they get married.

The main reasons of why Japanese women have to hold such prejudices lie in the historical contexts of Japanese society. Since the Edo era of 1600 – 1867, the law about wom-

en that is called “do not get closer, not to let them know” was enacted by Ieyasu Tokugawa³. In the practices of this law, women were prohibited in joining any types of activities outside their home (Koshal et al., 2004). In this period of time, women were preferred to keep decent distance with academic and even cultural fields. Furthermore, a new policy called “National Enrichment and Security” was enacted in the later period, which is the Meiji era from 1868 – 1915. This policy basically had the nature related to militarism and was the root of the concept of “male-centered society” (Koshal et al., 2004). At the same time in this Meiji era, in 1899, the Meiji Civil Code pointed out that women had no legal rights and were considered as the belongings of the male heads of the households, i.e. either the fathers or the husbands (Reese, 2004).

The opinions towards women started to change after World War II. As the war expanded, American culture started to intrude into Japanese society that gave women in Japan new perceptions about their legal rights (Koshal et al., 2004). Japanese women were first granted the rights to have legal positions in the clause Rights and Duties of the people in 1947 Constitution (Japan Prime Minister and his Cabinet, 1947). However, it is not until the 1980s that women were about to acknowledge the importance of higher education for their social statuses. (Koshal et al., 2004)

In recent years, the “male-dominant society” concept in Japan is slowly weakening due to the changes in the perception of gender roles. There are many new concepts appearing that support these changes strongly such as dual-earner couples. As the levels of education in this country also increase, modern Japanese parents also educate their children to respect the other gender and the way to build their own families by having responsibilities with their households including taking care of their children even they are men. (Yonetani, 2004)

³ Ieyasu Tokugawa was acknowledged as the founder and the first ruler of Edo era from 1600 to 1868 in Japan. Tokugawa received the power in 1600 and remained the impact of his power even after he left office in 1605 until he died in 1616 (Sansom, 1961).

3.3 Legislations and national policies of Japan about gender diversity

3.3.1 The Labor Standards Act 1947

The Labor Standards Act of Japan was first enacted on April 1947 (Japanese Government). The prohibitions about gender diversity and benefits for female workers were first introduced in Japan through this act (See Appendix 3).

That was the first time that Japan ever had applied legal acts about the equality and benefits for female workers. According to this Labor Standards Act 1947, women are given the rights to have equal wage with men. However, the biggest limitation of this Labor Act is that even though women were granted the rights to have equal wage if they work in the same field with all the same aspects as men, their opportunities to get the jobs and during working were not guaranteed to be the same as men. (Sugiura, 1992)

3.3.2 The Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL)

The Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) of Japan was officially put into practice in April 1986 after going through in 1985 (Sugiura, 1992; Edwards, 1994). The EEOL was passed by the National Diet of Japan, the bicameral legislature of Japan, after seven years of strongly against debates and arguments (Sugiura, 1992). According to Assmann (2014), after the enactment of this law, it has become the basic framework for private organizations when they want to apply gender diversity initiatives in their own organizations.

In her paper of the EEOL in 1988 and 1994, Edwards states that there are two types of provisions in EEOL 1986 to secure the equality at work, which are prohibitions and recommendations. While prohibitions focus directly on protecting the equality of employed women, their human rights in the workplace and their benefits they should have compared to their male peers, recommendations give out some points that are to guarantee the rights of women on recruitment and employment (Edwards, 1988; 1994). In the same papers, Edwards (1988, 1994) quotes the prohibitions of EEOL 1986 directly from the report of Akamatsu (1986) but in a different order as below:

- Employers shall not discriminate between workers on grounds of sex in matters relating to the vocational training prescribed by Labor Ministry Ordinance to afford basic vocational ability for job performance.
- Employers shall not discriminate between the sexes as regards mandatory retirement age or dismissal of workers.
- Employers shall not invoke marriage, pregnancy, or childbirth as grounds for the retirement of women workers.
- Employers shall not dismiss women workers on the grounds that they have married, become pregnant, given birth, or taken maternity leave.
- Employers shall not discriminate between the sexes as regards to loans to workers of funds for building or purchasing a house, or other fringe benefits prescribed by the Labor Ministry Ordinance.

In addition, recommendations of EEOL 1986 also are quoted in the same papers of Edwards (1988, 1994) as below:

- Employers should endeavor to give equal opportunities to men and women when recruiting and hiring workers.
- Employers should endeavor to treat women workers on an equal footing with male workers when assigning posts or promoting workers.

The EEOL 1986 has gone through a lot of revisions since its enactment in 1986. However, according to Weathers (2005), the EEOL 1986 had two major revisions which were in 1997 and in 2006-2007. The revision in 1997 mainly focused on discrimination that can happen in any stages of employment, e.g. recruitment, working positions, and the chance of being promoted at work. The next major revision of the EEOL was in 2006-2007. In this revision, employers were encouraged to have been more serious and find more solutions in regards to sexual harassment. (Weathers, 2005)

According to Assmann (2014), the EEOL 1986 has mostly been considered as a guideline for companies in order to implement gender diversity in their workplace rather than a policy that has legal influence. In the provisions of the law, employers are only encouraged to eliminate discrimination and bad prejudices towards working women. However, there are no such penalties that were enforced in this law towards employers if they would not obey, which becomes the biggest limitations of this law.

3.3.3 The Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society

The Basic Act of Gender-Equal Society was enacted in June 1999 (Assmann, 2014; Gelb, 2011). The purpose of enacting this law is to build the perceptions of people towards the importance of gender diversity (Assmann, 2014) and then lead to “the formation of a gender-equal society” (Gelb, 2011). In this law, the working ability and

individuality at work are encouraged to develop regardless of gender. In this law, “discriminatory treatment” towards women are prohibited in all forms of action at work. In addition, treatments that secure gender diversity in the workplace such as positive action are encouraged in order to create a harmony and productive working environment (Gelb, 2011).

In the Gender diversity Bureau Cabinet Office of Japan (the Government of Japan), gender-equal society is defined as below:

a "gender-equal society" is a "society in which both men and women, as equal members, have the opportunity to participate in all kinds of social activities at will, equally enjoy political, economical and cultural benefits, and share responsibilities." In such a society, the human rights of men and women are equally respected. Women who desire an active role in society may participate in activities of their own choosing, while men could enjoy a fulfilling home and community life. A gender-equal society is a society built by men and women as equal partners.

One of the most important issues that are mentioned in the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society is the positive action. Positive action can be easily understood as the measures that push the needs of getting more female workers in the workforce. In the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society, positive action is defined in Article 2, Item 2 as below (Cabinet Office - Government of Japan, 2011):

positive provision of the opportunities stipulated in the preceding item (opportunities that both women and men will participate voluntarily in activities in all fields as equal partners in the society) to either women or men within the necessary limits in order to redress gender disparities in terms of such opportunities.

3.3.4 The Third Basic Plan

The Third Basic Plan for Gender diversity (shortly known as the “Third Basic Plan”) was through by the Cabinet Office in December 2010 (Cabinet Office – Government of Japan, 2010). This law is considered as an action plan for Japan to “form a gender-equal society”, also known as an upgraded version of the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society. Different from the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society, the topic that the Third Basic Plan wants to discuss is the reason why women rarely appear in leadership positions or other decision-making-required roles. (Assmann, 2014)

Apart from some issues that have already been mentioned in previous legislations such as equal opportunities for both genders in employment and eliminating discriminatory treatments towards women at workplace, there are new issues that were introduced at

the first time ever in this law that are “revitalizing the economy and society through women’s active participation”, “gender diversity for men and children”, “responses to people facing a variety of difficulties”, “elimination of all forms of violence against women” and “promotion of gender diversity in the local communities”. (Cabinet Office - Government of Japan, The White Paper of the Third Basic Plan, 2010)

3.3.5 National maternity and childcare support of Japan

According to JMC, female workers in Japan are granted a minimum paid maternity leave period of 14 weeks for childbirth, which include 6 weeks before and 8 weeks after the childbirth. Employees have the rights to return to work earlier in case she has the approval of medical doctors. During the maternity leave, the salary of the employees will be covered by social insurance up to 2/3 of the base salary.

Employees in Japan are also given childcare support through childcare leave. Childcare leave is available for both female and male employees. Childcare leave will start from the first day after the maternity or paternity leave ends until the first birthdate of the child. (JMC, 2017)

3.3.6 Abe’s “womenomics”

After the election in 2012, the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, unveil a new economic policy, widely known as Abenomics, in order to eliminate the stagnation in Japan’s economy while keeping the steady speed of the economic flow in early 2013 (The Government of Japan). This “Abenomics” strategy mainly focuses on the three “policy arrows”, which target on “expansionary monetary policies, fiscal stimulus, and structural reforms” (The Government of Japan – “Abenomics”, 2017). Among these three “policy arrows”, Abe announced that on the “third arrow”, structure reforms, most of the policies will generally focus on “womenomics” (Chanlett-Avery & Nelson, 2014).

“Womenomics” is defined as a theory that supports the ideas of empowering female workers at work as well as proving the fact that giving women equal opportunities and equal participation in the economy will make the economy beneficial and also support the development of society (Macnaughtan, 2015a). The phase “womenomics” and its importance for Japan society were first introduced in public through a paper about in-

creasing the proportion of female workers in the workforce as a part of the solution for Japan's economic crisis by Kathy Matsui⁴ in 1999 (Macnaughtan, 2015a; Matsui, 2016). Through the establish of Abenomics policy in 2013, Government of Japan started to promote "womenomics" as a national policy instead of a theoretical phase (Macnaughtan, 2015a).

One of the most important expected outcomes that Abe want to have through the enactment of "womenomics" policies is to create "a society in which all women shine"⁵. According to The Government of Japan, a number of policies have been put into practice in order to keep women in the workforce. The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of this "womenomics" plan as below:

- Targeting more women to join the leadership positions. At World Economic Forum 2014 Annual Meeting in Davos, the Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan targets to have women occupying 30 percent of managerial positions by 2020.
- Increasing the proportion of female workers in working population. The percentage of female labor participation rate between the ages of 25-44 is expected to reach 73 percent in 2020. (Goldman Sachs, 2014)
- Increasing the child care benefits and encouraging women to use them. According to The Government of Japan, the child care capacity is expected to reach approximately 500,000 children in FY2017 and the benefits for child care leave are also expect to increase 50 to 67 percent for the first six months of leave⁶. (The Government of Japan, 2017)

There are a lot of barriers that this agenda has to overcome in order to bring efficient effects to Japan's economy. For example, many companies in Japan are still operating one size fits all' hierarchical, linear career model (Macnaughtan, 2015b), which will

⁴ Kathy Matsui is one of the main analysts for the topic "Womenomics" of Goldman Sachs. Source: Goldman Sachs Biography. Accessed on 13th March 2017.

⁵ This is included in one of the speeches of the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Sixty Eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations held on September 26th 2013. Source: Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet – Speeches and Statements by the Prime Minister.

⁶ This law already went into effect in April 2014. Source: The Government of Japan – Unleashing the Power of Women.

make it extremely difficult to accommodate the ideas of having women in leadership positions.

4 COMPANY CASES

4.1 Hitachi, Ltd.

4.1.1 Overview of the company

Hitachi, Ltd. is a multinational highly-diversified leading company in Japan founded in 1910 and established on February 1st, 1920. The headquarters are placed in Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan. The number of employees in FY2015⁷ in Japan is 37,353. The net sales of the company are 1,859,605 million yen (Hitachi main page) or \$106.6 billion. Hitachi ranks #178 in the world's biggest public companies (Forbes Global 2000).

Hitachi is mostly known as a technical-based company. However, the business segments that Hitachi operates are quite various, which include “Information and Telecommunication Systems; Power Systems; Social Infrastructure: Transportation; Social Infrastructure: Industrial Systems; Electronic Systems and Equipment; Electronic Systems and Equipment: Healthcare; Construction Machinery; High Functional Materials and Components; Automotive Systems; Digital Media and Consumer Products and Financial Services”. (Hitachi main page – Hitachi Products and Services, 2017)

4.1.2 Female employees at Hitachi

According to the performance data of Hitachi, until FY2015, the number of new female employees each year in Hitachi accounts for 22.8 percent of all new recruits (Hitachi

⁷ Fiscal year (FY) is a period including twelve total months over which the financial statements, including the accounts and taxes, of a company are calculated (Source: Investopedia, 2017). In the case of Japan, fiscal year is from the beginning of April till the end of March, the fiscal year will follow the year in which the period begins (The World Factbook – Japan, 2017). For examples, fiscal year 2015 (FY2015) is the period from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

main page, 2017). Although out of around 500 new recruits with engineering backgrounds each year, there is only around 10 percent that are women (17.8 percent in FY2015), the amount of new female recruits for non-engineering positions are half (45.5 percent in FY2015) of the overall new recruits for those positions, which are around 100 positions. The proportion of female workers in Hitachi is increasing with stable pace and now already accounts for 16.5 percent (5,817 in FY2015) of the total workers of the company. (Tamiya – Japan Spotlight, 2016)

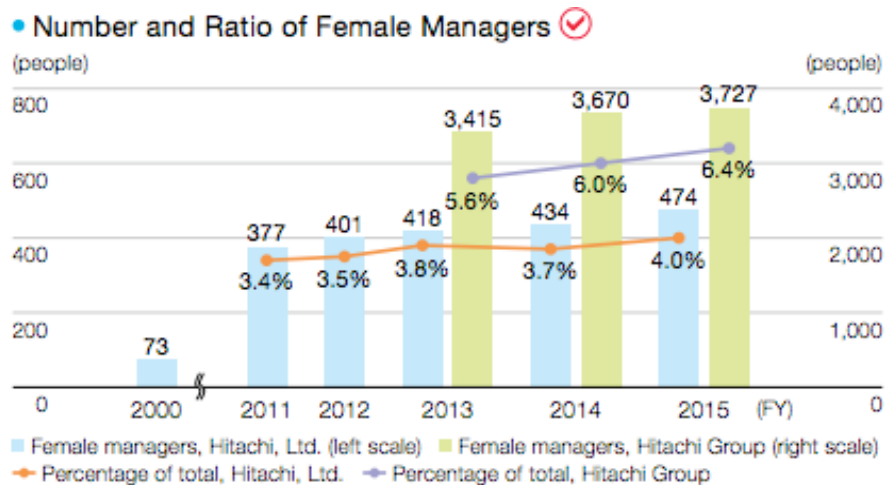


Figure 6. Number and Ratio of Female Managers in Hitachi.

(Source: Hitachi main page, 2017)

In 2015, there are 474 female managers, which account for 4.0 percent in the total of managers, in Hitachi, Ltd. (data in FY2015). That is already a huge growth compared to 73 in 2000. However, the percentage of female managers in Hitachi is still very small. And from 2011 to 2015, the percentage of female managers in Hitachi is not growing so much, from 3.4 percent in 2011 to 4.0 percent in 2015 (Figure 6). (Hitachi Sustainability Report 2016, Hitachi main page, 2017)

According to Hitachi, they already set two key performance indicators in order to ensure the probability that women play an important role in decision-making process and their opportunities to take part in managerial positions in their company, which were widely published in FY2013 (Frost and Kalman, 2016: 169; Hitachi Sustainability Report 2016 – Hitachi main page, 2017) as below:

- Have more female executives by the end of FY2015 also raise the awareness of female employees about the opportunities of being appointed to the top

management positions in the company. This goal has already been achieved in 2015 (Tamiya – Japan Spotlight, 2016).

- Increase the number of women in managerial positions in Hitachi, Ltd. Japan to 1,000 by the end of FY2020, which is 2.5 times more than that number at the end of FY2012.

4.1.3 The diversity management programs of Hitachi to empower women's careers.

According to the “Survey on Female Workers’ Workplace Opportunity” conducted by Nikkei Women and Nikkei Womenomics Project in 2015, Hitachi ranked 1st in Category 3: Active Use of Women’s Ability for having a specific and serious goal of using women’s working ability. As to accomplish this goal, Hitachi spent much effort in giving the chances for young female employees to participate in different career seminars designed by the company as well as developing the diversity of programs for long terms that also include the importance of having female managers in the company’s network. (Nikkei BP, 2015)

One of the most widely-known programs that are operated by Hitachi dedicated to women is “Women of Hitachi”. “Women of Hitachi” is the most basic program that is operated to help women in all aspects and levels of work. The main purpose of this program is to support female workers at Hitachi to develop their skills and working abilities, the way to seek opportunities, how to set higher professional goals, etc. This program is open to everyone that is working at any company belonged to Hitachi Group around the world. (Hitachi main page, 2017)

Apart from existing programs for developing women’s careers, Hitachi also make use of the Hitachi Group Women’s Career Success Survey to have a specific view and current situation of each business unit and then set realistic and useful targets for each unit in order to make their management commitment stronger. Additionally, by offering female workers many programs such as the Hitachi Group Women Leaders’ Meeting, Hitachi wants to make potential female employees realize their individuals working goals and ambitions in order to target at higher levels of work and top management positions of the company. The biggest intention of Hitachi is to build a working environment in

which the maximum number of women can show their full potential at work. (Hitachi Sustainability Report 2016 – Hitachi main page, 2017)

In the “Declaration on action by a group of male leaders who will create a society in which women shine” announced in June 2014, Hiroaki Nakanishi, Chairman and CEO of Hitachi, Ltd. states that “It is essential to get things done or decided by a team with diversity, executives should make every effort to create a suitable work environment.”

The diversity management strategy of Hitachi has gone through three phases from the 1990s until now (See Appendix 4). As being first introduced in the 1990s, the diversity management programs of Hitachi already focused on supporting women’s career advancement and work-life balance through the enactment of the Gender-Free and Family-Friendly Plan. According to Naohiko Tamiya⁸ (interview with Japan Spotlight in 2016), since the 1990s, the issues of helping women return to work after marriage and childbirth have become one of the most outstanding issues of diversity management strategy of Hitachi.

The concept of “supporting women’s career advancement” has been carried on through phase 1 to phase 2 of diversity management programs of Hitachi and also always remain to be one of the most important issues that diversity management programs of this company have to put in priority. The phase 3 of diversity management roadmap of Hitachi started from 2012 with the slogan “Diversity for the Next 100”. In this phase, the concept of supporting the balance between work and nursing care was introduced and the concept of “supporting women’s career advancement” was upgraded into “strengthening women’s career development” (See Appendix 4). Through the enactment of “Diversity for the Next 100” program, Hitachi’s major aim is to make their working environment become a place where women and other employees of this company can maximize their working abilities in order to bring the biggest benefits to the company.

⁸ Naohiko Tamiya is the General Manager of Human Capital Division in Japan, Human Capital Group/ Senior Manager of Diversity and Inclusion Development Center of Hitachi, Ltd.

4.1.4 Work-life management support systems of Hitachi

As in Hitachi, the work-life balance support systems have always been the most important issues in order to empower women's careers. In the "Survey on Female Workers' Workplace Opportunity" conducted by Nikkei Women and Nikkei Womenomics Project in 2015, Hitachi ranked 8th in Category 2: Work-life balance.

In Hitachi, childcare support systems were built carefully in order to create a better working environment for women so that they will definitely return to work after childbirth. Women will be granted one year in total for fertility treatment leave. In the pregnancy period, women can still be paid for days off from working in order to have prenatal medical appointments or leave for illness related to pregnancy, etc. The maternity leave period in Hitachi will last for 16 weeks, which include 8 weeks before and 8 weeks after childbirth. In addition, all employees have the possibility to have childcare leave or parental leave. The period of child care leave can be up to 3 years, or until the child starts to go to school, i.e. when the child finishes first grade of primary school. Hitachi also offers their female workers to have the probability to take this childcare leave on nonconsecutive days. (Hitachi main page, 2017)

To make it easier for employees to return to work after the fertility leave, Hitachi offers some support systems as below:

- Employees with infants or young children may have the rights to work for shorter hours, usually 6, 6.5 or 7 hours per day. Employees can also take half-day leave for unlimited of times in case of problems related to childcare.
- In order to make it easier for employees with infants or young children, Hitachi's intention is to create the most flexible working environment in which their employees do not need to care about working location and working time. Hitachi has been working on setting up satellite offices, simplified application and operation process system for employees to have possibilities to work at home. In addition, they also release various mobile tools that enable employees to work more flexibly. ("Declaration on Action by A Group of Male Leaders Who Will Create a Society in which Women Shine", 2015)

- All employees of Hitachi have the rights to take family nursing care, which is up to 5 days per year and child nursing leave, which is 5 days per child per year.
- Last but not least, Hitachi offers their staff the chance to take leave for overseas spouse transfers, which may be up to 3 years or less.

In FY2015, in Hitachi, Ltd., there are 524 female staff and 307 male staff taking childcare leave or spouse childcare leave and 668 females and 3 males using shorter working hours for childcare. (Performance data of Hitachi, Hitachi main page, 2017)

As being asked in the interview with the Japan Spotlight in 2016, Naohiko Tamiya said that “I believe the number of our female employees leaving the company when they have children has significantly declined.” However, he also states that “Another issue that we have in mind for the interest of our female colleagues is how to keep them motivated to work hard to get higher positions in the company or encourage them to fully utilize their potential and gain promotion to managerial levels even after having kids. But I worry that many of them may be satisfied with their current status and with shorter working hours in taking care of their kids and be reluctant to pursue their career path.”

4.2 Shiseido Japan

4.2.1 Overview of the corporation

Shiseido Japan was founded as Shiseido Co, Ltd. in 1872. It is a Japanese multinational personal care, including skincare, cosmetics, haircare and fragrance (Shiseido main page, 2017). The headquarter of Shiseido is situated in Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan. The total assets are around 946.0 billion yen or \$6.7 billion. And the number of employees are about 46,000 for the whole group worldwide. The number of employees of the group in Japan is 23,272 in FY2015 (Shiseido main page, 2017). Shiseido is the 10th largest beauty brand in the world (Goudreau - Forbes, 2012) and ranks #1570 in the world's biggest public companies (Forbes Global 2000).

Shiseido was established as the first private western style pharmacy in Japan. Shiseido's philosophy was to combine Western modernity with the traditional classic of Asia. This philosophy of Shiseido has been carried on until today. (Michaud, 2007-2008)

4.2.2 Female employees at Shiseido

In the “Survey on Female Workers’ Workplace Opportunity” conducted by Nikkei Women and Nikkei Womenomics Project in 2015, Shiseido tops in overall rankings of “100 Best Companies Where Women Play Active Part” for the second consecutive year (Nikkei BP, 2015). Shiseido is considered to be the best companies for female staff to develop their careers in Japan.

According to Personnel Related Data of Shiseido in FY2015, out of 23,272 employees of Shiseido Japan, there are 19,324 female employees, which account for 83.0 percent of the overall employees of the group (Shiseido main page, 2017). This number is extremely high compared to the fact that the percentage of women in labor force of Japan is only around 43 percent. The biggest reason of this lies in the fact that Shiseido is a cosmetics firm and its approximately 90 percent of customers are women.



Figure 7. The Ratio of female managers in Shiseido.

(Source: Shiseido, 2017)

In FY2015, the number of female leaders in Shiseido Japan is 324, which account for 27.0 percent out of 1,198 leaders in the group (Figure 7). Compared to the fact that only 9% of the senior positions of the whole Japan are women, Shiseido is doing extravagantly well in promoting women to managerial positions. However, the ratio of female leaders in Shiseido is still low considering the fact that the number of female staff in their group is more than four times larger than that of male staff.

Shiseido has already set a specific goal of having 30 percent of managerial positions of the group are women as soon as possible (Shiseido main page, 2017). According to Nikkei, the giant cosmetics firm has already achieved that goal in January 2017. To

keep up with the good start, Shiseido claims that they set the new target of having 40 percent of managerial positions are women in 2020 (Nikkei, 2017). To accomplish this target, according to the group, they are now under promoting “individual personnel development”, which focuses on finding female employees that are eligible for managerial positions through the process of “steady achievement of results and learning the basics of management”. Female employees are encouraged to face a higher level of work responsibilities and broaden professional area. (Shiseido main page, 2017)

In April 2008, Shiseido Co. appointed Ms. Kimie Iwata as executive Vice President (Japan Times – Kyodo News, 2008). This was the first time that a woman was promoted to a top-management position in Shiseido. And she also became a rare female executive in Japan at that time. After the current president of Shiseido, Masahiko Uotani, joined Shiseido in 2013, he already increased the number of women on the company’s board to 3 out of 18 in his second year of being the president (Wetherille, 2017).

4.2.3 The diversity management policies to promote gender-free environment of Shiseido

The enactment of the EEOL 1986 became the first drive for the giant cosmetics firm to reform their management strategies. At a very early stage, the top-management class of Shiseido already saw the pros of promoting gender equality in their firm through diversity management initiatives. Gender-free working environment has always been promoted in Shiseido since 1990 with the major aim of “enhancing corporate trust of employees, who are major stakeholders in the company”

The process of creating a gender-free working environment in Shiseido’s management strategies has gone through three phases until 2008 (Michaud, 2007-2008). The beginning of this process started after the enactment of the EEOL in 1986 until the end of 20th century. Even though there were a lot of effort putting in this process to empower women’s careers, there were not many significant changes in the firm at that time. The second phase of promoting a gender-free working environment started from the beginning of 21st century. According to Michaud (2007-2008), at this phase, the firm set up a specific plan in order to create the best working environment for their female employees. Positive actions such as awareness campaign through seminars, “Gender-free Book” published by the firm’s in-house channels and the corporate Internet; new personnel

system or encouraging managers and leaders taking gender-free approaches, etc. were implemented in the firm's management strategies in order to make employees used to the gender-free working environment concept. After the second phase of the process, the situation of women's careers in the firm slowly changed. The ratio of employees who thought that they were working in a gender-free environment increased from 26.5 percent in 2001 to 38.2 percent in 2002. In addition, the percentage of women in managerial positions of the firm reached 8.2 percent in 2002 (Sanui – ILO, 2003). The third phase of this process started from 2004. In this year, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) department was established together with the program "Gender Equality Action Plan" (Michaud, 2007-2008). This program was active continuously in FY2005-2012 in the base of promoting "cultivation of the corporate culture", in which Shiseido pursued the target of having more women at managerial positions.

One of the largest targets of Shiseido in promoting gender-free working environment is to have more women in managerial positions. Ms. Kimie Iwata⁹ stated in the interview with Associated Press in 2011 that "We want to develop their careers regardless of gender. We want to have a lot of female managers and executives." (Hosaka, 2011)

Countless of forums dedicated to female workers have been held by Shiseido in recent years. During FY2005-2012, "Career Support Forum" was held under the theme "reform into an efficient way of working" and "proactive career establishment of female employees" (Shiseido CSR annual report 2016 – Shiseido main page, 2017). In addition, seminars targeting in inspiring female workers to aim for managerial positions in the firm such as "Career Navi Lunch" held in December 2015, in which they inspired employees with role models within the company, were carried on in the hope of reforming employee awareness towards the gender-free environment.

After the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe introduced his "womenomics" in 2013, Shiseido gained more motivation in leading the economy with promoting the gender-free work-

⁹ Ms. Kimie Iwata was the Vice President of Shiseido at the time of that interview happened.

ing environment. They got the “Minister of State for Special Missions Prize” in “Advanced Corporation Awards for the Promotion of Women”¹⁰ in FY2014.

As a firm of the majority of their customers and employees are women, Shiseido will continue putting much effort in supporting women as to follow the state of the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to create a working environment “in which all women shine”.

4.2.4 Work-life balance support systems of Shiseido

According to Shiseido, most of their work-life balance systems focus on not only the flexibility of working for their employees but also strengthening “the appointment and promotion of female leaders and human resource development” (Shiseido main page, 2017). To promote the work-life balance for their staff, they implemented lots of campaigns and programs such as encouraging their staff to go home on time by “Go Home On Time Day” campaign or turning off electricity in the whole offices after the official working hours, etc. together with offering different childcare and nursing care support systems.

Shiseido has been implementing various of work-life balance systems for helping women return to work after childbirth since the beginning of the 1990s (Table 2). The firm not only supports women in childcare but also encourage their male employees to take more time in taking care of their families and children, e.g. encouraging fathers to take paternity leave as much as possible.

¹⁰ This award was first held by the Japan Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office in 2014.

Table 2. Overview of Childcare and women support programs introduced by Shiseido

(Source: Shiseido CSR Report 2016 – Shiseido main page, 2017).

Support Program	Year introduced	Details
Maternity/paternity leave	1990	A systems by which employees may take leave after having a baby until the child is three years old for a total of up to five years (Employees may take leave a total of up to three times for the same child in the case of special circumstances [Revised in 2009])
Child-rearing work hours	1991	A system by which employees may shorten work hours by up to two hours a day if they have children in up to the third grade of elementary school [Revised in 2008]
Cafeteria system for childcare support	1998	A system by which employees can receive a fixed annual subsidy to offset childcare fees for children in nursery school.
Childcare plan	1999	A plan implemented to improve communication structures that enable employees to confirm with their managers the process from pregnancy onward to return to the workplace.
Kangaroom Shiodome	2003	An in-house daycare center for Shiseido employees' children, the center is also partially open to the children of employees of nearby companies.
Short-term paid parental leave	2005	A system by which employees may take leave up to two consecutive weeks until the child is three years old. This short-term paid parental leave system encourages male employees to take leave.
Nursing care leave system for children	2005	A system by which employees may take paid leave if they have children not yet enrolled in elementary school who require nursing care due to sickness or injury. Employees may take leave of up to five days per year for one child and up to ten days for two or more children per year. (Paid leave) Half-day leave is also permitted. [Revised in 2010]
Childcare support center	2006	Medical office staff at the head office provide support centering on health issues, including various concerns or questions related to pregnancy, birth and child-rearing.
Maternity wear	2006	A system in which maternity wear is provided for Beauty Consultants.
Kangaroo Staff system	2007	A system by which alternative staff relieve Beauty Consultants taking time off for childcare.
Guidelines for governing transfers of employees with childcare and nursing care responsibilities	2008	A system of rules that prevents transfers of employees that would require them to move while taking time off for childcare or nursing care.

According to the performance data of Shiseido in FY2015, there are 1,354 employees, 1,350 females and 4 males using the childcare leave program and 1,990 employees, 1,988 females and 2 males using the child-rearing work hours program. Thanks to much effort that Shiseido has been putting in this section, in the performance data of Shiseido in 2016, there is almost nobody leaving the job for the reasons of childbirth and childcare in the firm. (Shiseido main page, 2017)

Shiseido has always paid much attention to how to help the Beauty Consultant department, where 99.9 percent of them are women, balance their work and personal life. After a long time trying to promote the work-life balance supports among Beauty Consultants, 98 percent of them have been back to their work positions after the childbirth and childcare periods. Besides, Shiseido also designed the “Kangaroo Staff System” (mentioned above) that are dedicated only for Beauty Consultants. In recent years, more than 1,000 Beauty Consultants are getting support from childcare thanks to this program.

In 2016, the problems of women not possible to get their children into daycare became hot issues in the country that also became the biggest crisis for Japanese government after they announced the ambitious “Abenomics” that dedicated to gain more female participation in the labor force (Steger, 2017). To solve this problem, together with the “Kangaroom Shiodome” introduced in 2003 (mentioned above), Shiseido announced in February 2017 the joint venture with JP Holdings – Japan’s biggest daycare provider – named Kodomology. Kodomology will provide “companies with consultations on the setup of in-house nurseries and promote entrusted operation of such facilities” with the biggest aim of guaranteeing the growth of children of the employees in the firm. In addition, Kodomology will also identify the diversity in each company while keeping the balance of work and childrearing. (Shiseido main page, 2017)

Even though the programs to promote work-life balance of Shiseido are very effective, many SMEs managers thought that these programs are too costly and time-consuming for them to implement. As being asked in the interview with Japan Spotlight in 2007, Ms. Kimie Iwata¹¹ said that:

¹¹ Ms. Kimie Iwata was the Director and Corporate Executive Officer for Personnel & Consumer of Shiseido at the time the interview took place. (Japan Spotlight, 2007)

Corporate support measures do not mean that workers do not have to work but contain the message that in a sense they are asked to work harder. We are trying to reduce overtime hours without increasing the number of employees. This means employees are asked to raise their productivity per hour and to make their way of working more efficient. The resultant time spared would be used for the shortening of work hours and for a better work-life balance enabling employees to spend more time on regional volunteer activities and lifelong learning as well as childcare and other household duties. We are demanding of employees in this regard.

This means that female employees are supported in many aspects, in return, the company wants them to work more productively.

Yuki Honda, a two-child female worker of Shiseido, joined 1989. To show the gratefulness towards the company, she said in an interview that “I think I was fortunate with this company because they did not assume we women would quit after childbirth and they educated us so we'd continue to work” (Magnay – CNN, 2013). In another interview about her opinions of work-life balance supports, Honda said that “If we change our standards, working mothers won't have the excuse that they face a lower evaluation or are criticized for lower production because they are raising children”. She also added that “I was promoted to a management post while reducing working hours. Creating more examples like me would give working mothers incentive”. (Mie – The Japan Times, 2013)

4.3 Dai-ichi Life Japan

4.3.1 Overview of Dai-ichi Life Japan

The Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co. Ltd. or Dai-chi Life is a multinational life insurer of Japan. Dai-chi Life is currently the 3rd largest life insurance company in Japan after Japan Post Insurance Co. Ltd. and Nippon Life Insurance Co. (The Life Insurance Association of Japan, 2015). Dai-ichi Life was founded in September 1902. The headquarter is located in Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan. The number of employees is 56,724 until 2016. The total assets of the firm are around 36,193 billion yen in FY2015 (Dai-ichi Life Group main page) or \$416.7 billion. The firm is placed in 224th of the world's biggest public companies (Forbes Global 2000).

4.3.2 Female employees at Dai-ichi Life

In the “Survey on Female Workers’ Workplace Opportunity” conducted by Nikkei Women and Nikkei Womenomics Project in 2015, Dai-ichi Life Japan ranked 5th in the overall rankings of “100 Best Companies Where Women Play Active Part” and ranked 2nd in the category 4 “Gender Equality” of the same survey. (Nikkei BP, 2015)

According to the personnel related data released by Dai-ichi Life in 2016, the total number of female employees are 49,678 (as of 1st April 2016), which account for 91 percent out of the overall 55,033 employees of the company in Japan. As being similar with other insurance companies in Japan, this ratio of female employees with the overall number of employees is significantly high compared to the fact that there is only 43 percent female participation out of the national labor force (mentioned in part 3). The reason of it mostly lies in the gender roles stereotypes of Japanese about the fact that insurance industry is more suitable for women. “In Japan, the insurance industry is more important for women’s knowledge-intensive employment.” (Shire, 2007 :67)

There are two types of employees in Dai-ichi Life that are the Total Life Plan Designers and the In-house employees. The Total Life Plan Designers are the ones who directly deal with customers. Their roles are to provide advisory services and ongoing support for customers. At the end of FY2015, there are 42,983 Total Life Plan Designers in Dai-ichi Life, in which there are 1,167 male employees and 41,816 female ones. On the other sides, at the end of FY2015, there are 11,634 in-house employees in Dai-ichi Life, in which include 3,772 men and 7,862 women. (Dai-ichi Life Social Responsibility Report – Dai-ichi main page, 2017)

The ratio of women at managerial positions in Dai-ichi Life is increasing in recent years (Figure 9). In FY2016, the number of female managerial employees of Dai-ichi Life is 836 employees, which account for 23.3 percent out of the managers of the firm (Dai-ichi Life Annual Report 2016 – Dai-ichi main page, 2017). Compared to the fact that only 9 percent of the senior positions of the whole Japan are women (as mentioned above), this ratio of Dai-ichi Life is quite big. However, considering the fact that the ratio of female participation in the labor force of this firm is 91 percent, this ratio of female leaders is really low.

According to Dai-ichi Life, after a period of reforming the personnel structure and raising employees' awareness towards further advancement for female employees, they finally gain some results in return. One of the outstanding results of this is that they already appointed the first women in the Company Board as Executive Officer on April 1st, 2015 and the second one on April 1st, 2016. In addition, the ratio of female managers of the firm is increasing gradually (Figure 8). In 2014, Dai-ichi Life announced that 30 percent of employees being promoted at that year are women (Japan Society, 2014).

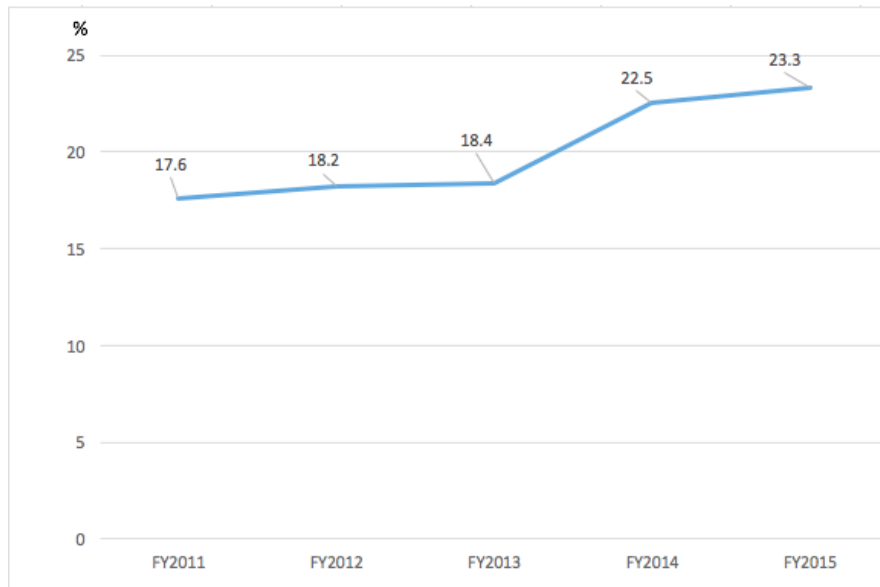


Figure 8. The ratio of women in managerial positions in recent years of Dai-ichi Life.

(Source: Dai-ichi Life, 2017)

In the period of FY2015-FY2017, Dai-ichi Life implemented the revised Medium-term Management Plan. With the help of this management strategy, Dai-ichi Life set a new target of having 25 percent out of the managerial positions occupied by female employees by FY2019 and if possible, more than 30 percent by the beginning of the 2020s.

Some assessment/ awards that Dai-ichi Life has gained in related to gender equality in FY2015 are listed as below (See Table 3).

Table 3. Assessments and awards related to gender equality that Dai-ichi Life has received in FY2015.

(Source: Dai-ichi Life main page, 2017)

Organizer	Assessment/Award
Nikkei Business Publications, Inc.	Survey on Female Workers' Workplace Opportunities: 1st among insurance, securities and other financial industries, 5th in overall ranking
Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office	Award for leading companies in which women shine The Minister of State for Special Missions Award
Japan Women's Innovative Network	2016 J-Win Diversity Award First Prize of Company Award, Advanced Category

In 2013, Dai-ichi Life got the 4th times awarded in the Kurumin Mark¹² certification held the Tokyo Labor Bureau of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in Japan in regards to the Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children. (Dai-ichi main page, 2017)

4.3.3 Diversity management policies to promote the achievements of female employees of Dai-ichi Life

The policies to promote female employees' careers at Dai-ichi Life are divided into two categories in order to be suitable for two types of employees in the firm which are the Total Life Plan Designers and the in-house employees.

4.3.3.1 Total Life Plan Designers

As for Total Life Plan Designers, since the majority of them are women, Dai-ichi Life offers two paths (Figure 9) that they can choose to advance their careers which are also suitable for female workers. They can either choose to advance in Professional fields or to train to be qualified for managerial positions. Most Total Life Plan Designers are offered professional development program that is designed individually and also a five-

¹² Kurumin Mark certification is the certification that acknowledge the support that the company provide in order to help their employees with childbirth and childrearing issues

year development program follow-up structure (See Appendix 6) that guide carefully how they can do to advance their careers.

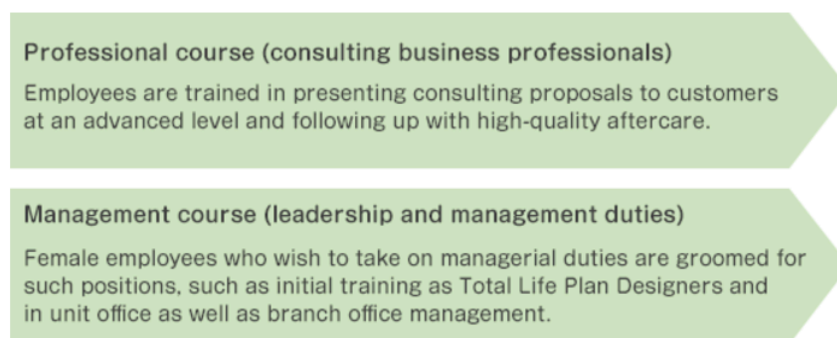


Figure 9. The two-career path designed for Total Life Plan Designers of Dai-ichi Life
(Source: Dai-ichi Life, 2017)

4.3.3.2 In-house employees

As for in-house employees, Dai-ichi Life has set up various of initiatives in order to fulfill two goals that are to strengthen the pipeline for future female leaders and appoint more female leaders as managers and general managers (Figure 10).



Figure 10. The two goals of empowering female careers of Dai-ichi Life
(Source: Dai-ichi Life, 2017)

They have been putting a lot effort in promoting the importance of female participation in the labor force and also pointing out women’s effort in balancing the traditional working style of Japan. After getting some specific results in implementing these initiatives, Dai-ichi Life set a goal in continuously promoting the gender diversity in the

workplace and the advancement of the functionality of effort, while still guaranteeing equal opportunities of each individual in the company.

Dai-ichi Life has built various programs in order to promote the ambition of female employees in advancing in leadership positions as listed below:

- Positive Action Program is put out by Dai-ichi Life in order to promote the next generation of female leaders by building a specific training program at each level of management for female employees (Figure 11). At each level of leadership, female employees will have different on-the-job and off-the-job in order to be qualified to reach the next level of management. (Dai-ichi Life main page, 2017)

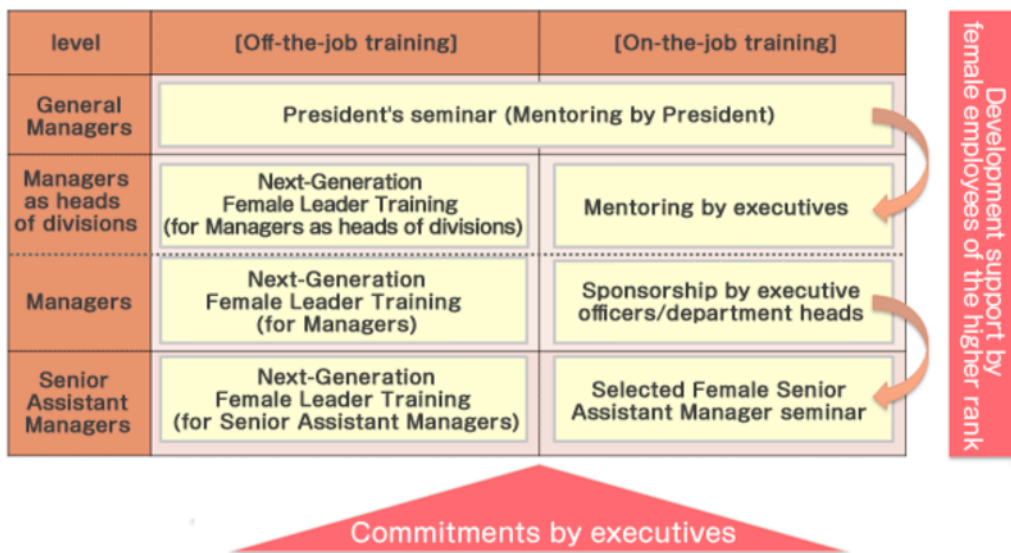


Figure 11. Positive Action Program of Dai-ichi Life

(Source: Dai-ichi Life, 2017)

- Building and strengthening the internal and external network for female employees through the Dai-ichi Women’s Executive Leaders (D-WEL) program, which was first held in FY2014. In this program, Dai-ichi Life showed the role models within the firm in order to inspire the next generation of female leaders. These role models can also work as instructors for the management training. As for developing the external network, the company has held various exchange events not only in the same field of business but also cross-industry.

- Internal and external trainee system is opened that allows participants not only develop their professional knowledge but also change their perceptions and increase their goals at work.

4.3.4 Work-life balance support system of Dai-ichi Life

To help female employees balance their dual roles at home and at work, Dai-ichi Life has provided various programs for childbirth and childcare support (Appendix 7). Their major goal is to make female employees feel comfortable to return to work after childbirth or childcare leave without many worries about their personal issues affecting working. As in General Business Owner Action Plan for the period of FY2015/2016, Dai-ichi life aim to encourage more male employees to take parental leave in order to help their spouses and also develop a working environment in which all employees have no problems in raising children while working through various childbirth and childcare support systems and also the implementation of working in flexible ways. Some examples of childbirth and childcare systems of Dai-ichi Life can be listed as below:

- The parental leave system that gives every employee the chances to take a maximum of 25 months of leave to take care of children. This period will supposedly end on the end of first April or first October counting from the month after the child are one year and six months. In addition, employees can also take parental leave in case of gradual entry into nursery school for children until the end of April or October.
- To support employees to come back to work normally after the childbirth or childcare leave, Dai-ichi Life operates several seminars for easing their minds before returning to work.
- Employees can choose to work one or two hours shorter than the official working hours, which is seven hours, until the end of the first April after their children enter primary school.

The number of employees using parental leave system in FY2015 of Dai-ichi Life are 1,143 employees and the number of employees using the shorter work hour system for childcare in FY2015 are 390 employees. However, the ratio of in-house employees returning to work after childcare leave in FY2015 is 93.1 percent and the ratio of in-house

employees still employed after one year in FY2015 is 90.0 percent, reducing a little bit compared to 94.1 percent and 95.5 percent respectively in FY2014.

In-house employees are also offered by Dai-ichi Life to use the program of working-from-home and flexible working time in order to create a more flexible working environment.

5 DISCUSSION

The gender stereotypes are still happening widely in Japan. This fact can be seen through the three companies that are analyzed in the research. Hitachi, a technical company which is thought to be more suitable for men as Japanese categories women as not good at technic and sciences (Adachi, 2013) has more male employees than female employees, especially in technical departments. Shiseido and Dai-ichi Life, on the other side, are consulting and manufacturing firms, which are seen as more suitable for women's abilities (Adachi, 2013; Kincaid, 2014) both have the majority of their employees are women. These gender stereotypes have been in Japanese people's perceptions for centuries and cannot be solved in the near future.

After the enactment of the EEOL in 1986, all of the three companies started to recognize the importance of gender equality and having more female workers in their workforce. These three companies all started to raise the employees' awareness towards gender equality at work since then. As the Abe's "womenomics" started to be enacted in 2013, these companies all currently focus on having more women at managerial positions. The initiatives that they have applied in each company can be different, but all of them have the same goals of raising women's awareness at career advancement and building their motivation for working. However, what they have done in this section is still considerably not effective enough because the ratio of female leaders in these three companies is still increasing, but not so much, in recent years.

Out of these three companies, Shiseido is the one that has the best result, which is 30 percent of women in managerial positions considering the fact that it is the smallest in revenues and number of employees. Dai-ichi Life which has more than 90 percent of their workforce are women but the ratio of female leaders is only around 20 percent. The ratio of female leaders in Hitachi is very low, around 4%, which also reflects the

stereotypes in Japan that women cannot fulfill the managerial positions in technical fields.

The ratio of female leaders in Shiseido Japan is rather high compared to the fact that there is only 9 percent of female leaders in the whole labor force of Japan (The Japan Times, 2016). However, this ratio is still low compared to the fact that they have 83 percent of their workforce are women. Even though these companies have been trying so hard to have more women in managerial positions, there are still a lot of limitations that prevent them from achieving the good results. The biggest challenge that these companies have to overcome is the perception of their female employees. As being taught to obey the rules since being young, many Japanese women will not take the advantages offered by the companies if no one else does the same things¹³. The main reason for this is the typical mindset of afraid of being different with other people of most Asian countries that are affected by Confucianism. This is the toughest challenge that is not easily solved.

The management system of Japan is still heavily affected by the seniority base and the perceptions of traditional gender roles. In order to balance the gender diversity in the workplace, the whole working and management systems have to be renewed, which is also the aim of Japanese government through the enactment of “Abenomics”.

Furthermore, these companies also try to a work-life balance support system in order to support female employees at work. All of these companies have detailed and specific programs for childbirth and childcare support. The programs of these three companies are comparatively the same with the same purpose of creating a working environment in which female employees have no worries in balancing their work and personal life. Women are granted to choose various programs in order to balance their work and family.

Even though the programs of these companies are built quite well to support female employees, there are still some issues that are not completely covered, especially the daycare problem. The daycare crisis has always been the challenge for Japan after the announcement of Abe’s “womenomics” in 2013. As the end of April 2015, there are 23,167 children that cannot get into daycare (Osaki – The Japan Times, 2016). The

¹³ This fact was included in the interview section of Michaud (2007-2008)’s thesis.

problems of women cannot be solved only by giving them maternity leave and parental leave for a period of time if they cannot get their children into daycare.

Shiseido is the one that doing the best out of these three also in this section. According to many researchers, Shiseido is considered as the best workplace for female employees in Japan. In addition, Shiseido is the only company that provides daycare service inside the company and has the intention to provide more. This results in the fact that all of their employees return to work after the childbirth and childcare leave. Among the companies in Japan, female employees at Shiseido are seen as the lucky ones.

Also having the majority of the workforce are women, Dai-ichi Life Insurance Japan fell behind although they are much larger than Shiseido Japan. This is also the reason why only 90 percent of their employees return to work after childcare leave while the ratio of this session in Shiseido Japan is 100 percent. As to have a perfect plan, Dai-ichi Life can learn from Shiseido to provide daycare services for their employees' children inside the company.

As for Hitachi, before trying to push their female employees into leadership positions, they should firstly work on changing the perceptions that women are not good at technical fields. This can be done by holding many different types of seminars and conferences in junior high schools and high schools to encourage female students to pay more attention and be more confident in pursuing the careers in technical and natural science fields.

However, as mentioned above, this problem is not easily dealt in the case of Japan economy. If they want to have the best results in a short period of time, the whole national economy of Japan has to overcome a total reform of the whole management system that may lead to a lot of economic crises.

6 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research is to find out how the Government of Japan encourages women to join the labor force to save this country from working population shrinking day by day and also how large corporations follow the national policies as their country need it.

Throughout the research, the importance of having more women in Japan labor force and how to keep them working for a long period in the development of the national economy of Japan has been proved. However, the policies that are implemented by the Government and the companies' top management of this country are seemed to be still working but not very effective as the roots of the problem lie in the long-life history and cultures of Japan that are not easily changing in a short period of time. As being a highly male-dominated culture for centuries, the perceptions of Japan people towards women have just changed little by little in recent years, which prevent Japanese women from pursuing their careers.

However, the author believes that if the Government of Japan and the large corporation's top management determine on upgrading their policies with more powerful policies and start to change the perceptions of their people since the very first stage, there may have some significant changes in the future.

The weaknesses of this thesis can be clearly seen through its process. One of the biggest weaknesses of this paper is that all data was collected based on secondary source, even though the author tries her best to find the reliable sources, the trustworthiness of the data in this thesis is not guaranteed completely. In addition, due to the language and geographical barriers, the author is impossible to measure the satisfaction of female workers with the policies through surveys that they have been getting from their Government and their organizations making the whole viewpoints of this thesis are mainly based on the employers' perspectives. Last but not least, as a fellow female, the perspective of the author while writing this thesis sometimes may be more favorable towards women that make the analyzing process may become not objective enough. Nevertheless, in case that others are interested in this topic, this thesis can be seen as a basic introduction to the topic and a guide for others or the organizations involved to open the topic wider and more specific.

In case that the author has the chance to have a further study for this topic, the author wishes to examine deeper in how the female workers in Japan think of gender diversity policies that they have been getting from their Government and their organizations. If applicable, the author would like to quantitative survey with a specific group of female workers in Shiseido Japan.

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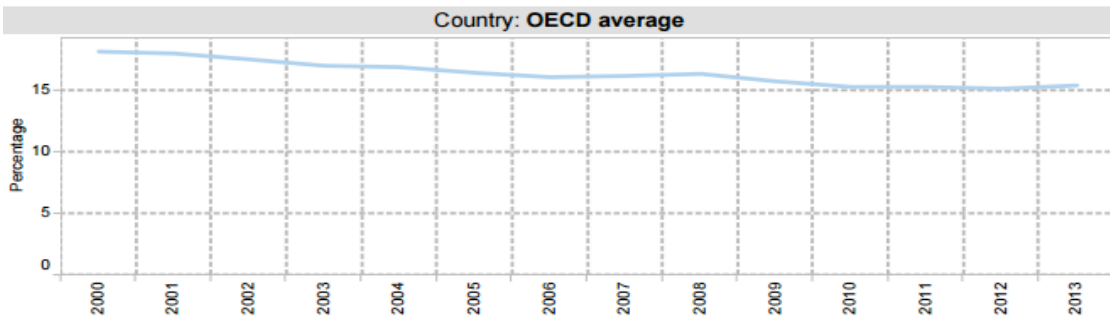
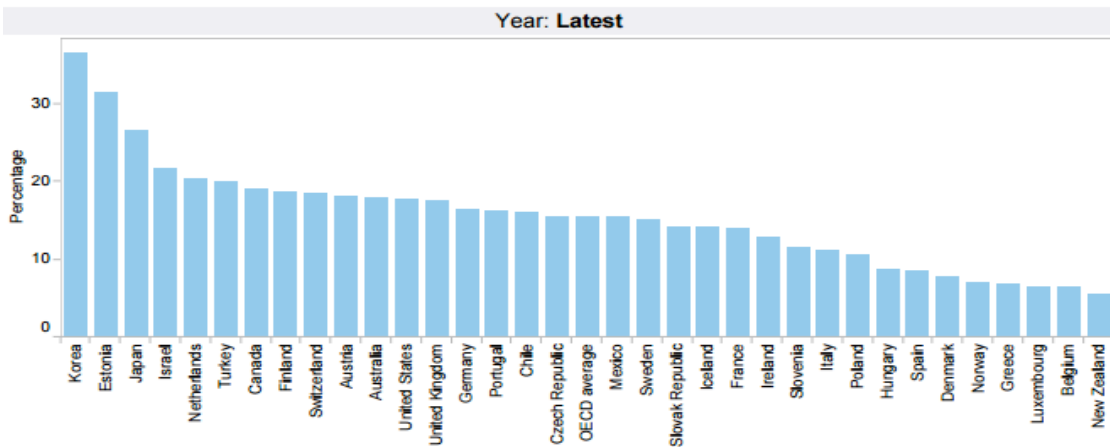
APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

OECD Countries' Latest Gender Pay Gap Percentage.

Full-time employees. The gender wage gap is unadjusted and defined as the difference between male and female median wages divided by the male median wages.

Select a year to compare countries Latest
 Select a country to compare years OECD average



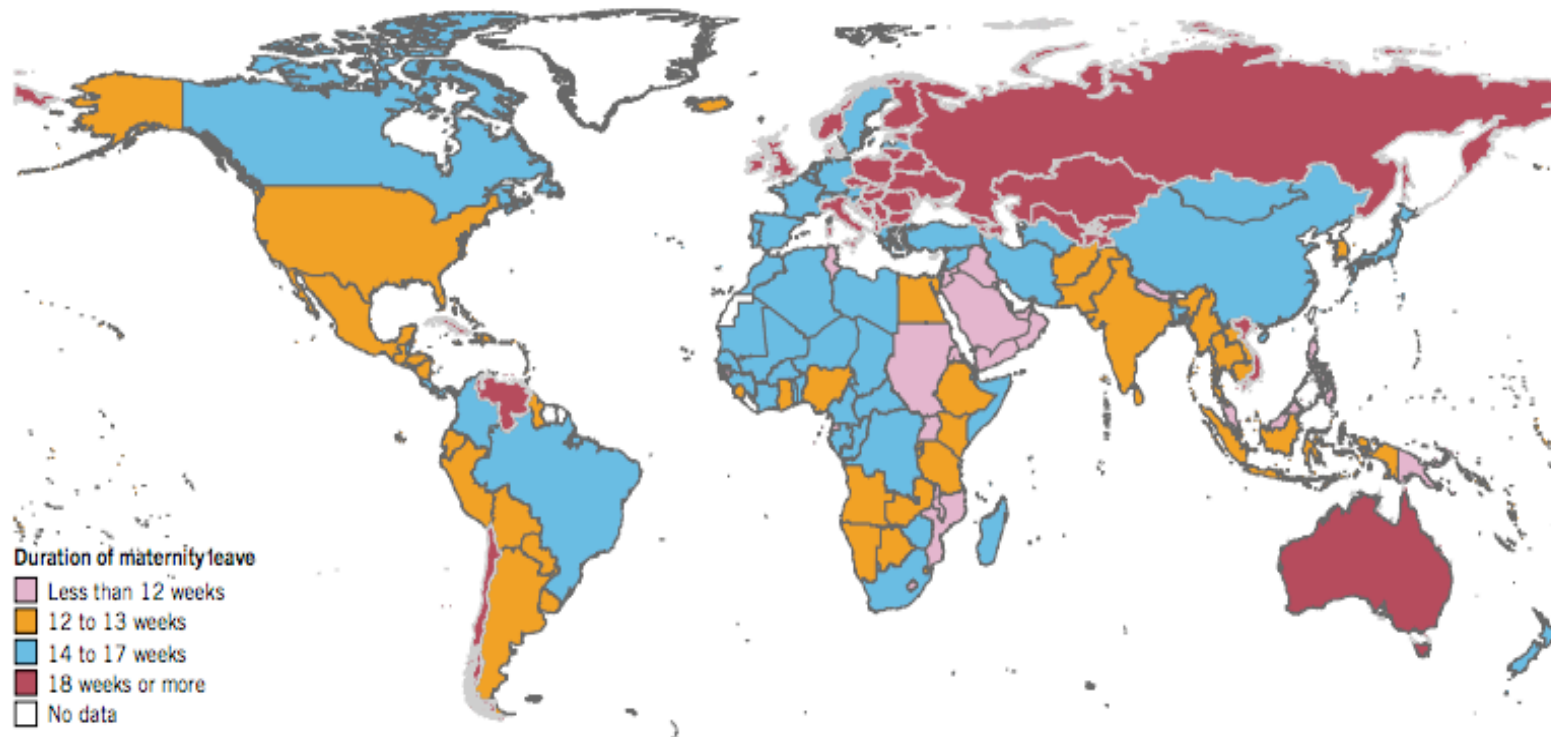
Source: OECD Employment Database 2014

The OECD average in this instance refers to the mean average gender wage gap across the 34 OECD countries with any missing data filled by linear interpolation.

Ireland for 2012: there is a low level of statistical significance according to the Irish Central Statistical office (CSO).

Appendix 2.

Duration of maternity leave around the world in 2013.



Appendix 3.

The prohibitions about gender diversity and benefits for female workers in The Standard Labor Act 1947 of Japan.

Article 4. *An employer shall not engage in discriminatory treatment of a woman as compared with a man with respect to wages by reason of the worker being a woman.*

Article 65. *In the event that a woman who is expected to give birth within 6 weeks (or within 14 weeks in the case of multiple fetuses) requests leave from work, the employer shall not make her work.*

(2) An employer shall not have a woman work within 8 weeks after childbirth; provided, however, that this shall not prevent an employer from having such a woman work, if she has so requested, after 6 weeks have passed since childbirth in activities which a doctor has approved as having no adverse effect on her.

(3) In the event that a pregnant woman has so requested, an employer shall transfer her to other light activities.

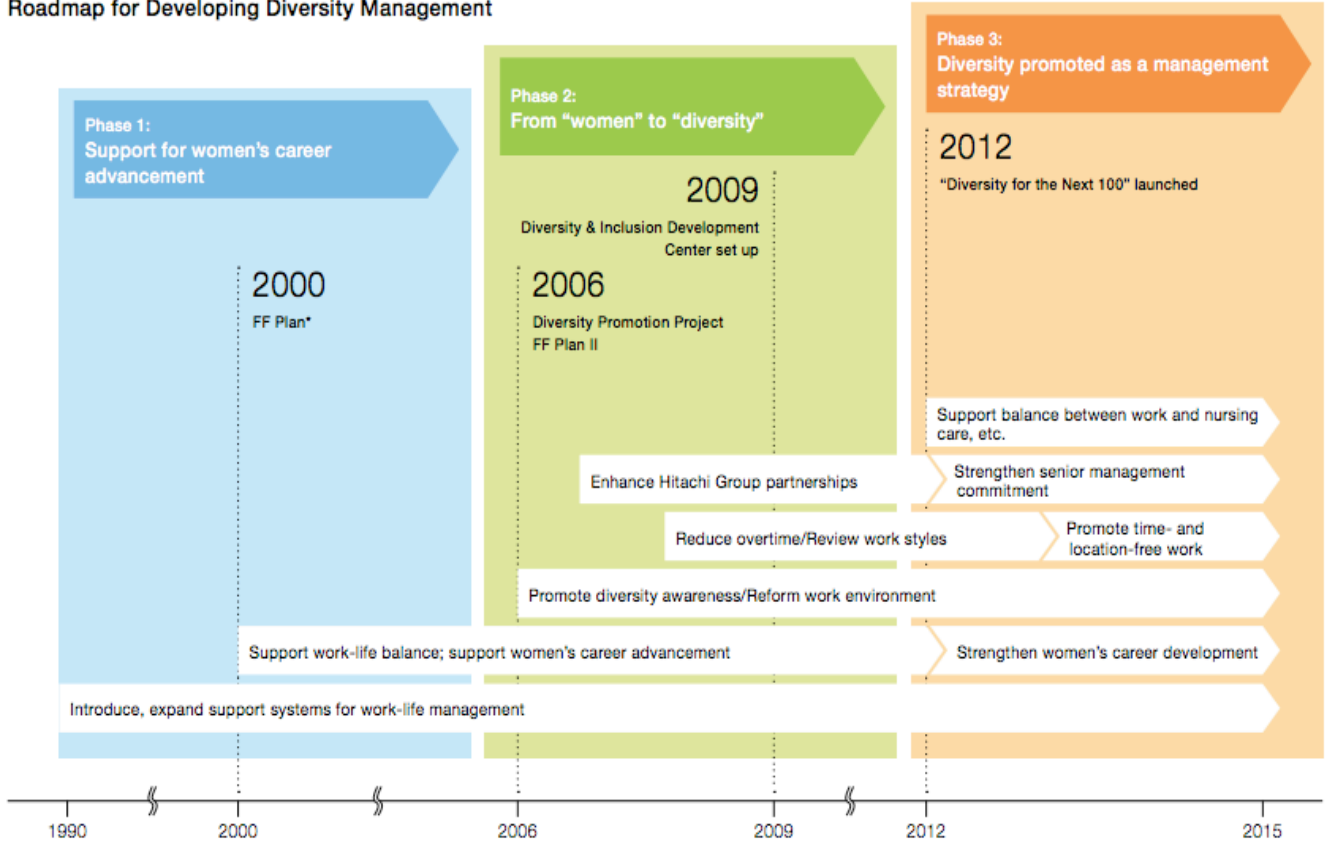
Article 67. *A woman raising an infant under the age of one year may request time to care for the infant of at least 30 minutes twice a day, in addition to the rest periods stipulated in Article 34.*

(2) The employer shall not have the said woman work during the childcare time set forth in the preceding paragraph.

Appendix 4

Roadmap for Developing Diversity Management of Hitachi, Ltd.

Roadmap for Developing Diversity Management

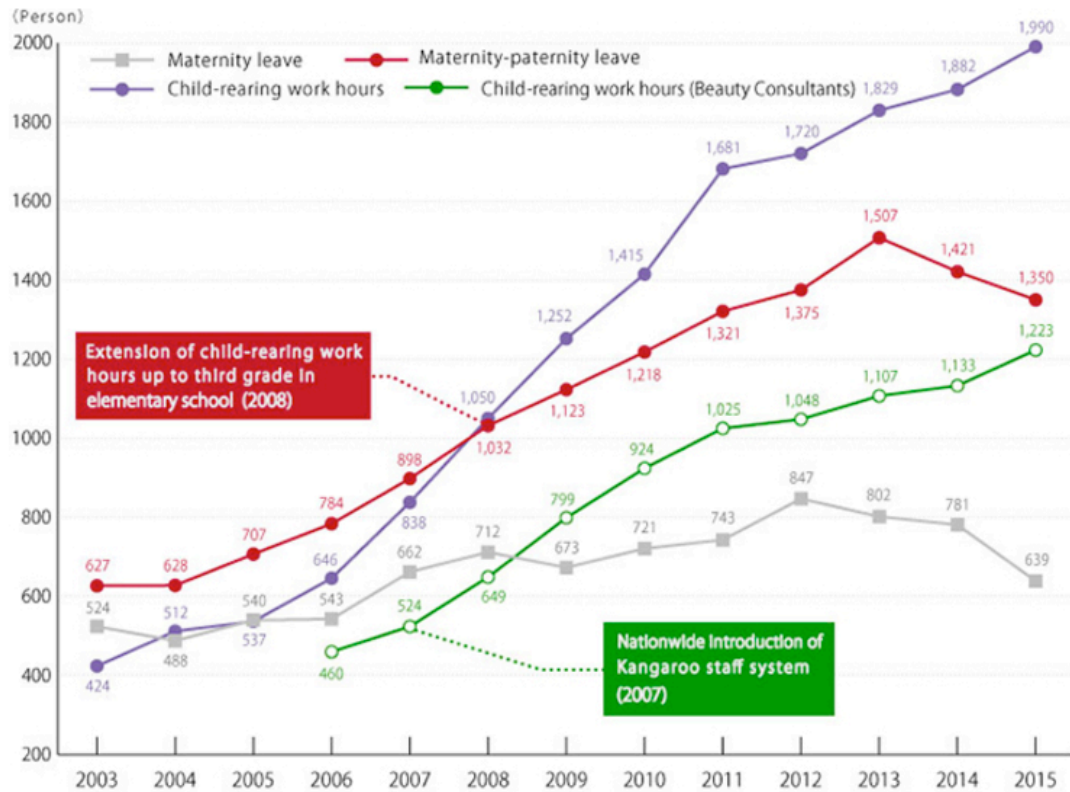


* The Gender-Free and Family-Friendly (FF) Plan is an initiative to create a better work environment by supporting efforts to balance work and family life and supporting women in the workplace.

Appendix 5

The Number of employees using childcare systems in Shiseido Japan.

Number of employees who used child care system in the domestic Shiseido Group



Note1: Years ended December. Results for FY2015 are for 9 months between April and December.

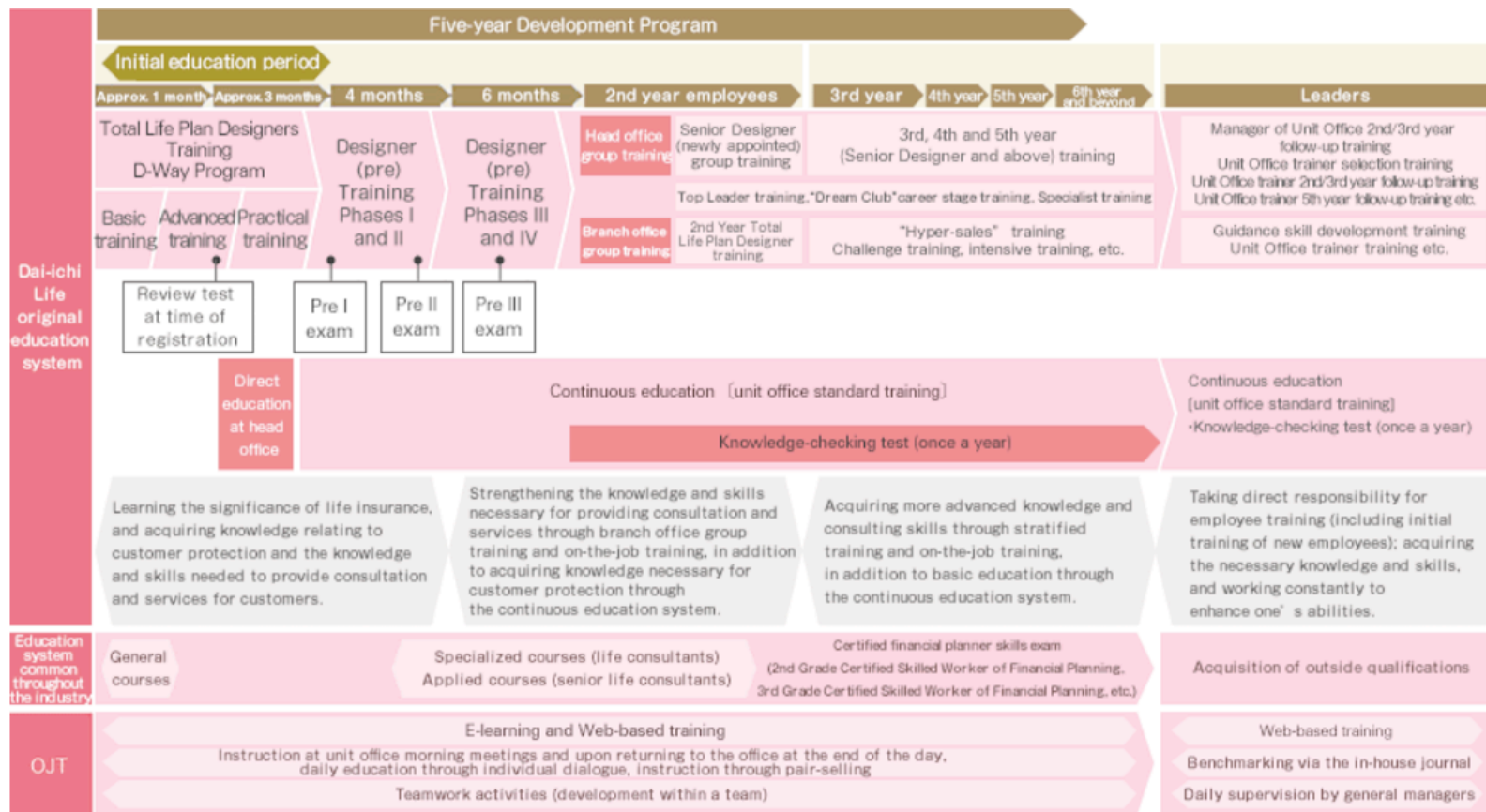
Note2: The data is subject to the number of persons who used the systems among the domestic Shiseido Group managers, employees in general positions, Beauty Consultants, employees in specialized positions (routine operations specific to worksites), affiliates' employees and limited-term contract employees.

Note3: The targeted number of people is 23,272 as of January 1, 2016 (6,609 BCs).

Note4: Number of employees who used the childcare leave and took time off to care for their children is a cumulative total.

Appendix 6

Five-year development program for Total Life Plan Designers in Dai-ichi Life



Appendix 7

Childbirth and childcare support systems of Dai-ichi Life

