

Towards Gender and Intergenerational Inequalities in the Japanese Social Welfare System

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Abstract

Social welfare is crucial for people who live in the capitalized world. Japan is also one of advanced capitalist welfare states. Nonetheless, even there are many universal advanced social welfare schemes, but Japan has been facing challenges and precarious issues on its welfare system. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to examine on the intergenerational issues and gender inequality in Japanese social welfare system under the theoretical framework of welfare state, by using the documentary research as a main methodology. The results show that even Japan has universal progressive welfare programs, but there are conspicuous issues on gender division of labor and inequalities within its employment system. The Japanese-style welfare society, lifetime employment system, and family patterns cloud also apparently display on the issues of gender and intergenerational inequalities in Japanese social welfare system.

Keywords: Welfare State, Social Welfare, Inequality, Japan

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บทคัดย่อ

ระบบสวัสดิการสังคมถือเป็นสิ่งจำเป็นอย่างยิ่งในโลกที่อยู่ภายใต้อิทธิพลของโครงสร้างทางเศรษฐกิจและสังคมแบบทุนนิยม ญี่ปุ่นเป็นหนึ่งในประเทศทุนนิยมที่มีระบบรัฐสวัสดิการแบบก้าวหน้า อย่างไรก็ตาม แม้ว่าญี่ปุ่นเองจะมีระบบสวัสดิการแบบถ่วงน้ำหนักที่ประชาชนทุกคนสามารถเข้าถึงได้อย่างเสมอภาคแต่ระบบสวัสดิการของญี่ปุ่นเองกำลังเผชิญกับความท้าทายหลายด้าน บทความนี้จึงมีเป้าหมายเพื่อสำรวจและวิเคราะห์ประเด็นปัญหาความเหลื่อมล้ำทางเพศและความไม่เสมอภาคระหว่างรุ่นวัยในระบบสวัสดิการของญี่ปุ่น ภายใต้กรอบแนวคิดรัฐสวัสดิการของเอสปีง แอนเดอร์สัน และแนวคิดเรื่องเพศสภาพ โดยใช้การวิจัยเอกสารเป็นวิธีการหลักในการศึกษา พบว่า แม้ญี่ปุ่นจะมีระบบสวัสดิการทางสังคมที่ก้าวหน้าแต่กลับพบว่ายังมีปัญหาการแบ่งแยกและกีดกันทางเพศระหว่างชายหญิงในระบบการจ้างงานและระบบสวัสดิการทางสังคมอย่างชัดเจน นอกจากนี้ รูปแบบสวัสดิการทางสังคมเฉพาะตัวแบบญี่ปุ่น ระบบการจ้างงานตลอดชีวิต อัตราการเกิดที่ลดลงในสังคมที่เต็มไปด้วยผู้สูงวัย รวมถึงแบบแผนและค่านิยมทางสังคมในระดับครัวเรือนยังสะท้อนให้เห็นปัญหาด้านความเหลื่อมล้ำทางเพศและความไม่เสมอภาคระหว่างรุ่นวัยในระบบสวัสดิการทางสังคมของญี่ปุ่นด้วย

คำสำคัญ: รัฐสวัสดิการ ความเหลื่อมล้ำทางเพศและความไม่เสมอภาคระหว่างรุ่นวัย ญี่ปุ่น

1. Introduction

‘In a world where money matters, Social Policy is a very substantial subject.’

(Hartley Dean, 2012: 5)

Living in the world of capitalization and globalization is not easy. The market mechanism always contributes to a man who is powerful and exploits the others who are inferior. Therefore, living in a world where money is an imperative thing to sustain human well-being under the world of inequality, discrimination, political and economic exploitations, the Social Policy is necessary for all humankind.

Nowadays, social policies and welfares are standing out both in academic and political domains. However, efficiency of social welfares is disparate based on prioritization of key performers related to social welfare provision in each country. In consequence, *‘welfare state’* is now prevalent among scholars in policy studies, social science, political science, and social welfare studies. Based on the idea of the welfare state, where there are various advanced-welfare programs for their citizen. The key-performers in welfare provision are mainly included of; state, market, and family. However, focusing only on these three actors are not conspicuously adequate to elucidate whether each country has an effective welfare scheme or not.

Consequently, the idea which could be helpful to identify the social welfare mechanism and characters in each state has been integrated to scrutinize and classify types of the welfare state called *‘the three world welfares of capitalism’* or *‘welfare regime’*. These welfare regimes encompass three typologies; 1) conservative welfare regime, 2) liberal welfare regime, and 3) social democratic welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990). These regimes are helpful to study the role and interaction between state, market, and family in welfare provision. It has also been using as the mainstream concept for welfare state studies as well.

However, focusing on Japanese social welfare can be valuable to any developing asian countries, since Japan is one of the advanced welfare states. Notwithstanding, even though the Japanese social welfare schemes are universal, which all Japanese can equally benefit. But nowadays the Japanese welfare state appears to be uncertain since there are many impending challenges in the near future especially for super-aged society issue and government’s fiscal burden (Pholsim, 2017). In addition, specific Japanese employment system, *lifetime employment system*, is also the main cause of its welfare provision issues which apparently led to the gender division of labor, inequality among regular and non-regular workers in employment system, and intergenerational issues. Therefore, even Japan has advanced social welfare programs on the one

hand, but on the other hand, there are dysfunctional points related to inequality and social issues as well, and this paper would examine on these concerns.

2. Objectives

1) To investigate inter-generation inequality between young and elder generations under current social welfare system in Japan.

2) To analyze gender inequality in the Japanese social welfare provision based on framework of the welfare state.

3. Methodology

The main method used in this study is a documentary research methodology. The data and sources of study are researching, books, journals, academic papers, and also news related to social welfare studies in Japan. The author also integrated statistic sources from the Japanese official statistic and international organizations to analyze related issues on the Japanese social welfare system.

The fundamental focus in this paper is grounded on Esping-Andreson's three welfare typology focusing on relations between state, market, and family and also examining gender inequality within the Japanese welfare provision. The main hypothesis in this paper is that even Japan has comprehensive universal welfare schemes but within its welfare system, Japanese-style welfare society, there has been forming structural inequalities related to gender and intergenerational issues.

4. Results

4.1.) Historical Background of the Japanese Social Welfare

Tracing to the Japanese history, its modern welfare system emerged in post-1945 under the GHQ's reform (Takahashi, 1997). However, there were some features of Japanese welfare had formed before in the Meiji-restoration aimed to improve poor living conditions, helping impoverished and helpless families. In the Meiji Era, the Japanese government also promulgated the Relief Ordinance in 1874 for above-mentioned purposes, and this law was finally amended into the Relief Law (Kyugo-ho) in 1929. However, all welfare provision in the aforementioned period emphasized in order to show a mercy from the emperor to citizens, without considering welfare as the rights of citizen (Takahashi, 1997; Gould, 1994).

Afterwards, a following significant law was also promulgated in 1911, called Factory Law, which trying to improve a poor working condition in factories, limiting women working hours, and protecting adolescence workers. As a result, the first Japanese social insurance

was also emerged under promulgation of the Health Insurance Law in 1922 which was implemented in 1927, modeled after German Bismarckian social insurance and targeted mostly to factory employee who were under the Factory Law (Takahashi, 1997; Leichter, 1979; Gould, 1994). Ultimately, this health insurance directed to two groups (Suganuma, 2014); 1) *health insurance union* in big industries, and 2) *small and medium factory employees* insured by government. Therefore, it is plausible that this national health insurance law had slightly contributed to promote the ‘*company unions*’ before the social insurance partnership within company started after the First World War. Furthermore, the Ministry of Welfare was also established in 1938 along with the promotion of pension insurance legislation in 1941 (Gould, 1994).

However, the pre-1945’s welfare was not in the easy path to be implemented, since the governments’ aims and awareness were neglected to support the welfare programs. Local residents instead, after the Rice Riots in 1918 the district commissioner (*homen iin*) was created across Japan (Takahashi, 1997; Suzuki, 2007) and acted important roles to assist officials, screening resident’s eligibility for financial aid, and guiding the poor to better their living conditions, etc. (Wataru, 2016).

Furthermore, the pre-1945’s Japanese welfare system could be characterized as the *Welfare for Warfare*. Since many welfare-related laws were promulgated grounded on the *emphasis to the wars* (Ito, 1988; Yoshida 1994; Takahashi, 1997). For instances; 1.) Law of Protection of Mothers and Children in 1937 aimed to secure human resources to continue the wars rather than improving human’s well-being, and boosted fertility rate from women in wartime for the purpose of national security such as ‘*Gonin umanai haha wa ichinin mae de nai*’ (Mother who does not give birth to more than five children, does not fulfill her duty); 2.) Law on National Health Insurance in 1938 targeted essentially in rural areas as an indispensable source to maintain labor forces and improved physical condition of emperors’ soldiers; and 3.) Law on Medical Protection in 1941 was designed to improve physical conditions by delivering medical doctors to all rural areas under the idea of life security for all people, and the people - all to be soldiers (healthy people, healthy soldiers: *kenmin kenpei*).

Notwithstanding, for the long history of trials and errors in aforementioned period, the pre-1945 Japanese welfare characteristics can be defined as the ‘*emperor-oriented family and mutual support by neighbors*. It can be understood that welfare provision in the pre-1945 era was not basically based on citizen’s rights. But in this period, Japanese citizen were examined as a commodity, and welfare provision tried to stabilize social classes and conventional political-norms more than recognize on the *citizen rights* to access welfares from the state.

Furthermore, labor pension system (*kosei nenkin hoken*) was also recognized in the early 1940s. But it was discriminately contributed to civil servants and military services, not covered all labor forces and self-employed workers. However, this none-universal pension system took a progress in the Japanese welfare history. As a result, after the Occupation reforms in 1945, this labor pension was finally improved, and the pre-war welfare policy which citizens were unequally treated according to their social status was equalized under the ‘*public assistance*’ created by three principles of SCAPIN 775 and the Daily Life Security Law against discrimination and unequal welfare policy (Takahashi, 1997). ‘*The right to live*’ and living standard were also guaranteed by article 25 in the Constitution of Japan, following laws were also initiated under the ambitions to develop welfares in Japan (Takahashi, 1997 & 1973; Gould, 1994); Welfare Law for Children (1947), Workmen’s Accident Compensation (1947), Unemployment Insurance Law (1947), Welfare Law for Physically Handicapped (1949), The Livelihood Protection Law (1950) which integrated means-test measure for social assistance, Law on Social Welfare Work (1951), and Law on Promotion of Social Welfare Work (1953), respectively.

However, focusing on the post-war reforms, it is worth to note that the political ambition for social welfare program in post-1945 reform has never been a primacy policy of ruling political party, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), but economic development policy is paramount. Because, this period the Japanese government was not prioritizing on the welfare system, but boosting the economy (Gould, 1994). In addition, government officer’s perspective on social welfare were also claimed that Japan did not need a ‘state welfare’ as the Western countries, since Japan has already formed its welfare provision, not by the state, but by its *family*, *community*, and the *firms*.

Nevertheless, during the post-war reforms, ‘social security’ draft was also proposed by Social Security Council (SSC) and ultimately summited to the Japanese government in 1950. However, this proposal was leisurely proceeded and ignored by government because of the opposition movement. Eventually, ten years later, this proposal on the social security system was re-considered in 1961, universal pension and health care systems have been formed as the Japanese social security system in post-war until now. Moreover, the comprehensive social welfare reform was launched in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Takahashi, 1997) such as; 1.) Law on National Health Insurances in 1959; 2.) National Pension Law promulgated in 1959, universal pension which first proposed by SSC was reformed and endorsed by the government; 3.) Mentally Retarded Law in 1960; 4.) Law for Welfare of Aged in 1963; and 5.) Mother and Children Welfares Law in 1964, child allowance was also firstly introduced in 1972 for second and subsequent child.

Therefore, the Japanese welfare policy in aforementioned period has changed from the concept of ‘relief-oriented and impoverishment-targeted policies’ to equalization and support for socially disadvantaged groups because of varied laws are promulgated and broaden the targets from only poor to all labor, mother, and child.

However, Japan as a latecomer capitalist welfare state, faced the first oil crisis in 1973 while conducting ‘the first year of welfare policy’. The above-mentioned welfare programs were thoroughly reviewed by LDP’s government again and the social movement for welfare provision was lost its influence because of the economic crisis. As a result of this crisis: declining national economy, fiscal deficit, and excessive welfare failures from other industrial countries in the United State and Europe were the main reasons for the Japanese government to re-examine its social welfare programs carefully. This crisis ultimately led the Japanese government to form ‘*Japanese-style welfare society*’ in late 1970s which *self-help effort* was prioritized, public welfare provisions have been *substituted by other institutions* such as company and family, and this is one of the striking characteristics of the Japanese social welfare system (Miyamoto, 2003; Takahashi,1997; Gould 1994).

4.2.) Towards Japanese- Style Welfare Society: State, Market, and Family in Welfare Provision

Based on Esping-Anderson’s welfare regime, it is clear to discuss that the Japanese welfare state does not completely fit into one specific regime that Esping-Anderson proposed; *universal, liberal, and conservative regimes*. Even Esping-Anderson himself first classified Japan into ‘conservative welfare regime’ (Esping-Anderson, 1990: 52) based on his de commodification score, he finally reexamined Japan as a *mixed type* of conservative model with some characters of the liberal model (Esping-Anderson, 1999). On the other hand, there are many arguments from scholars examined that, Japan does not absolutely fit into conservative welfare regime, because of Esping-Anderson’s flawed methodology. Some distinguished argument placed Japan in the middle position (Miyamoto, 2003; Lee & Ku, 2007) between the Three Worlds Model and the East-Asian developmental state model, between advanced welfare states and developmental states. Another argument claimed Japan as ‘family welfare regime’ (Wataru, 2016: 54). However, this section would investigate the Japanese social welfare, based on two extents, namely; 1) the roles of state, market, and family in welfare provision, 2) gender issues in the Japanese social welfare system. These two dimensions – the first is a fundamental concept of Esping-Anderson’s welfare regime, the last one is a complimentary issue to his flawed omission.

It is clear that the Japanese state is built on corporatist rather than laissez-faire. Economic policy direction in Japan is also fundamentally based on the cooperation between businesses, elite bureaucrats, and politicians in which “*businessmen have influence over the politicians, the politicians control the bureaucracy, and bureaucrats keep the businessmen in line*” (Fukushima, 1989: 255). This pattern contradicted to the conservative welfare regime, since this hidden corporatist power absolutely influences major public policies related to economic and social conditions in Japan. In addition, even though political and public affairs are led by the conservative LDP party, but truthfully focusing on public policy formation especially on social welfare provision, the social welfares have been substituted by the corporation in providing substantial welfares and benefits to employees, and the Japanese government has been sustaining this welfare system until now.

The substitution of welfare provision by ‘company’ welfares and prioritizing on ‘family’ as a caregiver at home and reproductive works are the main characteristics of ‘*Japanese-style welfare society*’ (Nomura & Kimoto, 2002; Miyamoto, 2003; Kimoto & Hagiwara, 2009). The Japanese-style welfare society is fundamentally launched based on initiatives of the company’s welfare system and self-help effort in family (Kimoto & Hagiwara, 2009). Most of Japanese people are expected to work with big companies so that they could rely on company welfares. Because these welfares are substantial and cover all living life and needs. That is also the reason why Japanese students try to get into the big private companies when they are the third years student so that when they graduated, they would dedicate their whole life working for the company in the *lifetime employment system* with the prosperous welfares. In Japan, the substitution of company welfares plays the forefront role in welfare provision to workers and their family, and the government supports this welfare-style because it is beneficial to the government in terms of social expenditure and fiscal burden.

In addition, focusing on current characteristics of the Japanese welfare system can be categorized into two programs, which are; 1) social insurance and 2) social assistance (Vanderborght & Sekine, 2014). Specifically, the main social welfare programs are comprised of three types; *medical care insurance, pension insurance, and social welfare* (Nomura & Kimoto, 2002). These insurances are covered by nine programs of welfare provision; 1) national basic pension, 2) national health insurance¹, 3) health services for elderly, 4) personal social services

¹ National Health Insurance comprises of seven insurance categories for different groups; 1) regular employees in big corporation, 2) employee in small and medium size firms, 3) seamen, 4) national officials, 5) local government officials, 6) teacher and employees in private school, and 7) farmers and self-employed workers. Insurances’ benefits and contributions are different among each category.

for elderly and disabled, 5) unemployment insurance, 6) labor accident insurance, 7) child allowances, 8) Day-care services for children, and 9) public assistance for those who cannot be saved by preventive social policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). However, more specifically focus on Japanese social insurance; national health insurance and national basic pension, the payers can be categorized into three categories as shown in Figure 1. Contributions and beneficiaries are different based on the individual’s occupational status. The earnings-based in private sector providing under Employee’s Pension Insurance (EPI) which managed by employers or companies, employee normally retire at age 55 but are entitled to get their pension at age 60. Earnings-based in public sector, on the other hand, provided by Mutual Aid Association (MAA) which administrated by the government for central and local officials, they would retire and receive the pension at age 60 (Gould, 1994). This earnings-based pension is supplementary benefits added to the basic pension.

The national basic pension is the pension for all insured Japanese, but particularly for regular employee in private company and public officials they have their own supplementary-benefits based on their income, as well as self-employed workers. Dependent spouse and housewives were firstly given the rights to join pension scheme when the ruling LDP government reformed the pension insurance program in 1985. Previously, they had no rights to join the pension funds and had to rely upon their husband’s pension only (Gould, 1994; Tabata, 1991; Kimoto & Hagiwara, 2009).

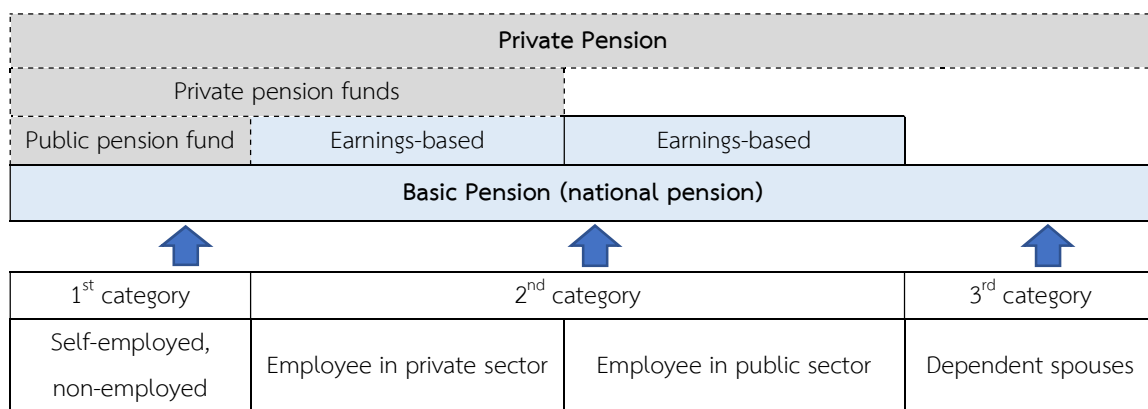


Figure 1: The Japanese welfare system

Source: Vanderborgh & Sekine (2014)

However, even though universal National Insurances (National Health Insurances and National Pension Insurance) are for all Japanese citizen. But examining on the contributions, it appears that the Japanese social welfare system is grounded on ‘liberal regime’ because the

main insurance contribution funds is mainly financed by taxes and personal contributory systems with a small portion of government's subsidy. Nevertheless, the government subsidies are also seen as analogous to company insurance programs. This subsidy is recognized as an employer's contribution provides universally to those who are self-employed, informal-labors, and low-income citizens.

4.3.) Typical Family & Modern Family Patterns in Japan

Focusing on family ideal could clarify the ideas of welfare provision system. However, patterns in the family have always been changed, once the family pattern was constituted with *male breadwinner ideal*, full-time housewife as a caregiver, and their children – this called '*typical family norm*' which has been transformed and gradually diminished. In contrast, another family pattern has emerged called the '*modern family*' in which *husband as breadwinner should acquire a sufficient income to sustain their family so that housewives could comprehensively care for familial duties as a caregiver* (Seccombe, 1993). Based on these family patterns, capitalism has influenced to the transformation from the traditional typical family into the modern family norm, and Japan is considered as a *strong modern family norm* (Nomura & Kimoto, 2002). It is not only male breadwinner ideal that is prevailing in the Japanese family pattern, but also reluctance to be married from Japanese youth because of their concerns on familial roles (Yoshida, 2017; Kimoto & Hagiwara, 2009).

Retrospectively, considering the Japanese-style welfare society, in which company and family are significantly substituted in welfare provision along with the idea of the modern family could contribute to clarify the welfare state typology that the Japanese family pattern has been institutionalized by the company to sustain the modern family norm in the Japanese society. Since after the World War II, 'livelihood wage system' was created by the companies for its employment system (Shibata, 2012). The Japanese white collars and regular employees have been formed their family patterns conform to this modern family norm. In addition, employment system and company welfares are provided predominantly to male breadwinner (regular workers) with substantial income, allowances, pension schemes, and comprehensive company's welfare for workers and their family. On the other sides of this Japanese modern family pattern, housewife's predicament tries to circumvent the divorce, because she will not only be stigmatized as a widow or single mother, but also faces a harsh life in struggling to support herself.

The reason which company sustains the modern family pattern because it absolutely benefits to the company. While housewives deal with household, familial duties, and

other reproductive works, male regular workers could completely devote their life working for the company, competing and producing exceptional performances with hope to get promotion and better benefits from companies. Both home-place and workplace are largely reproduced and substituted by *companies' welfares*, without these welfares and benefits from company Japanese family could not function well.

4.4.) Gender Perspective on the Japanese Welfare System

Fundamentally, focusing on welfare studies under Esping-Anderson's work, it would be useful to examine on gender issues and integrate feminist ideas related to the welfare state in which Esping-Anderson disregarded in his work on welfare regime typology. Based on the feminist approach, gendering welfare state can be classified into three models (Sainsbury, 1994);

(i) *breadwinner model*, which husband is the main provider for family members and welfare provision is given directly to husband, family members are circuitously benefited. This model examines husband as the main salary earner provides to family, but wife is examined as a caregiver for husband and child. Hence, the husband is only the main source for family, this concept is called the 'principle of maintenance'.

(ii) *individual model*, which not based on 'principle of maintenance'. Both husband and wife are shared leading roles in the family, and both of them can be examined as a dual-roles; both wife and husband can be both earners and caregivers in the family. Welfare provisions are given directly to both husband and wife so that wife could directly get benefits from welfares.

(iii) *mixed model between breadwinner and individual models*, which is based on the 'principle of care' and welfare provision related to maternity or motherhood are directly given to mother so that they can provide cares directly to their child without support from her husband, and this care work is regarded publicly to be assisted. In addition, welfare provision also provides directly to the husband, and latter provide to their members.

Based on this gendering welfare state ideal, the Japanese gendering welfare provision can be evidently categorized in to the '*breadwinner model*' because of three arguments; 1) systematically traditional-family conservation, 2) the Japanese employment system; lifetime employment and 3) low female participation rate in labor market in which the labor market mechanism excludes female from the regular worker (Kimoto & Hagiwara, 2009). These conditions lead Japanese mothers to rely heavily on husband's lifetime work, and finally affected to the high level of income gap between male and female as World Economic Forum

(2017) reported in ‘Global Gender Gap’ displayed Japan is ranked at 114 from 144 countries around the world (fallen from last year, no. 111), this reflects that Japan is a *highly gendered gap country*.

Normalization of gender discrimination could also be an explanation founded in the history of Japan, for instances; unequal electorate’s right between male and female in election system; the roles of first son and daughter responsibilities to their family are also unequal. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs defines an idea of head of household that: father should be considered as household head even his income is less than the first son; the first son should also be deemed as a household head even though his income is less than the second son; wife can be head of household only when the husband has no income; for a family without son usually adopts a boy from different family (Sugitomo, 2014: 164-166).

In addition, the lifetime employment system is also problematic for Japanese woman, especially ‘*mother*’. Because, in practices, Japanese women and mothers are easily excluded from the labor market because of their motherhood or maternity. Since, it is more beneficial for the company to hire men as a regular worker, on the contrary, hire women as a ‘non-regular’ worker. This eventually reproduces a gender division of labors in workplace and household domains which finally created the ‘*M-shape*’ feature of female labor force participation as showed in Figure 2 (right side).

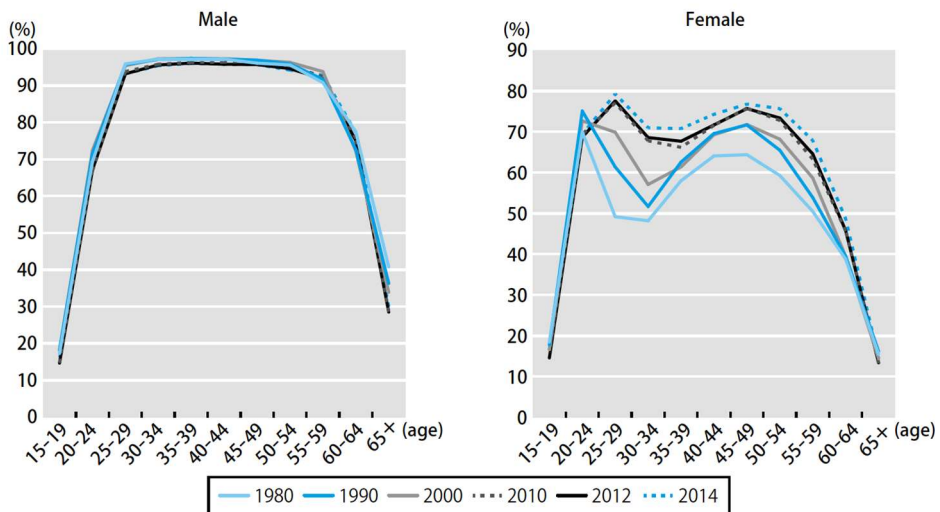


Figure 2: Labor force participation in Japan by age and sex

Source: The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2016: 24)

Figure 2. shows regular male workers are very stable in their life-course, in contrast to regular female workers who work as a regular worker after graduation (during early twenty) and roughly 50 percent quits job after giving birth of their first child (late twenty and thirty) and re-enter to work as housewife *non-regular workers* in years later (Aronssen, 2015: 7-9; Steinberg & Nakane, 2012 :20; Hewlett et al, 2011: 10-12; Suzuki, 2007: 16-18), this women's life course in the Japanese labor force participation called *M curve shape* (right side).

However, the proportion of Japanese contemporary labor force is predominantly based on male regular workers and increasing number of female non-regular workers as showed in Table 1 and Figure 3. This working status also significantly affects to eligibility of social insurance benefits, because low-income irregular workers cannot pay for their social insurance programs. As a result, female non-regular workers have to rely on husband regular worker.

Table 1. Numbers of Japanese regular and non-regular workers, and unemployed during 1990-2010

Year	Male		Female		Total	
	1990	2010	1990	2010	1990	2010
<i>Regular workers</i>	2,438	2,317	1,050	1,046	3,488	3,368
%	91.2	81.7	61.9	46.7	79.8	66.3
<i>Non-regular workers</i>	235	518	646	1,192	881	1,708
%	8.8	18.3	38.1	53.3	20.2	33.7
<i>Unemployed</i>	77	203	57	133	134	3362
%	2	5.3	2.2	4.4	2.1	5.1

*Unit: 10,000 persons, **Source: Statistics Bureau, 2011 in Suganuma (2014)

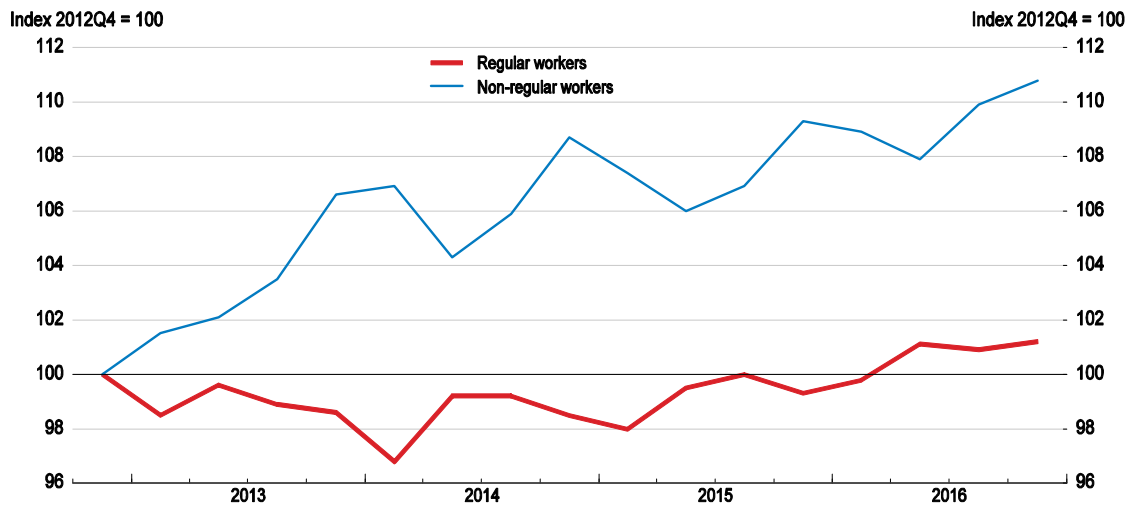


Figure 3: The raising of non-regular workers in Japan

Source: OECD (2017)

'lifetime system' and worker's status are problematic, not only for worker's welfare availability but also inequality of 'wage gap' among workers as showed in Figure 3. The wage gap between regular and non-regular workers is high, and most of the regular worker is male (OECD, 2017). In addition, the lifetime employment also impedes welfare accessibility of workers whose working status is non-regular worker. Since benefits and welfares from company are provided only for *regular workers* in a lifetime system (Gould,1994) these welfares such as; company housing, belong to company's union, company's pension and medical insurances, training programs, allowances, and receiving other companies' welfares, etc. These benefits meet the various needs and demands of regular workers but could not benefit to non-regular workers. Finally, 'the lifetime system' (work security), directly institutionalizes the male breadwinner ideal in the Japanese society. Therefore, the breadwinner model could be evidently identified as the main Japanese family pattern with disparities in wage and welfare, male is the most beneficial from this pattern.

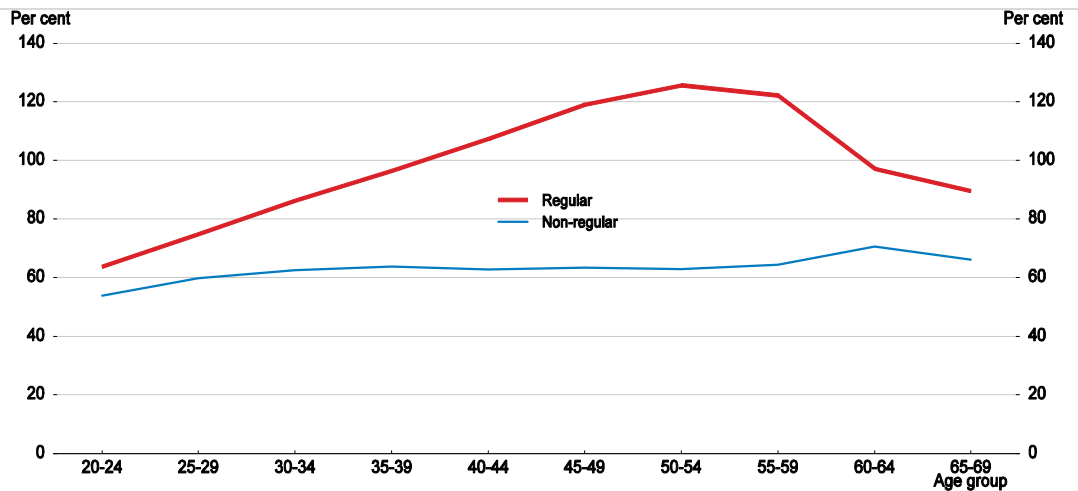


Figure 3: Wage gap between regular and non-regular workers in Japanese employment system

Source: OECD (2017)

In addition, focusing on the gender division of labor in Japan can be apparently explained by daily ways of life and domestic works in a comparison between male and female calculated by a unit of hour. The surveys of time-use in comparative activities between male and female as showed in Table 2 (Suzuki, 2007) clearly indicates that time spending per day on free-time and sleeping of Japanese female is less than male. In addition, for the domestic works (household chores, child-care, family-care) of Japanese female spends three hours per day, while male spends time on domestic works only seventeen minutes. By contrast, time spending on the occupation of Japanese male is five hours and thirty-nine minutes per day, while Japanese female spends only three hours a day. These findings are an empirical fact which supports the idea of the male breadwinner model and gender inequality in the workplace and home.

Table 2. Time-Use Average per Day between Male and Female in Japan

Activities	Japan	
	Female	Male
Free time	5.17	5.46
Food-related	3.37	2.52
Sleeping	7.38	7.52
Commuting	0.22	0.41
Domestic Work	3.01	0.17
Occupation	3.04	5.39

*Unit : hours and minutes

** Free-time: hobbies, entertainment, television, sport, recreation, socializing, etc., Food-related: meals, personal errands, etc., Commuting: travelling between home and workplace or school/university, Domestic works: household chores, child care, family care, Occupation: work, study.

4.5.) The Japanese Welfare State: Inter-Generation Inequality

Focusing on current situation and characteristics of Japanese welfare system, it is understood that the main contributor who finances the welfare funds is young or working ages through their taxes and insurance premiums as showed in Figure 4. But, the benefits are mostly transferred to elders under the ‘pay as you go’ system such as; pension, medical treatment, etc. without rewards to young and working ages, they just have to wait and see until they are elder, but on the other hand, young and working labor are only active source of welfare funds under the rapid shirking population in Japan as showed in Figure 5.

Furthermore, according to the Annual White Paper of Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2016) and the Japanese Times (2017) showed that ‘during the 1994-2014 period, the income level of elderly who aged 65 and older remains at the same level, but the proportion of elders’ low-income households (less than 1 million yen) decreased from 18.8 percent to 13.7 percent, while the ratio of elders’ middle-class households (2 - 5 million yen) increased from 42.3 percent to 48.2 percent. Therefore, it is clear that the Japanese elders are earning more income and benefit from the welfare system while the sources of welfare’s fund are gradually decreased affected by the rapid shrinking population.

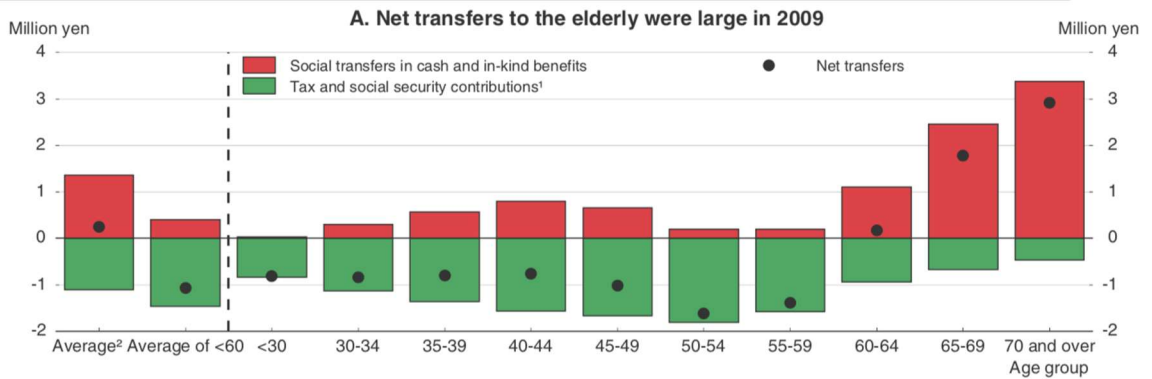


Figure 4: The tax and transfer system redistribute income from the working-age to the elderly

Source: OECD (2017)

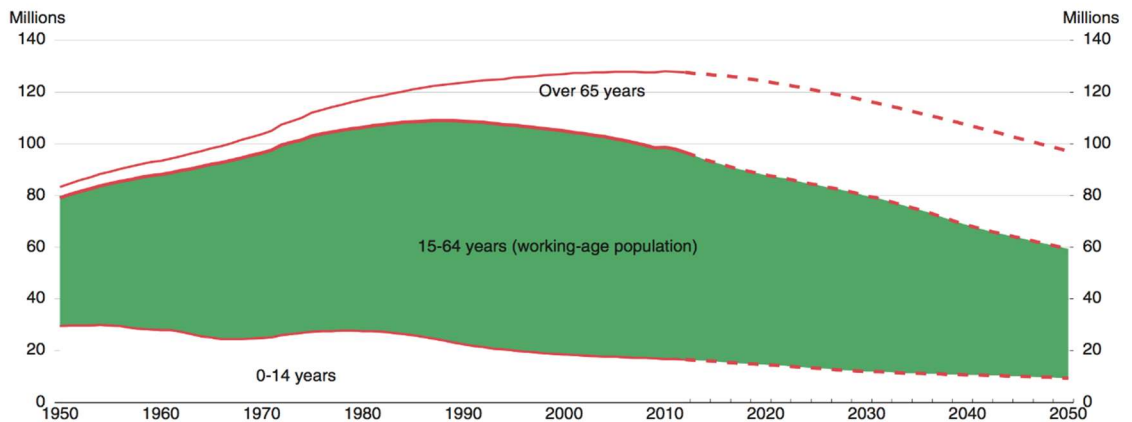


Figure 5: Rapidly shrinking population in Japan (super-aged society)

Source: OECD (2017)

Therefore, it is not only gender issues when we consider on ‘inequality’ in the Japanese welfare system. But it also includes the ‘inter-generation inequality’ between young adults or working ages and elders in *welfare distribution*. In addition, the shrinking population in Japan is also a vital challenge to the Japanese government in order to cope with social welfare provisions since the source of welfare funds is now rapidly declining, and the Japanese government’s debt is also highest among OECD countries (OECD, 2017), the fiscal burden for social welfare spending in a super-aged society is also an imperative challenge to Japanese social welfare in the near future.

5.) Conclusion

Focusing on two dimensions; first, *the roles of state, market, and family in the Japanese welfare system* reflect that the Japanese welfare system has been prioritized initially on the market (company), and viewed family as reproductive sector for the market, then the state at least. In addition, *the Japanese-style welfare society*, which is the main character of its welfare system also highlights heavily on the company rather than the state's welfare. However, observing on a controversy between company (as liberal regime) and family (as conservative regime), it could be visibly reflected that the Japanese-style welfare society – both state and family (wives and family members) are favorably expected upon substantial company welfares and benefits. But the Japanese employment system, however, contributes greatly for men, to be hired as a regular worker, rather than women. These patterns conform to the *modern family ideal* which income from only husband adequately supports to the family – male breadwinner.

To put it in a nutshell, public social welfares in Japan are substituted by company welfare and family caregiver. On the other hand, while the public welfares are substituted and reproduced by family caregiver, the family caregiver also relies heavily on company welfare. This pattern shows that company institutionalizes modern family pattern, and without companies' welfares and benefits of male breadwinner, both state and family institutions could not effectively function in welfare and reproductive mechanisms.

There is also a high level of inequality related to social welfare system in Japan. Even though there are characteristics of universal welfare programs: *'health and pension insurances for all'* (*kokumin kai-hoken kai-nenkin taisei*, or *KAIHOKEN*), but *inequalities in labor force participation, gendered division of labor, increasing insecure labors who are easily excluded from social insurance programs, highly individualistic on welfare provision, and inequality among generations and workers*, have placed Japan far from social-democratic regime or universalism welfare state. Furthermore, the Japanese social norms and its employment system have been built as a foundation for social welfare institutionalization to sustain this structural inequality, and it is difficult to be cracked because of its contribution to the government in terms of fiscal burden, and companies also gain royal regular workers who intentionally devote themselves to the lifetime employment system and substantial benefits from company welfare.

Therefore, these structural inequalities in the Japanese social welfare system generated challenges to the Japanese government and next generations since there are various challenges in Japan; deficiency of working ages, low fertility rate, high debt of the Japanese government, and super-aged-society. In addition, inter-generation and gender inequalities within the Japanese

welfare system identified in this paper are also one of the main causes to these challenges. Hence, the Japanese government needs to unbind these issues in its social welfare system so that the economic and aging issues in Japan will be more effectively solved.

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