

Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

International Studies Undergraduate Honors
Theses

College of Arts & Sciences

2024

The Unseen Women of Japan: Marginalization of Single Mothers

C. Bo Boja

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/etds-intl-std-theses>

Seattle University

**The Unseen Women of Japan:
Marginalization of Single Mothers**

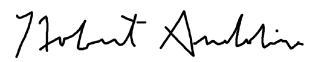
International Studies Departmental Thesis

By

C. Bo Boja

2024

The signatures below constitute approval of this departmental honors thesis by C. Bo Boja



Dr. Robert Andolina, Thesis Seminar Instructor



Dr. Felipe Murtinho, External Reader

Abstract

In recent times, Japan has been grappling with a shockingly wide gender gap, as calculated by the Global Gender Gap Report. The contradiction of a prosperous country with disproportionate gender inequality points to underlying trends within Japanese society that continue to work towards undermining women's opportunities and rights, especially those who do not fit into the ideal standards set for women, specifically single mothers. Studies have shown that multiple external societal factors work towards perpetuating the poverty of single mothers. This thesis analyzes primary and secondary research from government data, academic articles, books, news articles, and interviews of this population's hardships and lived experiences. The specific factors of focus are traditional family structures and culture, stigmatization and shame, income and labor participation, and government welfare policies. The factors in the marginalization of single mothers have details unique to this group, but, they are generally reflective of the hardships that all Japanese women have to face in light of a society deeply rooted in patriarchal values. This analysis's approach uncovers the deep-rooted legacy of Japan's patriarchal structures within its dominant systems of authority and how contemporary society's attachment to these ideals works and exasperates the poverty of single mothers while undermining the status of all women. These findings bridge the gap between these factors to better understand the shortcomings of Japan in effectively empowering its women and how to formulate steps toward productive change.

Keywords: Japan, gender inequality, single mothers, gender roles, poverty, stigma, discrimination

I. Introduction

Gender inequality is a worldwide persisting issue. According to the Global Gender Gap Report of 2023, which uses “the Global Gender Gap Index [that] measures scores on a 0 to 100 scale and scores can be interpreted as the distance covered towards parity”, the score for all 146 countries included in the report “stands at 68.4% closed”, with a score of 100% being indicative of a closed gender gap with full parity. The World Economic Forum estimates it will take 131 years to reach full parity (p. 5, 2023). In context, this percentage shows that the world is barely halfway towards completely closing the gender gap and will take more than a century to achieve. Japan is no exception, with its 2023 gender equality gap score being 64.71%, placing them at 125 out of all 146 countries, they scored the lowest of all East Asian and Pacific countries in the report (WEF, p.30). In addition, Japan has scored low in women’s economic participation and opportunity, scoring at 56.1%, and in political empowerment, at 5.7% (p 30). These scores contrast with the fact that educational attainment for both genders is virtually equal, 99.7% (p. 217). Indeed, Japanese women are also highly educated, with enrollment rates at universities and junior colleges at 61.6% in 2023 (Statista Research Department, 2023). If Japanese women are highly educated, why does Japan score low in gender equality? While labor and education restrictions placed on women have been eased, other forces uphold the patriarchy and traditional family structure amidst the growth of Japanese industries and a rapidly aging population. Although women's lives are dictated by the feminine ideal of motherhood and the domestic household in almost any country, in Japan, this has continued to affect women to the point of being barred from achieving paths toward economic and political success.

Despite the dominance of traditional gender roles and family structures, there still exists single-parent households, with around 90% being headed by single mothers (Mesmer, 2023; MHW, 2023). Looking at single mothers, “based on data from 89 countries and territories, there are at least 101.3 million lone mothers... in the world (UN Women, 2020). Although Japan’s single-mother population makes up a small percentage of the population, they are still part of a globally vulnerable group that is affected by the persisting gender inequality. They are also finding themselves in marginalized positions due to higher rates of poverty (Kinnear, 1999, p.

17). Putting the spotlight on this invisible group of women within society can help uncover the damaging effects of the patriarchal stigmatization of those who do not meet gender ideals, as their situation is reflective of broader gender issues within the country. With the gender equality gap and prevailing idealized gender roles in mind, this paper asserts that because single mothers deviate from society's expectations, they are placed in an intensified state of exclusion. Their situation nonetheless exposes the overarching patriarchal trends within the Japanese workplace, government policies, and society. Through unpacking the history of traditional gender roles and the marginalization of single mothers in modern Japan, it can be understood that the stark gender equality gap that continues to prevail in Japan is due to the enduring legacy of traditional and contemporary gender roles that influence self-perception, government policies, and employment; factors that shape the current situation of marginalized single mothers and work to stigmatize them. To take this further, this paper also claims that single mothers reflect broader issues of gender inequality that all Japanese women face, issues that ultimately derive from patriarchy and the stigmatization of women. To better focus my research, I propose this guiding question: why do Japan's single mothers experience disproportionate levels of poverty and alienation? I believe answering these questions will bring to light the patriarchal attitudes that have contributed to the undermining of the status of all women in Japan. By understanding the marginalization of Japanese single mothers, the ways women are stigmatized can be better understood and addressed.

II. Conceptual Framework

Throughout this project, I take an intersectional analysis that seeks to give a comprehensive picture of the marginalization of single mothers in political, economic, and cultural dimensions of Japanese society. Not only do I show how Japan's rigid gender roles & hierarchies play a role in perpetuating the continual poverty and inequality faced by single mothers, but to also demonstrate how gender ideals stigmatize single motherhood in the workforce, government, and general population.

The concepts of stigma and shame comprise the framework used to understand the ways single mothers are alienated and isolated. This section briefly defines what stigma is and how it negatively impacts an individual through the connections made between certain traits

and labels with stereotypes and the subsequent shame felt resulting from being perceived as such.

a. Stigma & Shame

Stigma plays a large role in the social marginalization of certain groups within a society. According to Goffman (1963), stigma refers to an “attribute that is deeply discrediting” and what makes a person “different from others... thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted discounted one” (p. 3). I use this definition of stigma in the context of single mothers as they lie outside of the Japanese norm. In addition, stigma is also representative of the “relationship between attribute and stereotype” (p.4). This relationship is applied to the ways that the label, or attribute, of lone motherhood, shapes the popular perceptions of single mothers in predominantly negative ways.

Levin (2005) notes that stigma leads those stigmatized to be “devalued, ignored, and excluded” by society while also having “difficulty establishing an accurate, stable, and clear self-concept... [leading to] members of stigmatized groups [perceiving] themselves in ways that are consistent with these stereotype” (p. 2). Hence, when stereotypes are perceived in a stigmatized individual as true to their character, they often cause feelings of shame. This is observed in the ways that single mothers actively hide their circumstances, usually poverty or mental illness, to avoid the stereotypes associated with lone motherhood.

To further illustrate the definitions and the relationship of stigma and shame Sutton (2014) notes that stigma is an external process in which social contribution or value is placed upon a person of low income and thus attaches labels that are associated with specific aspects of life on low income. Subsequently, shame is the internalization of the social labels created by stigma which forces one to view themselves through the negative views of others (p. 144-145). What is important to note is that stigma presupposes a separation between what is considered normal, conventional, and correct and what is different, abnormal, and worthy of disapproval. The positive and negative nuances in this differentiation are what is used to justify stigma and subsequent discrimination.

III. Methodology: Global Case Study Method

This project's material consists of primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data regarding single mothers and how their circumstances of poverty and alienation manifest in cultural, economic, and political dimensions. To analyze the marginalization of single mothers, I will be utilizing the global case study method (Darian & Smith, 2007), by examining the interplay of political, economic, and cultural dimensions of a worldwide problem through a focus on Japanese single mothers.

The main subject of this global case study project is single mothers of Japanese nationality who are raising a child or children without a spouse who resides in Japan. Single mothers can be understood as mothers with children from a previous marriage or mothers who have never been married (Pew Research Center, 2013). The larger object of the study, gender inequality, manifests in the circumstances of single mothers on political, economic, and cultural dimensions, and in the disadvantages faced by most Japanese women.

The reason why single mothers are the focus instead of single fathers or both single fathers and mothers is that, although both genders experience similar struggles that come with raising a child solo, women tend to face more problems due to the expectations of their gender role (Kinnear, 1999). Also, single-mother households make up 90% of the total number of single-parent households (Mesmer, 2023). I am concentrating on how gender inequality manifests in the persisting marginalization of this particular group of women through various factors. In addition, these factors will also be considered in thinking about the overall status of women in Japan.

The realities of Japanese single mothers have many similarities with those of American single mothers. Single mother-headed households in America are one of the most disadvantaged groups in the US with 3.46 million living under the poverty line in 2022 (Statista Research Department, 2023). This is illustrated by the fact single mothers are often not able to make enough money to provide for their families (Humberstone, 2007), due to having to take on both the role of housewife and breadwinner, similar to Japanese women. In contrast, American single mothers do not experience the same influence of a persisting patriarchal traditional culture that women experience in Japanese society. America, like Japan, has patriarchal attitudes and beliefs, but they manifest differently.

This paper's evidence utilizes both primary and secondary sources gathered from the Japanese government websites, academic databases, and news outlets. Most of the primary sources used are quantitative data from government statistics. These statistics come from the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare website or sites that graph the data taken from them. These statistics are mainly used to illustrate in numbers the population and income of single mothers and provide evidence of the persisting problem of poverty within this group. The primary qualitative information includes descriptions of government policies, especially regarding welfare support and interviews conducted with single mothers in academic texts and YouTube videos. These government policies are mainly welfare policies taken from the government websites of various Japanese cities such as Osaka and Yokohama. I chose to use interviews from YouTube because I was personally unable to conduct any interviews during my study abroad in Japan and also due to my limited Japanese language abilities. The interviews from academic texts come mainly from the source written by Ezawa.

Secondary sources that are used in this paper are mainly academic texts and news articles regarding the topic of single mothers in Japan. These texts help to analyze the different areas in Japanese society, politically, economically, and culturally, where single mothers are marginalized. Almost all of these articles were published in the last fifteen years. Many of these sources are in English due to the limitations of my Japanese language skills and the existence of translations of certain articles.

There are limitations in my data and my analysis. One limitation of the data that I am using is that it is mainly sources written in English. For this reason, some cultural nuance may be missed within my analysis. I would also like to note that my perspective has shortcomings since I am approaching this global cast study with a background that is predominantly educated from American and Western academia. There may be cultural and historical nuances that may be overlooked due to my inability to read Japanese and my lack of personal experiences with Japanese culture. Nonetheless, I strive to keep this analysis culturally aware and sensitive to the beliefs and practices of the Japanese population.

IV. Japan and Single Mothers: historical, cultural, and economic context

In Japan, women oftentimes become single mothers through divorce, with a small percentage, 2.3 percent, having children out of wedlock (Semuels, 2017). Single mothers as a population have only increased significantly in the last decades. Between 1993 and 2011, Japan saw a 55 percent, 789,900 to 1,238,000, increase in the number of single-mother families (Shirahase, 2014, p. 549). Their numbers have not changed drastically since 2011, as according to the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (2023), they were 89 percent, or 1,195,000, of the total number of single-parent families whose number was 1,344,000 in 2021.

Also, in 2023, Japan's labor force participation rate was a total of 62.9 percent total with men making up 71.4 percent and women making up 54.8 percent. The employment-population ratio for Japan in 2023 was 61.2 percent, with 69.5 percent being men and 53.6 percent being women. Thus, men make up the majority of labor force participation and employment rates while women account for a little over half. The unemployment was 2.6 percent in total with 2.8 percent being men and 2.3 percent being women (ILO). There was no data regarding Japan's poverty line, as the government does not have an officially published amount. Nonetheless, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare calculated the poverty rate to be 15.4 percent in 2021 and has been on a downward trend since 2012 (Statista Research Department, 2023).

In what follows, I will give additional background that is important to the context of the arguments made in the evidence and argument sections. This includes a brief overview of the historical development of the cultural gender norm of the Japanese Housewife and basic information regarding the policy of Womenomics.

a. The Ideal Woman: the Japanese Housewife

The role of Japanese women in society has their role tied to the household. This sentiment has held up throughout the 20th and 21st century. According to Imamura (1990), during the 20th century, the dominant family structure was one of the agricultural households in which patriarchal hierarchies and gender-based role division were enforced within family units. Within this family structure, women were married off to other families and their main purpose was to produce heirs for the family. However, the expectation for her was to help run the family business and perform the role of caretaker for the elders within the family. However

important to highlight is that within this system, at a certain age, the wife is expected to “retire” and hand off her role in helping maintain family businesses to the younger generation. This transition moved the wife to a status known as “shufu” or housewife. This status made her responsible for all responsibilities within the household which included “running, allocating, and passing on the ways of the household to her daughter-in-law”(p.1-2). However, her role in the family and society at large changed into the postwar era, especially during the late 50s and early 60s, through the development of the “salaryman family”. The shift in roles created the era of the “full-time housewife”, or “sengyo-shufu” where women primarily worked within the sphere of the home, notably having very few opportunities outside (Imamura, p.3, 1990, p.; Lukyansteva, 2023, p.9).

As noted by Imamura (1990), the last notable change in the role of women in society came in the 70s and 80s. In the 70s, there came an increase in more highly educated women who found themselves more free from the obligations of family. This new group of women helped in the start of developing more opportunities for women in the labor force, especially in part-time and temporary work, adult education, and community participation. This helped to culminate in women’s increased participation outside of the domestic home. These factors that contributed to this included increased education and workforce experience of women, their longevity, having fewer children to raise, and the increasing cost of housing & children’s education worked to increase the number of women participating in the labor force. However, this is not to say that women are entirely free of the traditional role of the “shufu” in the current day. The sentiment of gender-based division still holds strong in Japanese society. The norm is that husbands are the breadwinners and wives are the housekeepers (p. 4-6). In addition, marriage is seen as a way of securing “stability in one’s life, to be considered a full member of society, and often for the sake of the family (Bloch, 2017, p. 25). Nonetheless, this societal pressure of marrying and having children and conforming to her “intended” role is one of the difficult decisions of Japanese working wives as it would mean forsaking their current careers (Kumagai, 1995, p. 156). In addition, according to Lukyantseva, the prominence of these expectations is the legacy of the severe gender stereotypes that were enforced onto men’s and women’s roles from the 50s to 70s. The ideal masculinity was placed onto the role of the

salaryman and femininity was embodied in the housewife (2023, p. 9). In essence, the role placed on Japanese women made them their husband's partners in familial business, and subsequently "shufu" and caretakers to the family they married into. The transition into modern times and the proliferation of wage-based work pushed women into the home, making them primarily housewives and caretakers. Deviating from traditional values coinciding with the increase in women's education and the fall in birthrates, enabled Japanese single women and housewives to venture outside the home to participate in the economy. The option of remaining in the home is much more encouraged, as motherhood is valued more than a career as the job of money-making was placed upon the husband. With this context in mind, it provides the background as to why single mothers experience marginalization in Japanese society. This will be elaborated on within the following sections.

b. Abe Shinzo's Womenomics

Emerging out of the Lost Decades, a period starting in the 90s when Japan experienced economic stagnation and deflation, Abenomics is a set of economic policies brought forth by the Abe Shinzo administration after his reelection as Japan's prime minister in 2012 and set into motion in 2013 (Botman, 2015, p. 16). This economic project was proposed as a plan to revive the Japanese economy after two decades of deflation, all while maintaining fiscal discipline (The Government of Japan, 2020). This plan is defined by three key goals. The first is fiscal stimulus in the form of a large stimulus package with economic recovery measures. The second is an unorthodox monetary policy. This new monetary experiment is exemplified in the Bank of Japan's asset purchase program. The last arrow is structural reform. These reforms include cutting business regulations, liberalizing the labor and agricultural sectors, cutting corporate taxes, and increasing workforce diversity (McBride, 2018). However, what stands in the way of achieving this is the country's declining birthrate which has led it to becoming an aging society and lack needed workers (The Government of Japan, 2014; Asia Pacific Curriculum).

To combat this, the third goal also involves a policy called "Womenomics". This policy is guided by the belief that boosting economic growth through these reforms will increase the participation and advancement of Japanese women in the workforce. Specific goals of Womenomics include raising the female employment rate from 68% to 73% by 2020. In

addition, corporations were required to increase the appointment of women to management positions (McBride, 2018). Having more women become a part of the labor force, would allow the gap in workers to be filled. In addition, looking towards countries like Sweden and Denmark, which have both higher female employment and higher fertility, the Abe administration argued that increasing women's status and participation in the labor market would help to increase fertility rates (McBride, 2018; Asia Pacific Curriculum). According to the Japanese government, from 2012 to 2019, the number of women joining the workforce increased by about 3.3 million and women in management positions in the private sector approached 10% (The Government of Japan, 2020; Siripala, 2021). However, implementing these women-centric economic policies, was more about "stimulating national economic growth and harnessing a workforce in a society with a shrinking population". (Dalton, 2022).

V. Arguments & Evidence

In the following sections, I argue that single mothers in Japan experience disproportionate levels of poverty and alienation because of gender inequality rooted in traditional gender roles and stigma that promotes a housewife and male breadwinner model. This then manifests in the obstacles that they face in low income, lack of access to stable employment, and government family policies on family and social welfare. Together these factors create a vicious cycle that traps single mothers in economic and social marginality.

a. Single Mothers

Because becoming a single mother in Japan marks a departure from the stability that comes with being a housewife, it is oftentimes associated "with financial difficulties and downward mobility" (Ezawa, 2016, p.xiii). Because they are deviating from the role of "shufu" they must support themselves and their children as the sole breadwinner (Hertog, 2011). As a result, they often struggle more than their single-father counterpart as according to Kinnear, societally perceived attitudes and expectations of the roles of fathers and mothers are different. In addition, men have better access to jobs thus making single fathers more able to financially support their children compared to their counterparts (p.10-11, 1999). This is true in the way that in Japan "single-father households have more income on average than single-

mother households” (Umeda, 2010). However, at the same time, it is important to note for that reason, single fathers have received less government support until the last decade because they make more money despite having more financial difficulties than in two-parent households (Umeda).

Nonetheless, single mothers are inevitably tied to society’s expectation of the gender role of the housewife, while single fathers are not. This points to single mothers being met with more roadblocks towards upward financial mobility. This serves as evidence that single mothers and their children experience poverty higher rates of poverty (Kinnear, 1999, p. 17). Unsurprisingly, according to Ramsey, despite Japan being known as a financially prosperous nation, it has the highest percentage of single-mother-headed families living below the poverty line out of all OECD nations, 56 percent compared to the US at 33.5 percent (Ramsey, 2022).

b. Shame Culture

Utilizing the idea of stigma is key to understanding the alienation and poverty that are experienced by Japanese single mothers. Despite the “increased ‘normality’” due to the general increase of single mothers globally since the 80s (Silva, 1996, p.1), there are still mixed feelings surrounding it in Japan, especially negative attitudes from immediate family and older adults are common (Hertog, 2011, p.109). Although not plainly stated, I believe that the fear of the mother, child, and grandparents being through the label of an “illegitimate grandchild” (p.109) is indicative of the role that stigma plays in stigmatizing single mothers. Within Western feminist discourse, the circumstances of mothers and single mothers are often interpreted to be “two sides of the same coin” in the way that they share similar constructions (Silva, p.2). The hardships that are experienced by Japanese mothers and single mothers are consequences of the legacy of the enduring patriarchal ideals that shape Japanese family structures and gender roles. However, in the situation of single mothers, struggle with the attribute of lone motherhood and their deviation from the dependent housewife role that factors into their experienced poverty and alienation. Along with this, there is the idea that “women’s greater dependency on individual men tends to stigmatize lone motherhood more than in situations where women have greater autonomy” (p.2). Contrastingly, the stigma experienced by

Japanese lone mothers tends to result from their lack of dependence on a husband through deviating from the traditional housewife role. With the gender ideal for women being that of the housewife role, the attribute of lone motherhood is attributed to being unconventional and discrediting, and thus subject to more stigmatization. Through the idea of stigma and its effects, I hope to use it to give more context and understanding as to why the poverty of single mothers and gender inequality continue to persist.

Single mothers more than often experience embarrassment and shame surrounding their status perpetuated by society and the authorities around them through the form of stigma. In other words, single mothers are forced to live in a reality where society pushes the view of the stigmatized label of a “failed” woman onto them. Single women are already generally portrayed by mainstream media in a negative light, often being labeled as “‘parasite single’ and ‘loser dog’” (Nakano, 2017, p.63). Considering the downward mobility that is associated with being a single mother, they deal with similar negative stereotypes that come from stigmatization. They often receive a stigma from their parents as most Japanese parents “are strongly opposed to their daughters having children outside of marriage” and worry more about “the stigma and shame associated with illegitimacy than their daughters “ (Hertog, 2011, p. 92, 103). Single mother and model Ayano on Asian Boss stated in an interview “[...]most people think I’m another failure. [...] perhaps it's part of Japan’s shame culture where people think you end up like this if you don’t listen to your parents” (Asian Boss, 2020). On the other hand, if they are not being actively ridiculed by Japanese media, they are objects of pity (Shiotsu, 2020). In general, the label and the associated negative connotations it carries are a source of embarrassment to the point that some mothers are actively trying to hide that aspect of their circumstances. Facing stigma and disapproval from mothers outside society and their immediate family, single mothers are left to fend for themselves.

c. Income and Labor

Even before the enactment of Womenomic policies, Japan’s high labor-force participation rates for single mothers have been high compared to their married counterparts. In 1988, 86.8 percent of single mothers were working in contrast to 31.8 percent of married mothers (Duncan, 1991, p.118). In 2006, 85 percent of single mothers in Japan were in the

labor force (Shirahase, 2014, p. 551). And in 2021, 82 percent of single mothers were recorded to be employed (Siripala, 2021). It is apparent throughout the decades, that the employment rate of single mothers has steadily remained incredibly high, especially in comparison to married women at 76% in 2021 (Nonomiya, 2022). However, the high employment rate does not mean single mothers are doing financially well. Looking at the Global Gender Gap Report (2023), the gender pay gap is about 22 percent (p. 218), compared to the OECD average of 12 percent (Okubo, 2023). The high percentage of single-mother employment points to poverty rather than economic prosperity. As per the Global Gender Gap Report's findings, women earn 30 percent less than men for the same work (Ramsey, 2022). Kyodo News (2021) reported that 51.8 percent of single-parent households said they had some degree of economic hardship. The average income for single mothers in 2005 was 2.13 million yen a year compared to the average household one-child household of 7.18 million yen (Hertog, 2011, p.94). And in 2021, it was 2.43 million yen, or \$23,000, which includes benefits (Siripala, 2021). Compared to the national average of 5.14 million yen that year (Statista Research Department, 2024), it points to single mothers living in poverty. With access to mainly low-paying temporary jobs, single mothers are faced with the struggle of balancing their work, providing for their children, and taking care of themselves. These mothers are on their own when maintaining the household. The model of a breadwinner father & stay-at-home mother are the gender roles in the dominant family structure in Japanese society. Single mothers have to take on the role of both.

The reason why women earn so much less than men is due to societal expectations that women will inevitably leave their jobs to have children making it significantly harder for a single mother to secure a stable, well-paying job. The Japanese wage system is based on a male-breadwinner model which means that men and women start at different wage levels & salaries are mainly dependent on the length of steady employment (Peng, 1991, p. 121). The pattern of Japanese women's participation in the labor force is referred to as the "M-shaped model". The first part of the M, the inclined slope, represents when a young woman first enters the workforce after the completion of her formal education and continues to work after marriage until they have their first child. They then return to the labor force when their children start attending school as part-time workers until their children graduate. According to Kumagai, the

drops in the M represent the duality of the women's role where one part is dictated by the modern necessity to participate in the labor force, and the other is demanded by traditional values for her to be childrearing housewife (1995, p. 151). With this model in mind, it is important to point out that single mothers experience a low chance of being hired into a job that offers a livable wage due to having left the labor force due to motherhood and thus have gaps within their work history that are only able to help them secure low-paying, part-time or temporary work (Peng, 1991, p.121; Shirahase 2014, p. 551; Ramsey 2022). In a comparison between the employment rates of American and Japanese mothers returning to work," 73 percent of [American] mothers can find steady employment upon returning to work [while] only about 22 percent of mothers were able to do so in Japan" (Shiotsu, 2020). This points back to the struggle of Japanese women in balancing and reconciling the contradicting roles that perpetuate the acceptable construction of the correct Japanese woman. They are either the modern, single woman who participates in the labor force or the traditional married housewife. The single Japanese mother falls outside these two norms So, although a high percentage of single mothers are employed, it is still difficult for them to secure a stable job.

Japanese companies perpetuate this problem due to having strict, inflexible hiring standards. They prefer to hire people who have just graduated college, a traditional practice called "shukatsu" (Shibata, 2019). In addition, there is an expectation that employees should be able to work long, demanding hours, especially with unpaid overtime (Saiidi, 2018). Single mothers do not fit into these qualifications due to being women and having children. This points to the stereotypical assumption that they can not fully commit to their jobs due to having to set aside time to raise their children. These exclusionary prerequisites are very apparent in Japanese companies' rigid hiring policies that upkeep gender roles. For instance, Japanese companies require that job applicants list their family members on their resume. What this means for a single mother is that if a recruiter sees that she lists a child but no husband, she will get questioned about her marital status and who will be able to take care of her child if the child gets sick (Semuels, 2017). There is always the assumption that single mothers are unreliable employees due to the presence of children. For many Japanese companies, single mothers are considered risky hires since they are seen as unreliable due to

their double role as a provider” (Shiotsu, 2020). Since the gender norm for Japanese men is that they can continue to work even with the presence of children in the family, male employees are preferred. The expectation of parenting always falls onto the mother due to gender roles rooted in traditional family structures. This sentiment is so strong that many institutions will give married male employees bonuses if they have a stay-at-home wife (Semuels, 2017). The message that is undoubtedly echoed in these policies is that there is no place in the labor force for mothers, especially those without a husband. It is through the breadwinner husband that a Japanese wife has access to monetary benefits. Single mothers are consequently barred from being able to climb the hierarchical ladder of the Japanese workplace or even get their foot in the door. In other words, because single mothers are the sole breadwinners of their families, they have to have multiple jobs or settle with temporary or unstable jobs to make ends meet because the only income accessible to them is low. To not be employed is not an option for them. In addition, the reason why temporary jobs, instead of stable, well-paying, are more accessible to single mothers is the discrimination they face from Japanese corporations who see them as a liability due to their status as mothers without husbands.

d. Government Policies

i. Family Policies

Similarly to the majority of Japanese corporations, the actions taken and policies enacted by the Japanese government perpetuate the society’s conservative gender roles & family structure. The support provided by the Japanese government’s current policies fails to effectively address the needs of single-mother families and even works against them. The previously mentioned Womenomics’s goals included raising the employment rate (McBride, 2018). However, at the same time, contradictory existing economic policies discourage married women from working. For instance, the “1.03 million yen wall” encourages married women to lower working ambitions to avoid high taxes, inadequate social welfare policies for childcare, and societal & cultural norms that push women into child-caring and housewife roles (Asia Pacific Curriculum, n.d.). In other words, despite wanting more women to enter the workforce, they only prefer single, unmarried women rather than mothers. And even then, there is still the assumption that these women will leave their careers, marry, and have children. According to

Shiotsu, the Japanese government has enacted “Family Friendly” policies in an attempt to raise Japan’s already low birth rate of 1.8. These policies work to put in motion marriages at younger ages, free childcare for all households, improvements in work-life balance, and providing financial support for local matchmaking events. However, these policies are geared more towards promoting pregnancies than providing support to impoverished and struggling families through addressing societal pressures that they face (2020). In other words, the dominant view the government holds towards the female population is that their role lies solely within the household. In addition, the government also does not see impoverished populations, including single-mother families, as worth providing sufficient support for, as shown by how the policies mentioned earlier are meant only to support well-off, conventional families. Rather than provide support for women to return to the workforce after pregnancy, they expect them to stay housewives who are dependent on their husbands. In addition, in light of the decreasing birthrate in Japan, the policies that the Japanese government had created to support the Japanese family unit only benefit families who fit into the ideal traditional family structure pushed by society- a breadwinner husband & full-time housewife. Because single mothers already have children and do not encapsulate the ideal family unit, exclusive government-provided benefits are not accessible.

ii. Social Welfare Payments

Along with these exclusionary policies, the welfare system & public assistance resources for single mothers are also limited and fail to provide sufficient support. There is little state income support provisions or welfare provision for single-parent families (Duncan, 1991, p.118; Hertog, 2011, p.91). In Japan, two public resource assistant sources are accessible to Japanese single mothers. These are the “jidō fuyō teate”, the child-rearing allowance, which is given to mainly divorced parents, and the “jidō teate”, the child allowance, which are benefits for low-income households with children. However, both options provide a meager payment amount. In addition to these ineffective welfare support options, the Japanese government does not offer any form of discounts or payment support for the high social insurance premiums that all households are required to pay into the country’s health insurance and pension systems (Chieko, 2015). These policies reflect the reason why employment is so high among single

mothers as they have no other alternative option. The benefits that the Japanese government offers to single mothers barely allow them to make ends meet, as seen by the high poverty rate.

Allowance Type	Outline	Eligibility Requirements	Monthly Allowance Amounts	Payment Frequency
Child Allowance	Based on the Child Allowance Act, an allowance is provided to households with children to ensure a stable livelihood and the healthy growth and development of children, who will lead society in the next generation.	Individuals must be residing in Japan and are raising a child who has not yet graduated from junior high school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children aged 0 to 2 years: 15,000 yen per child ● 1st and 2nd children aged 3 years to the 6th grade of elementary school: 10,000 yen per child ● 3rd and subsequent children aged 3 years to the 6th grade of elementary school: 15,000 yen per child ● Junior high school students: 10,000 yen per child 	Paid via bank transfer on the 5th of June, October, and February.
Child Rearing (Support) Allowance	This program provides allowances to single mothers who take care of children, and single fathers who take care of and support children or persons who raise children,	<p>The allowances are payable to single parents with children under 18.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Must be a Japanese citizen 	<p>Monthly allowance (per child)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monthly benefit per child ● Full benefit: 42,330 yen ● Partial benefit: ranges from 9,990 yen to 42,320 yen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An additional 5,000 yen 	n/a

	other than the parents, by living with, taking care of, and supporting the children.		for 2nd child ○ 3,000 yen per child for 3rd and any subsequent child	
--	--	--	---	--

Figure 2. Data from Osaka City. (n.d.). *Child Support Allowance*. Retrieved March 12, 2024. and Osaka City. (n.d.). *Child Allowance*. Retrieved March 12, 2024.

Figure 2 lists the outline for the two allowance types provided by Osaka City. For example, an unemployed 35-year-old mother who lives in Osaka City with two elementary school-aged students can expect to receive around \$2,300 a month from the city“ (Fifield, 2017). This amount is below the \$4000 monthly cost average for a family of four (Numbeo). The Shinjuku City’s policy for childrearing allowance starts at 13,500 yen, or around 90 US dollars, per month per child and the child support allowance amount ranges from 9,990 yen, or about 67 US dollars, to 42,330 yen, or about 282 US dollars, per month per income level (Shinjuku City). Comparing this to the estimated monthly cost of living for a four-person family being 467,888.6 yen (Numbeo), or about 3,117 US dollars, what is offered by Shinjuku, like Osaka, is minimal. On Yokohama city’s website, an estimate for the allowance is missing. The only information for the allowance is that it is intended to help the family become self-sufficient (City of Yokohama). The statement implies the listed allowance amounts are temporary, limited, and inaccessible to single-parent families. The allowances provided by the different cities highlighted point towards this form of governmental financial support being meant to help short-term and until single-parent families can financially sustain themselves. However, how can single-mother families be able to when there are few higher-paying employment options for single mothers? As highlighted by the lack of job options that provide a livable wage for single mothers and their children, it is unlikely that these payments can effectively help single mothers in the long run.

The unfortunate reality is that these benefits used to be more generous. “Limited public income support for single mothers has been further reduced in recent years, resulting in lower benefits for almost half of all single mothers (Shirahase, 2014, p. 551). The reason why the

allowance is so low is, in part, an effect of the government's response when divorce rates increased in 2003. According to Ramsey, "the government implemented reforms to cut back on these social safety nets [...] the government reduced allowances and tacked income and time limits to benefits" (2022). With this decrease, procedures to apply to receive financial help became more complex and inaccessible as not only did one have to make the trip to a government office and fill out paperwork, but information on the procedure became difficult to find especially for single mothers who have limited information literacy and afford to put aside the time for research (Shiotsu, 2020). What about child support for divorced couples? Under Japanese law, parents who do not reside with the child have an obligation to pay child maintenance to the other parent who resides with the child (Matsuno, 2023). However, the enforcement of this policy is not strict as less than 20% of single mothers even receive any form of child support from their ex-husbands (Raymo, 2014, p.11; Ramsey, 2022). It is normal for a divorced father to not continue to pay child support to the mother, especially if the child is in her custody (Yoshiko, 1994, p. 84). The obligations of divorced parents that are laid out by Japanese law fall short of providing effective support to single mothers. Overall, the Japanese government & its policies lack sufficient subsidies for single mothers. With its promotion of pregnancy and maintaining the traditional family unit, it marginalizes Japanese single mothers. This is evident by the lack of resources and low, inaccessible welfare program allowances.

e. Work-life balance: a vicious cycle

With access to mainly low-paying temporary jobs and inadequate support from government family and welfare policies, single mothers are faced with the struggle of balancing their work, providing for their children, and taking care of themselves. These mothers are on their own when maintaining the household. The model of a breadwinner father & stay-at-home mother are the gender roles in the dominant family structure in Japanese society. Single mothers have to take on the role of both. The work-life balance that results from this is one of the main hardships. For example, in a vlog-style video covering the day of a single mother who is also a body therapy business owner, Ogura-san, the vlogger states, "She works late into the night, goes to bed exhausted, takes care of her children, to then waking up early in the morning again to take care of them and go to work in this cycle" (Dark Side of Japan Yuki, 2023). Another

example is a mother named Shinobu Miwa, a 45-year-old single mother who works as a part-time secretary. Despite working five hours a day, she can barely make enough for rent, food, school supplies, and other things she and her 13-year-old son need (Semuels, 2017). These mothers can secure employment, but their long work hours produce little financial reward. Some mothers who cannot keep up this lifestyle get fired. Toniko Martinez “works full time to provide for her two daughters and her 80-year-old mother, a dialysis patient who goes to treatment three times a week. She comments that her “number one struggle” is having to juggle her time between work and household responsibilities. She was fired from some jobs for taking absences for family emergencies” (Shiotsu, 2020). As mentioned above in previous sections, single mothers are often barred from obtaining jobs that would allow them to be paid a livable wage due to both their spotty job history as well as having children. The jobs that they can obtain require them to work long, exhausting hours with very little financial pay-off while also having to take care of their children when they are off the clock. This points to these mothers having little time to take care of themselves as they are forced to perform as both the breadwinner and the housewife. This hard-to-manage lifestyle is then paired with the stigma they face from Japanese society and subsequent shame making it hard for them to look and obtain support and resources.

f. Vicious cycle and entrapment

Being perceived as a single mother can keep women from accessing resources and discouraging them from seeking help. For instance, the status of being without a husband can bar her from obtaining necessary means of living, such as housing. This was the case for Toyohashi Mariko, a divorced high school graduate with a son, who states, “I lied to find a place [to live]. I was not officially divorced yet, so I could show them my family registration without any problems. So, instead of saying I was a single mother, I said my husband is working in another city” (Ezawa, 2016, p.63). She was prevented from renting a space due to her marital status, which made her an undesirable tenant by real estate agents. Being without a husband meant to agents that she is without a breadwinner husband and thus may lack financial resources and may be a problem family due to falling outside of the norm.

Dealing with discrimination from Japanese society, single mothers are too ashamed to seek help and this, in turn, makes it almost impossible for them to find and receive support and resources (Shiotsu, 2020; Fiefield, 2017). Taking both the struggle to balance work-life & dealing with shame strongly points to the consequence of single mothers being extremely vulnerable to low mental health & well-being.

Ratio of Psychological and Low-Self Perceived Health in Single Mother & Two Parent Nuclear Families

Figure 1

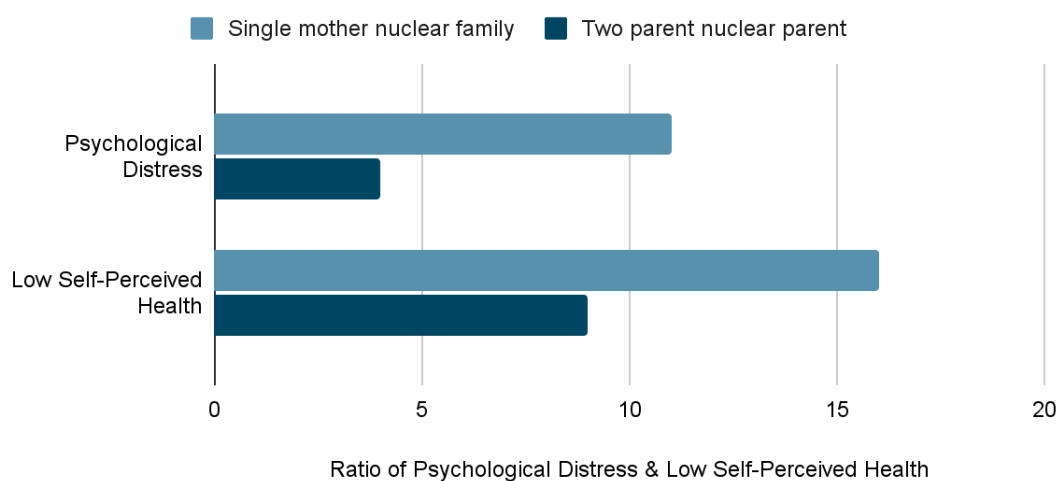


Figure 1. Nippon Communications Foundation. (2021, April 20). シングルマザーに積極的な支援を：こころの不調抱え、相談できる相手もない—成育医療研究センター調査. (Japanese Survey Finds Single Mothers Need Proactive Support). <https://www.nippon.com/ja/japan-data/h00987/>

Figure 1 shows data from an analysis of a study done by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, single mothers ranked the highest compared to other family units in regards to experiencing depression & anxiety disorders, with 11 percent, assessing their health as bad or not very good, “16%, around double that of the ratio in the other groups”, and having higher rates of smoking and drinking (Nippon Communications Foundation, 2021). In other words, single mothers, in light of a rigorous work lifestyle and societal shame, are an extremely vulnerable group compared to others. The consequences of having to manage a work-life balance are made harder when they also have to balance grappling with societal stigma and internal shame. They have no protections against discrimination for their marital status which is

coupled with a lack of a support system due to social isolation and shame. The vicious cycle of financial troubles, demanding work hours, providing for their children, and reluctance and lack of time to acquire help keeps them trapped in this unstable position.

VI. Implications and recommendations

If Japan to truly combat its gender inequality, there must be more emphasis on marginalized groups within the country, especially single mothers. In addition to this, the legacy of the salaryman family and subsequent gender roles must be addressed and dismantled for women's status and rights as a group to be improved.

One of the main takeaways from this research is that the hardships that single mothers face are a result of sexist, patriarchal attitudes that seek to reinforce traditional gender role structures and stigmatize women whose lives do not align with what is considered conventional. This is seen in the hiring preferences of Japanese companies and the types of social programs & financial support enacted by the government. That is why, single mothers must be provided more support by their immediate communities. Because of the ineffective support from the government, the only sources of support that single mothers can turn to are local non-profit organizations.

There are a few organizations that are located in the Tokyo area. The Japan Single Mother Support Association helps single mothers and their families work toward emotional and financial independence and stability by working towards not having to depend on government grants. They achieve this through paid classes that teach single mothers strategies for achieving and maintaining financial independence and advocating for single mothers in the workplace (FIT, 2021). Littleones, a non-profit organization, helps to provide single mothers and fathers not only with employment, information, housing support, and emotional care but also enrichment for their children and raising social awareness of child poverty. They achieve this through conducting social networking gatherings, providing consultation, advice, and support, monthly parent-child events, and housing search support (Littleones). Nerima Kodomo Shokudo Pantry, a pop-up pantry that helps to support impoverished families, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is mainly led by single mothers and provides support to women like

themselves. Not only do they provide free meals, but also life advice, such as how to help the children of single mothers with remote schoolwork (Shiotsu, 2020). All of these organizations work to provide active and effective support to single mothers in their community. The most successful aspect of these organizations is the community they provide for single mothers, as what keeps them in the vicious cycle is a lack of facets of support. Yet, there still needs to be more work done towards destigmatizing lone motherhood for the sake of garnering more support for organizations like the ones mentioned above so more funding and support can be given by the general population. Single mothers are not at fault for their situation, rather they are more negatively impacted by preexisting sexist structures in place. I hope that this research not only helps these organizations but also garners more attention and support for single mothers in a way that further stigmatizes their situation but uplifts them.

All in all, more attention and support should be given to this group in Japan as they are the least likely to speak up about the hardships they have experienced. In addition, their situation encapsulates the struggles that many women in Japan experience with having to balance expectations that come from traditional gender roles and participation in modern Japanese society. It is only through creating more awareness of this injustice that action in government and society is generated to create a more equal future in Japan.

VII. Conclusion

In 2023, the Group of Seven, or G7, held a meeting on women's empowerment in Nikko, Japan. Each of the seven countries sent a female representative to the gender equality meeting, however, representing Japan was a man. When the representative, Masanobu Ogura, was asked about being the only male representative, he said that "male leaders with strong enthusiasm for gender equality are still needed" (Guzman, 2023). The irony in this situation shows how far Japan still needs to go to improve the rights of women, as the thought of having a man speaking on the topic of women's issues reflects the lack of a voice the women of Japan have. Looking towards single mothers in Japan shows the consequences that deeply rooted patriarchal gender roles have on those who do not fit the norm, as illustrated by gender discrimination from a multitude of sources they face. There is a strong sense of stigma against

single mothers and due to this many mothers feel intense shame over their condition. This prevents them from reaching out and getting support. There is a lack of access to secure and livable jobs in the workforce due to deviating from the norm of being a married stay-at-home mother and not fitting into the ideal male worker model that Japanese corporations push. This leads to the intense balancing act of trying to be both breadwinner and housewife that single mothers must shoulder. The government discriminates against them due to the pushback of welfare assistance & unlivable allowances that point towards the upkeep of the traditional family structure. In conclusion, more attention and support should be given to this group in Japan as they are the least likely to speak up about the hardships they have experienced. In addition, their situation encapsulates the struggles that many women in Japan experience with having to balance expectations that come from traditional gender roles and participation in modern Japanese society. It is only through creating more awareness of this injustice that action in government and society is generated to create a more equal future in Japan.

Further research on this topic would be, looking into the situation of Japanese single fathers and foreign single mothers residing in Japan, as they are as invisible as Japanese single mothers. According to Dhungel (2023), single fathers make up the remaining 10 percent of single-parent households in Japan and, similarly to their female counterparts, experience higher psychological distress and rigorous work-life balance. In addition, they have little access to financial assistance and other welfare assistance despite expansions in the Child Rearing Allowance law in 2010 (Umeda, 2010; Dhungel, 2023). In the case of foreign single mothers, they experience the same precarious cycle as Japanese single mothers, however, the additional dimension of not being natively Japanese presents more barriers to accessing resources since many services require Japanese language skills (Ocharo, 2024). Including these other two populations would cover more broadly how single parenthood interacts with gender, nationality, and class.

References

- Asian Boss. (2020, February 23). *Being a single mother in Japan | THE VOICELESS #33* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYmivmkZvlg>
- Asia Pacific Curriculum. (n.d.). "Womenomics" in Japan. <https://asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/womenomics-japan>
- Bloch, D. (2017). "More than Just Nakayoshi: Marital Intimacy as a Key to Personal Happiness." In Manzenreiter, W. & Holthus, B. (Eds.), *Happiness and the Good Life in Japan*, (pp.25-40). Routledge.
- Botman, D., Danninger, S., & Schiff, J. (2015). *Can Abenomics Succeed? : Overcoming the Legacy of Japan's Lost Decades* (1st ed.). International Monetary Fund.
- Chad, D. G. (2023). Japan Sends Man to G7 Meeting on Women's Empowerment. *TIME*. <https://time.com/6290088/japan-gender-equality-g7/>
- Chieko, A. (2015, August 24). *日本でシングルマザーとして生きること (The Plight of Japan's Single Mothers)*. Nippon Communications Foundation. <https://www.nippon.com/ja/in-depth/a04603/>
- Children and Families Bureau Family Welfare Division. (2023). *令和3年度全国ひとり親世帯等調査結果の概要 (Summary of FY2021 National Single-Parent Household Survey Results)*. Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. https://www.cfa.go.jp/assets/contents/node/basic_page/field_ref_resources/f1dc19f2-79dc-49bf-a774-21607026a21d/9ff012a5/20230725_councils_shingikai_hinkon_hitorioya_6TseCaln_05.pdf
- City of Yokohama. (n.d.). *ひとり親家庭への支援 (Support for single-parent families)*. City of Yokohama. https://www.city.yokohama.lg.jp/lang/residents/en/child/for_single_parent.html
- Cost of living in Osaka.* (n.d.). <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Osaka>
- Cost of living in Tokyo.* (n.d.). <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Tokyo>
- Dalton, E. (2022, October 6). Was Abe Shinzo's womenomics policy good for women or the economy? Australian Institute of International Affairs.
- Dark side of Japan Yuki. (2023, May 3). *A Day in the Life of Japanese Single Mother* 😊 あいうえお [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipExtV45WIU>

- Dhungel, B., Kato, T., Kachi, Y., Ochi, M., Gilmour, S., & Takehara, K. (2023, June 5). *Prevalence and associated factors of psychological distress among single fathers in Japan*. *Journal of epidemiology*.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10165216/>
- Ezawa, A. (2016). *Becoming a Single Mother*. In D. Slaymaker & W. M. Tsutsui (Eds.), *Single mothers in contemporary Japan: Motherhood, class, and reproductive practice*. (pp.61-81). Lexington Books/Fortress Academic.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/seattleu/reader.action?docID=4509887&ppg=91>
- Fifield, A. (2017, May 27). In Japan, single mothers struggle with poverty and a “culture of shame.” *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-japan-single-mothers-struggle-with-poverty-and-with-shame/2017/05/26/01a9c9e0-2a92-11e7-9081-f5405f56d3e4_story.html
- FIT. (2021). *Japan Single Mother Support Association*. FIT For Charity.
http://fitforcharity.org/previous-runs/2021/2021_CharityInterview_singlemother.html
- Global Factsheet. UN Women. (2020).
<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/POWW-2019-Fact-sheet-Global-en.pdf>
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Touchstone
- Hertog, E. (2011). “I did not know how to tell my parents, so I thought I would have to have an abortion”: experiences of unmarried mothers in Japan. In Alexy, A., & Ronald, R. (Eds.), *Home and Family in Japan* (pp. 91–111). essay, Routledge.
- Imamura, A. E. (1990). The Japanese Family. *Asia Society*, 7–17.
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/exeas/resources/pdf/japanese-family-imamura.pdf>
- International Labor Organization. (n.d.). *Country profiles*. ILOSTAT.
<https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>
- Kageyama, Y. (2023, November 30). *Downtown Tokyo’s homeless fear removal ahead of Olympics*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/general-news-d452c1190049d94af74d393222f8c31f>
- Kinnear, K. L. (1999). *Single Parents : A Reference Handbook*. ABC-CLIO.
- Kumagai, F. (1995). Families in Japan: Beliefs and Realities. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 26(1), 135–163. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41602371>
- Kuwak, C. (2020). *The US role in advancing gender equality globally through girls’ education*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-uss-role-in-advancing-gender-equality-globally-through-girls-education/>

- Kyodo News. (2021, December 24). *50% of single-parent households in Japan struggle financially: Study*. Kyodo News.
<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/12/d8b8b4ab2cc1-50-of-single-parent-households-in-japan-struggle-financially-study.html>
- Levin, S., & Van, L. C. (Eds.). (2005). *Stigma and group inequality : Social psychological perspectives*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Littleones. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://npolittleones.com/en/about-us/>
- Lukyantseva, P. (2023). *Feminism in Modern Japan: A Historical Review of Japanese Women's Issues on Gender*. *Women's Issues on Gender*. 25(8).
<https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3069&context=jiws>
- Matsuno, E. (2023). *Family Laws and Regulations Japan 2024*. ICLG.
<https://iclg.com/practice-areas/family-laws-and-regulations/japan>
- McBride, J., & Xu, B. (2018, March 23). *Abenomics and the Japanese economy*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/abenomics-and-japanese-economy>
- Mesmer, P. (2023, June 23). *Single mothers in Japan face discrimination and barriers to support*. *Le Monde.Fr*.
https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/06/23/single-mothers-in-japan-face-discrimination-and-barriers-to-support_6036057_4.html
- Nakano, L. (2017). "Happiness and unconventional life choice: Views of single women in Japan." In Manzenreiter, W. & Holthus, B. (Eds.), *Happiness and the Good Life in Japan*, (pp.53-66). Routledge.
- Nippon Communications Foundation. (2021, April 20). シングルマザーに積極的な支援を : こころの不調抱え、相談できる相手もない-成育医療研究センター調査. (Japanese Survey Finds Single Mothers Need Proactive Support). nippon.com.
<https://www.nippon.com/ja/japan-data/h00987/>
- Nonomiya, L. (2022, September 10). *Japan's record percentage of working mothers masks low-paying jobs*. The Japan Times.
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/09/10/business/japan-working-mothers-pay-gap/>
- Ocharo, H. (2024, April 29). *Raising Kids in Japan as a single parent? it takes a village*. The Japan Times. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2024/04/28/voices/single-mother-japan-foreign-resident/>

- Okubo, M. (2023). How Japan is bridging the gender gap. *ESG Clarity*.
<https://esgclarity.com/how-japan-is-bridging-the-gender-gap/>
- Osaka City. (n.d.). *Child Allowance*. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from
https://www.city.osaka.lg.jp/contents/wdu020/kodomoseishonen/english/allowance_aid_etc/01.html
- Osaka City. (n.d.). *Child Support Allowance*. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from
https://www.city.osaka.lg.jp/contents/wdu020/kodomoseishonen/english/allowance_aid_etc/02.html
- Peng, I. (1997). Single Mothers in Japan: Unsupported Mothers Who Work. in S. Duncan & R. Edwards (Eds.), *Single Mothers in International Context: Mothers or Workers?*. (pp.115-147). Routledge.
- Ramsey, G. (2022, October 6). *Why most families with single mothers in Japan are living in poverty*. The Borgen Project. <https://borgenproject.org/families-with-single-mothers-in-japan/>
- Raymo, J. (2014). *Single motherhood and work-family conflict in Japan*.
https://www.iil.go.jp/profile/documents/j_raymo.pdf.
- Saiidi, U. (2018). *Japan has some of the longest working hours in the world. It's trying to change*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/06/01/japan-has-some-of-the-longest-working-hours-in-the-world-its-trying-to-change.html>
- Samuels, A. (2017, September 7). *Japan Is No Place for Single Mothers*. The Atlantic.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/09/japan-is-no-place-for-single-mothers/538743/>
- Shibata, M. (2019). *Why Japan's 'shūkatsu' job-seeking system is changing*.
<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190731-why-japans-shkatsu-is-disappearing-for-japanese-youth>
- Shinjuku City. (n.d.). *Welfare Programs for Single-Parent Families*. Information on Everyday Living for Foreign Residents Website. Retrieved July 9, 2023, from
http://www.foreign.city.shinjuku.lg.jp/en/kenko/kenko_24/
- Shiotsu, M., & Brown, J. (2020, September 28). *Single Mothers in Japan Confront Hidden Realities*. Metropolis Japan. <https://metropolisjapan.com/single-mothers-in-japan/>
- Shirahase, S., & Raymo, J. M. (2014). Single Mothers and Poverty in Japan: The Role of Intergenerational Coresidence. *Social Forces*, 93(2), 545–569.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43287837>

- Silva, E. B. (Ed.). (1996). *Good enough mothering? : Feminist perspectives on lone motherhood*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Siripala, T. (2021, January 19). *Japan's Struggling Single Mothers Expose the Flaws of Womenomics*. The Diplomat.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/japans-struggling-single-mothers-expose-the-flaws-of-womenomics/>
- Statista Research Department. (2024). *Japan: Average annual income per household 2023*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/856609/japan-average-annual-income-household/>
- Statista Research Department. (2024). *Japan: Higher education enrollment rate by gender 1960-2023*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1198580/japan-higher-education-enrollment-rate-by-gender/>
- Statista Research Department. (2023, October 20). *Japan: Poverty rate*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1172622/japan-poverty-rate/>
- Sutton, E., Pemberton, S., Fahmy, E., & Tamiya, Y. (2014). Stigma, shame and the experience of poverty in Japan and the United Kingdom. *Social Policy and Society*, 13(01), 143–154.
- Tokoro, M. (2003). Social Policy and Lone Parenthood in Japan: A Workfare Tradition? *The Japanese Journal of Social Security Policy*, 2(2), 25–58.
- The Global Gender Gap Report 2023*. (2023). World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf
- The Government of Japan. (2020). *Abenomics: The Government of Japan*. JapanGov. <https://www.japan.go.jp/abenomics/index.html>
- The Government of Japan. (2014). *Womenomics is pushing Abenomics forward*. The Government of Japan. https://www.japan.go.jp/tomodachi/2014/summer2014/womenomics_is_pushing_abenomics_forward.html
- Umeda, S. (2010, August 24). *Japan: Single-father households receive government support, like single-mother households*. The Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2010-08-24/japan-single-father-households-receive-government-support-like-single-mother-households/>
- Yoshiko, S., & Lippit, M. E. M. (1994). Unmarried Mothers and Their Children in Japan. *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement*, 6, 83–110. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42772070>

