

Analysis of the Present Situation of Small and Medium-sized Companies in Gifu and Aichi Area: Towards a Gender-Equal Society

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the present situation of companies in the Gifu and Aichi areas and, through a survey questionnaire, tried to clarify the problems involved in achieving a gender-equal society. The number of valid responses came from 237 companies. More than half have no managerial posts for women and the percentage of women holding a managerial post is only 7.6% overall. The problems the companies identified for women employees about advancing their work were “Nothing particular” and “Difficulty in asking for overtime and late-night work.” It is important to establish a system where diverse human resources can work effectively. In order to achieve this aim, maximizing the attractions of the company and improving performance are necessary steps. Creating a healthy workplace environment for both men and women is the first step toward creating a more gender-equal society.

Keywords

Gender-equal society, small and medium-sized company, Tokai area, Childcare and Family care Leave Law

I . Introduction

In 1999, the Japanese Government enacted the “Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society.” In this law, the term “gender-equal society” is defined in Article 2 as follows. “Formation of a Gender-Equal Society: forming a society in which both men and women, as equal members of society, are given opportunities to freely participate in activities in any field of society and thereby equally enjoy political, economic, social, and cultural benefits as well as shared responsibilities.” Government formulated

the Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality in December 2015, and there re-examined the patriarchal orientation to society and strongly emphasized expanding women's participation by identifying quantitative targets to be met.

Under the Abe administration, the “Minister in Charge of Promoting the Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens” is a key target and a focus on women's activities is very important. In April 2015, the Government enacted a new law “Women's activities promotion law” in order to advance

women’s activities. Companies with more than 301 employees are required to make and submit an action plan to promote women. It is not an obligation for companies with less than 300 employees, however, it is an important management strategy to utilize a diverse labor force in society where the labor force will decrease in the near future.

This paper focuses on the present situation of companies in the Tokai area in creating a gender-equal society and tries to clarify the problems of achieving it.

II. Methods

Questionnaires consisted of seven questions as follows: 1) Numbers and percentages of managerial posts for women, 2) Percentages of employees who took childcare leave in 2014, 3) Numbers of men who took childcare and family care leave in 2014, 4) Re-employment system for women who quit jobs because of marriage or maternity, 5) Problems in advancing women’s activities, 6) Numbers of

employees who took family care leave in 2014, and 7) Impressions of the Abe administration’s strategy on women and plans for promoting it at company level (free comments). After the questionnaires, we interviewed one company where women did not retire at marriage or maternity, and men took advantage of the family care leave system. These questionnaires were sent to 600 companies in Gifu and Aichi prefectures in December 2015 where Juroku Bank is financing.

III. Results

The number of valid responses was 237 companies, and the ratio of valid responses was 39.5%. Companies are classified into seven industrial groups (Table 1). About 30% are Material type companies followed by companies involved in the Wholesale and retail trades (21.9%). Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the numbers and percentages of companies by size of capital, numbers of employees, and location.

Table 1. Industrial Groups

Industrial Groups	Individual Industry	Numbers	Percentages
1. Material Type	Lumber and Wood Products, Paper and Paper Products, Chemical Industry, Ceramic Industry, Iron and Steel, Blades and Metal Products, Plastic, Mining Industry and others	70	29.5%
2. Machining and Assembly Type	General Machinery, Electrical Machinery and Equipment, Transportation Machinery and Equipment	32	13.5%
3. Daily Necessities and Others	Food, Textile, Furniture, Publishing, Printing	34	14.3%
4. Construction	Construction	24	10.1%
5. Wholesale and Retail Trade	Wholesale, Retail Trade	52	21.9%
6. Transportation	Transportation	10	4.2%
7. Service	Service	15	6.3%
Total		237	100.0%

Table 2. The size of capital

Capital (YEN)	Numbers	Percentages
less than 10million	6	2.5
10million to 30million	81	34.2
30million to 50million	50	21.1
50million to 1 billion	66	27.8
more than 1billion	34	14.3
Total	237	100.0

Table 3. Numbers of employees

Numbers of Employees	Numbers	Percentages
less than 10	15	6.3
10 to 50	76	32.1
50 to 100	62	26.2
100 to 200	60	25.3
300 to 500	12	5.1
more than 500	12	5.1
Total	237	100.0

Table 4. Companies' location

Area	Numbers	Percentages
Gifu	164	69.2
Aichi	73	30.8
Total	237	100.0

1. Numbers and percentages of women's managerial post

The numbers of all managerial posts, numbers of women involved, and percentages for each company were calculated as shown below (Fig.1). More than half of the companies surveyed have no managerial posts held by women followed by those with “more than 10%, less than 30%” (17.7%), and “less than 10%” (16.0%).

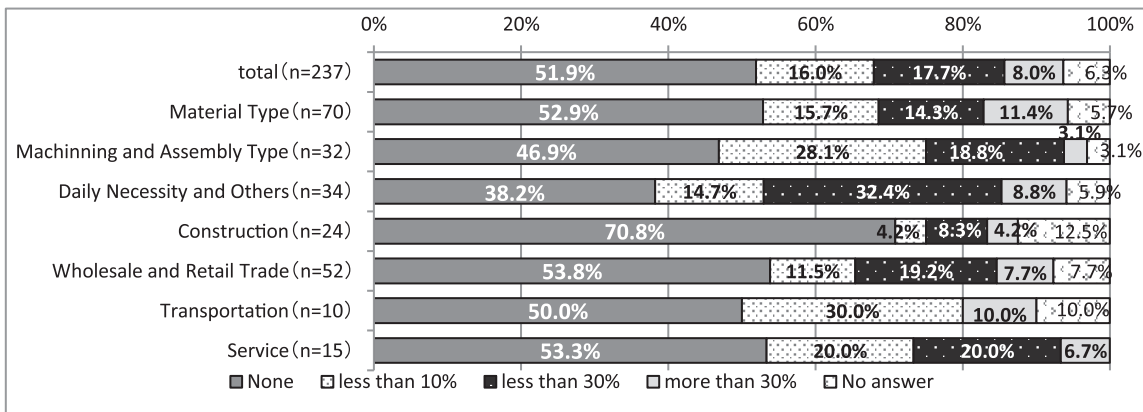


Fig. 1. Percentage of women in managerial posts by industrial groups

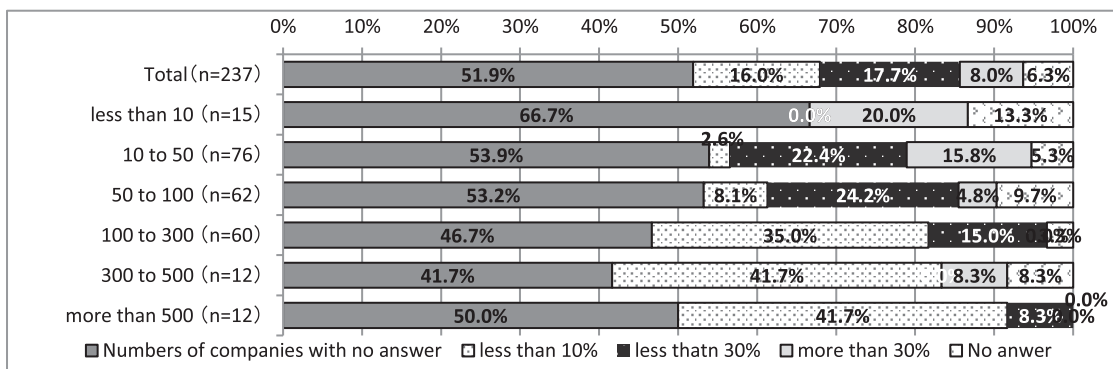


Fig. 2. Percentage of women in managerial posts by company scale

There are no differences between industrial groups. The group of companies manufacturing daily necessities and others shows that 38.2% have no women in managerial posts and 32.4% have “less than 30%,” which is the highest proportion found. When we compare the size of companies by numbers of employees, those having “None” in managerial posts are the largest category; there is a tendency that as size increases, there are lower percentages of women in managerial posts in companies with less than 500 employees. When we count all numbers of managerial post and calculate percentages of women’s managerial posts, the

average is 7.6%. The highest percentage of 18.0% is found among manufacturing companies. The next group is the wholesale and retail trade group (9.0%) and the least number of women in such posts are found in the construction industry (0.7%). The percentage of managerial posts held by women by size of companies and numbers of employees are shown in Table 6. Some of the companies with no managerial posts for women commented as follows: “We are educating women to managerial posts” or “We are posting women to managerial posts next year.”

Table 5. Numbers and percentages of managerial posts held by women by industry

	Total Numbers	Number of Women	Percentages of Women
Material Type (n=66)	1,198	105	8.8%
Machining and Assembly Type (n=31)	1,007	41	4.1%
Daily Necessities and Others (n=32)	579	104	18.0%
Construction (n=21)	549	4	0.7%
Wholesale and Retail Trade (n=48)	1,122	101	9.0%
Transportation (n=9)	232	6	2.6%
Service (n=15)	338	23	6.8%
Total (n=222)	5,025	384	7.6%

※n = numbers of companies with no answer

Table 6. Numbers and percentages of managerial posts held by women by company size

	Total Numbers	Number of Women	Percentages of Women
less than 10 (n=13)	24	4	16.7%
10 to 50 (n=72)	730	147	20.1%
50 to 100 (n=56)	740	47	6.4%
100 to ~300 (n=58)	1,497	91	6.1%
300 to 500 (n=11)	532	19	3.6%
more than 500 (n=12)	1,502	76	5.1%
Total (n=222)	5,025	384	7.6%

※n = numbers of companies with no answer

2. Percentage of people who took part in the childcare leave system in 2014

We questioned the percentages of employees overall and the numbers of men who took part in the childcare leave system in 2014 (Table 7). The majority responded “none” (58.6%), which suggests there are

no employees who need these systems. When we analyzed leave by industrial groups, the largest share was “none.” In 94 companies where needed employees exist, the percentage of those who used the support systems was 58.5% or “less than 30%” of the total. All industrial groups show the same tendency, which means that

although laws are enacted and established, there are many employees who did not or were not able to use these systems.

Table 7. Number of users of the childcare leave system

	No Target	Targets						No Answer
			less than 30%	30% to 50%	50% to 70%	70% to 100%	100%	
Material Type (n=70)	64.3	34.3(100.0)	(54.2)	(4.2)	(4.2)	(8.3)	(29.2)	1.4
Machining and Assembly Type (n=32)	43.8	56.3(100.0)	(44.4)	(22.2)	(5.6)	(5.6)	(22.2)	0.0
Daily Necessities and Others (n=34)	55.9	44.1(100.0)	(60.0)	(6.7)	(6.7)	(6.7)	(20.0)	0.0
Construction (n=24)	62.5	37.5(100.0)	(66.7)	(22.2)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(11.1)	0.0
Wholesale and Retail Trade (n=52)	51.9	42.3(100.0)	(68.2)	(9.1)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(22.7)	5.8
Transportation (n=10)	80.0	20.0(100.0)	(100.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	0.0
Service (n=15)	73.3	26.7(100.0)	(50.0)	(25.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(25.0)	0.0
Total (n=237)	58.6	39.7(100.0)	(58.5)	(11.7)	(3.2)	(4.3)	(22.3)	1.7

There are 18 companies where men were included among the users in 19.1% of 94 companies where needed employees exist. Sixteen companies contain one and two companies contain two (Fig.3).

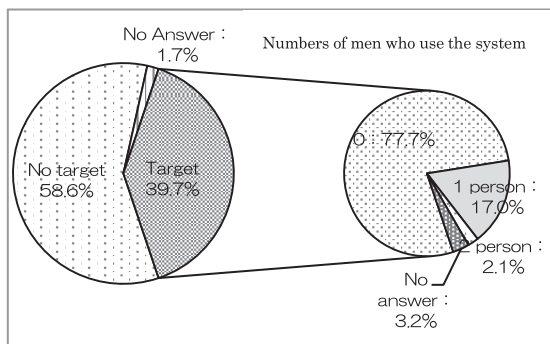


Fig. 3. Percentages of employees who are the targets of the childcare leave system

3. The re-employment system for women who quit jobs because of marriage or maternity

We questioned whether there is a system of re-employment for women who quit their jobs after marriage or maternity (Fig. 4, 5). As a result, 29.5% companies have a re-employment system while 46.0% answered,

“there is no plan to set up the system” and 19.4% answered, “we do not have the system at present, but are planning to set it up soon.” When the data were analyzed by industrial groups, the tendency was almost the same as the overall tendency. However, 60% of those in the manufacturing and transportation industries indicated that “there is no plan to set up the system,” which is a higher figure than in other groups. When the data were analyzed by the size of numbers of companies, no clear tendency was found.

The re-employment system is called “Job return system” in Japan. It is said that even though there are differences in conditions such as length of time after retirement, most large companies have already set up the system. Women employees with a wealth of experiences are attractive to companies. The re-employment system is an important measure in obtaining these employees. In this survey, about 30% of companies answered that they had a re-employment system and “when we include companies who plan to set up the system, the

percentage will be 48.9%.” It is obvious that the re-employment system will

spread in small and medium-sized companies as well.

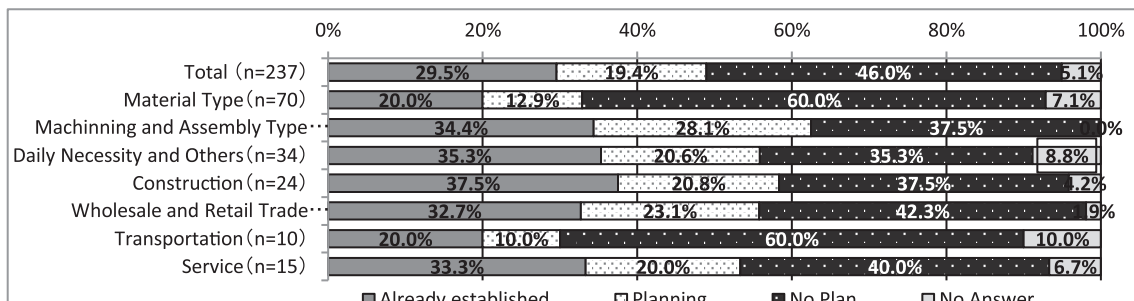


Fig. 4. The present situation: The re-employment system by industry group

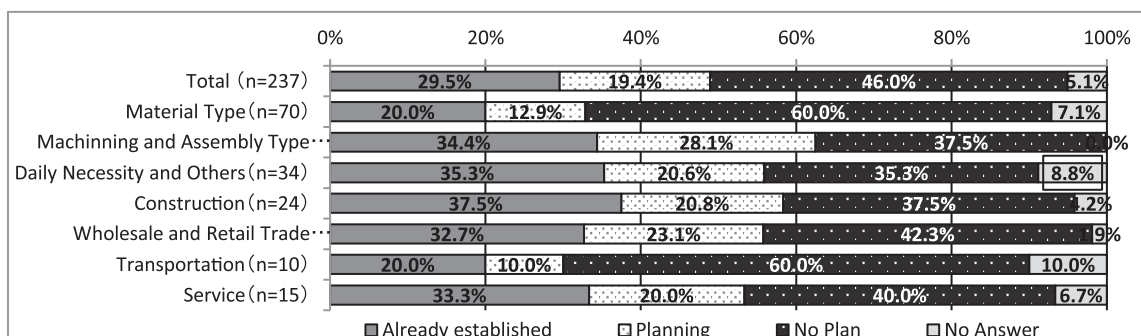


Fig. 5. The present situation: The re-employment system by size of company

4 . Problems of advancing women’s activities

We questioned the problems of advancing women’s activities at work (Fig.6~ Fig.13). “Nothing particular” was the most popular response (36.3%, Fig.6). followed by “Difficulty of asking for overtime and late-night work” (35.4%). The third was “Short no. of years in service” (29.1%). This shows that there are many women who quit their job at their marriage or at maternity. “Insufficient understanding of society about women’s jobs” and “Insufficient understanding of men about women’s jobs”

are both less than 10%, which nowadays means that understanding about women’s jobs is spreading.

When we analyzed problems by industrial groups in manufacturing and transportation industrial groups (Fig.7, 8, 9, 12), “Difficulty of asking for overtime and late-night work” was chosen the most but more than half of service groups chose “Nothing particular.”

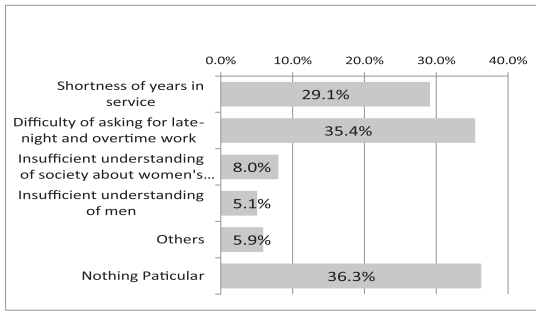


Fig. 6. Problems: Total

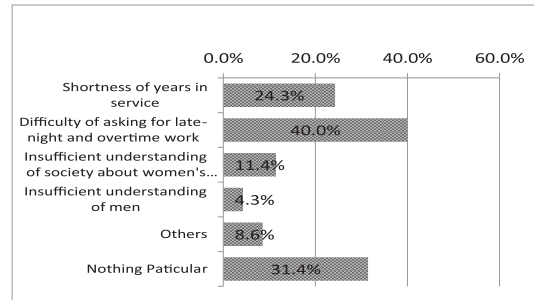


Fig.7. Problems: Material Type

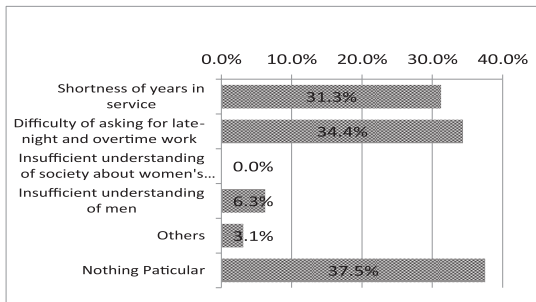


Fig. 8. Problems: Machining and Assembly

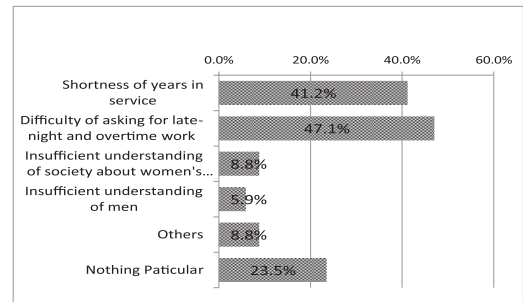


Fig.9. Problems: Daily Necessities and Others

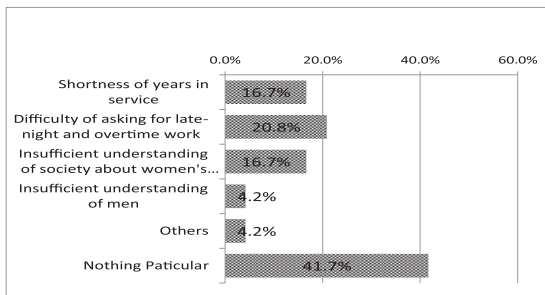


Fig.10. Problems: Construction

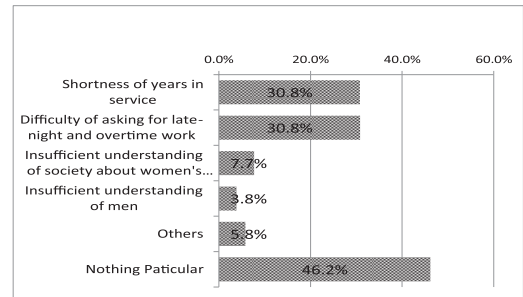


Fig.11. Problems: Wholesale And Retail Trade

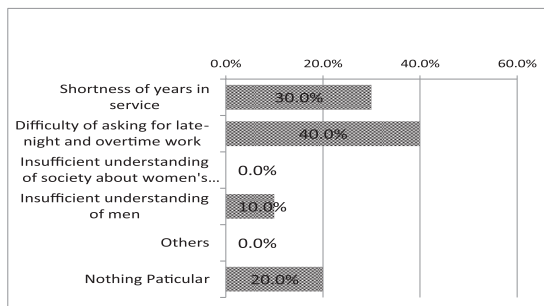


Fig.12. Problems: Transportation

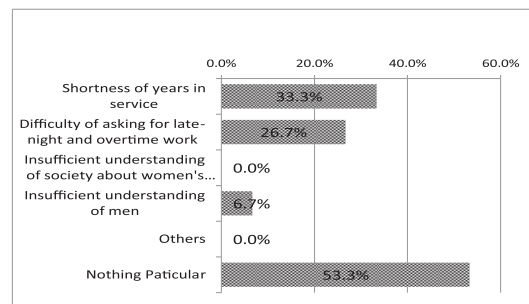


Fig.13. Problems: Service

Table 8. Comments on Women’s Problems

	Industrial Groups	Comments
1	Chemical Industry	Women employees lack motivation
	Plastic and Others	Lack of Motivation
	Retail	Insufficient understanding of society about women’s job
	Construction	Women do not wish to work longer and become managers
2	Blades and Metal Products	Heavy lifting is hard for women
	Ceramic Industry	Women are a risk in management
	Iron and Steel Industry	Manufacturing is hard for women
	Furniture	Working with machines needs heavy lifting
	Wholesale	Short working hours has a negative influence on results
	Food	Difficulty of asking for late-night and overtime work
	Wholesale	Sort working hours has a negative influence on results
	Textile Industry	Women work only in the office

There are several free comments in “Others”; comments are divided into two groups by contents (Table 8). One is about awareness toward women’s work and includes comments such as “There is no motivation to work,” or “There is lack of understanding.” The other is about physical characteristics such as “It is difficult to ask women when heavy lifting is necessary.”

5. Number of employees who took leave via the family care system in 2014

We questioned the number of employees who took family care leave system in 2014. We also questioned the number of men who took part in this system. As a result, there are 11 companies where these systems are used while there are no users in 92.0% of companies (Fig.14). There are five companies where men used the system, one person used it in four companies and two used it in one other company.

In Japan, there are more than 110,000 employees per year who took early retirement because of family care. Under the present family care leave system, it is

possible to take a maximum of 93 days per person when family care is needed; however, the acquisition rate is still low. Government is now planning a “Zero nursing turnover plan” in order to utilize this system more flexibly. Some companies accept the

flexitime and short-time working systems. These systems are aimed at creating a good workplace environment and stopping employees from retiring early. For balancing work and family care, not only systems but also changing consciousness about work, such as the long time “addiction” to labor, are necessary.

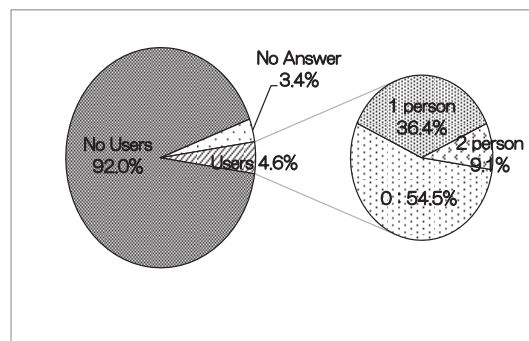


Fig.14. Percentages of employees who are the targets of the family care leave system.

6. Interview

From the questionnaires, we selected one company to interview. We interviewed a head of the company and a woman in a managerial post. In the company, 100% of women employees take childcare leave and men took advantage of the family care leave system. This company is in the manufacturing industry, which develops and manufactures machine parts. There are 95 employees and two women in managerial posts. There is no quota for women employees in managerial posts. Only full-time employees are hired and there are no part time jobs. The company has tried to make the environment friendly to women. As a result, women employees do not quit their jobs and all employees continue after marriage and maternity; this leads women to taking managerial posts. There was a plan for creating a re-employment system, however, as no women employees quit their jobs, the system does not exist at present. It was clear from the interview that all management decisions were made to achieve good management allowing the enterprise to survive. This strategy naturally leads women to managerial posts and 100% of employees can obtain childcare by the leave system. This enterprise obtained the prize “Excellent company for supporting childcare in Gifu prefecture in 2011.”

7. Free comments

There are 33 free comments on impressions of the Abe administration’s strategy for women and companies’ plans. Eight comments were about the necessity of women’s work at companies and society. Five comments are to do with the

necessities of establishing an environment in the company and society. Five comments are plans for advancing women in managerial posts and two are from the construction industry. Two comments are on the negative influences of special deductions for spouses. Because of this tax system, women limit their labor time. Only two companies comment on the difficulty of employing women. On the whole, most companies were positive about advancing women in managerial posts.

8. Conclusion

This paper analyzed questionnaires regarding the present situation of companies in Gifu and Aichi prefectures on promoting a gender-equal society. From analysis of the 237 companies that responded, more than half have no women in managerial posts, and women in managerial posts make up only 7.6% of the total. Most respondents think the problem for companies advancing women employees’ work is “Nothing particular” followed by “Difficulty in asking for overtime and late-night work.” From the results, we can conclude three points concerning the advancement of a gender-equal society in companies.

(1)Support for laws promoting women’s activities

A “Law promoting women’s activities” was enacted in 2015. The law obliged companies with more than 301 employees to make and submit action plans to promote women. It is not an obligation for the companies with less than 300 employees, however, it is an important management strategy to utilize a diverse labor force in a society where the

labor force will decrease. An action plan for advancing a gender-equal society will enhance the image of companies and, as a result, many women will select that company for a job.

(2) Support for diverse human resources

Companies with diverse human resources will acquire diverse points of view and innovative ideas, which in turn, lead to new innovations. These environments will also improve individual motivation and animate the workplace.

(3) Measures for a decreasing labor force

A decreasing labor force is definitely part of the near future in Japan and competition to hire human resources is an urgent task for companies. It is a heavy blow for companies when excellent employees quit jobs because of childcare and family responsibilities. If those employees can stay and continue to work, both companies and employees benefit. Moreover, the know-how of employees who have long experiences in childcare and family care is valued by other employees and the company because they typically use time effectively; this can cause improved productivity.

It is important to establish a system where diverse human resources promote active workers. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to maximize the attractiveness of the company and improve its performance as necessary. Creating a healthy workplace environment for both men and women is the first step toward a gender-equal society.

*This research received a grant from the “Diversity Research Environment Realization Initiative (collaboration type),”

Science and Technology Human Resources Development Grant in 2015.

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