

## Gender Inequality in the Labour Force: A Comparative Study between Japan and Bangladesh

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**Abstract-** This study examines the trend, nature and underlying reasons for gender inequality in Japan and Bangladesh's labour force. Content analysis has been undertaken to explore inequality using primary databases like the Statistics Bureau of Japan, Labor Force Survey 2017 of Bangladesh, Global Gender Gap Report 2023, and World Bank 2022. The data of this comparative study has been analysed using the “Feminist theory”. The findings reveal that males and females in both countries have equal employment rates across the industries. However, the wage gap in Japan is 22.1 percent, and Bangladesh has a narrow wage gap of 8.1 percent. The presence of gender inequality can be confirmed by the high rate of women's employment in the agriculture sector in Bangladesh, even after having a high enrolment rate in secondary and tertiary education. At the same time, most Japanese women are employed in the service sector, which offers irregular or part-time jobs with minimum financial benefits. However, factors influencing the inequality of the workforce are similar in Japan and Bangladesh. Both countries' unfavourable organisational and social structures have been identified as significant elements of inequality. This study suggests merging other aspects of gender inequality and exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the workforce of Japan and Bangladesh.

**Keywords** Gender inequality, Labour market, Japan, Bangladesh, Employment

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## 1. Introduction

It is now a common fact that women around the world experience greater inequality in the labour market and workplace compared to male employees. A woman with the same qualifications and skills often gets paid less for a similar job than a man. However, gender inequality can have different forms in different nations, depending on their values, cultures, and norms (Triventi et al., 2015). For example, women from undeveloped countries face different levels of gender inequality than women from developed countries. Even after having a high-level job, they commonly get less financial return for their effort and hard work. The scenario is even more alarming in developing countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. Women from this region have less access to education and other resources than men. So, they automatically become less qualified for any job, resulting in lower payments (Ahmed & Maitra, 2010). The social structure and sense of oppression towards women have been identified as the underlying reason behind this inequality in the South Asia region (Munir & Kanwal, 2020). In addition, although doing the same amount of work as men, women in the agricultural sector earn 21% less than men in this country (The World Bank, 2021).

Moreover, the labour market is highly gender segregated. Women are more employed in the informal sectors, which pay relatively less. In Bangladesh, most females are in the Readymade garments (RMG) sector. This sector has produced massive employment opportunities for women, but the pay scale is meagre for women, considering the price hike and inflation rate. In addition, they are getting paid less than men, even though women are engaged in more labour-intensive and risky roles (Ahmed & Maitra, 2010).

On the contrary, Japan is a developed country that is also, in fact, one of the leading economies in the world. The unemployment rate in Japan is meagre compared to other developed nations. However, women have historically been victims of discrimination in Japan. Before World War II, women in Japan faced severe inequality regarding their democratic rights and employment opportunities (Belarmino & Roberts, 2019). However, the Constitution of 1947 established the rights of women. The scenario in the education sector has improved as more women in Japan have access to quality education. However, in the case of the labour market, women still face inequality and discrimination (Iida, 2018). In addition, women's participation in politics or government jobs is pretty low in Japan compared to the developed nations (Gender Gap Report, 2021). This study aims to compare the labour market of a developed country like Japan and a developing country like Bangladesh, identifying its trend and nature. Also, it would investigate the factors behind this inequality. The rest of this paper has been divided into five sections. The first section includes a literature review on the gender wage gap, sex segregation in the workforce, and employment opportunities for women in Japan

and Bangladesh. The second part includes the methodology, including this study's theoretical and conceptual framework. The third part of this paper contains results, where the trends of gender inequality have been presented in three categories. The fourth part of the paper includes a discussion of the result and an analysis of the underlying factors behind gender inequality. In contrast, the final part consists of concluding remarks and the scope for future research.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Gender wage gap**

Ahmed and Mitra (2010) state that the wage gap is higher in urban than rural areas. In addition, this wage gap is attributed to gender discrimination against working-class women. Blau and Kahn (2017) have identified several factors leading to wage differences between males and females. It has pointed out the role of occupational segregation, which means that women are supposed to work in lower-paying areas compared to men. Discrimination at work is the leading cause of the wage gap.

Even though the wage gap has narrowed over the years, society still has differences. One study shows that women in developed countries like The United States earn about 80% of what men earn (Blau & Kahn, 2017). This finding indicates that the persistent wage gap is caused by discrimination and societal biases that are hard to explain. A previous study also shows that the difference in pay between these two entities varies from country to country. For example, the wage gap is smaller in Nordic countries than in other developed countries, which suggests that family-friendly working practices and generous parental leave policies may help close the gap (Fortin, 2014).

Previous studies have demonstrated that a disparity in income between men and women considerably affects individuals, their households, and society. Low wages for women make it difficult for them to be economically solvent and compel them to remain dependent (Ahmed, 2018). Moreover, previous studies have stated that the economy would expand significantly and poverty would decline if the wage disparity were closed. Many countries have implemented policies and steps to close the payment differences. Some of these are pay transparency, diversity programs, flexible work plans, and help with childcare costs. However, these strategies work in different ways, and more research is needed to determine whether they will help close the wage disparity in the long run (Albrecht et al., 2018).

### **2.2 Sex segregation in the workforce**

Eagly and Wood (2019) state that the fact that men and women have different job preferences and hobbies is one reason why sex segregation still exists. It also shows that women tend to choose jobs that involve caring for others, social contact, and communication. In contrast, men tend to select the ones that emphasise

competition, independence, and problem-solving. However, another study has shown that how people are significantly socialised affects their job choices. Cultural norms and ideas about how men and women should act often lead them to choose different jobs. For example, women are often pushed toward jobs involving caring for others, while men are often pushed toward professional or leadership roles. (Budden, 2019; Powell & Graves, 2020; Goldin, 2014).

Reskin (1993) discussed sex segregation in the workplace from demand and supply perspectives. Sex segregation has been declining since the 1970s; factors like employer preferences, economic pressure, and market demand have a direct impact on the segregated workforce. However, women's leadership in managerial posts has been found to have positive and negative effects on gender segregation in the workplace, so only encouraging women's leadership does not solve the issue (Stainback & Kwon, 2012).

Sex segregation in the workplace has considerable effects on both people and society as a whole. Previous studies have shown that challenging gender stereotypes, eliminating bias and discrimination, and supporting gender equality can lead to a labour market where everyone has the same chances and outcomes (Ahmed & Ullah, 2020).

### **2.3 Occupational discrimination in Japan**

Suzuki and Fujiwara (2019) explained discrimination based on age, often known as "ageism," which is prevalent in Japan. Older workers have more difficulty accessing job prospects than younger candidates since businesses tend to favour the former. This discrimination originates from preconceived notions about the capabilities, productivity, and adaptability to new technologies that older workers are perceived to possess. However, previous studies have highlighted discrimination based on nationality as an alarming issue in Japan. It is common for foreign workers in Japan to experience occupational discrimination based on their nationality or ethnic background they come from. Existing literature has stated that individuals who are not of Japanese descent face obstacles while trying to secure jobs, receive fair compensation, and gain access to possibilities for professional growth (Li & Sasaki, 2020). Perceptions of cultural differences and difficulties in communication are frequently the root cause of discrimination. Previous Studies have opined that occupational discrimination negatively impacts individuals' mental health, happiness, and job satisfaction. In addition, people who have been the target of discrimination report experiencing higher levels of stress, poorer levels of job satisfaction, and decreased levels of commitment to their organisations. These unfavourable consequences may result in lower rates of production as well as higher rates of employee turnover (Yamada, 2017).

However, existing literature has argued that discrimination in the workplace also

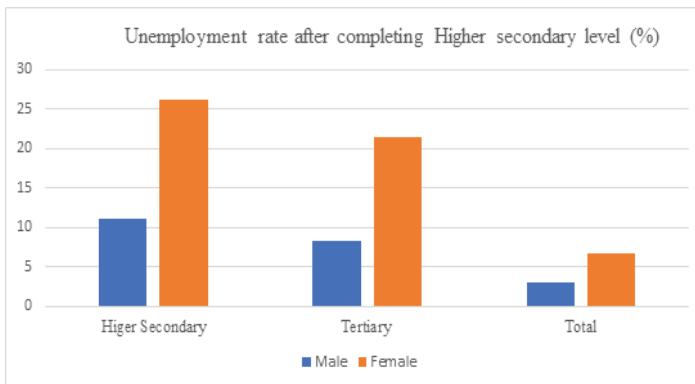
has wider-reaching repercussions for the economy. According to the findings of previous studies, discriminatory practices restrict the effective exploitation of human resources and prevent the Japanese labour market from reaching its full potential. Discriminatory practices contribute to a loss of economic productivity and impair overall growth because they prevent talented persons from entering specific occupations (Nakakubo, 2018; Suzuki et al., 2021; Kameda, 2018).

## 2.4 Education and Gender Inequality

Education is a significant factor in fostering social and economic growth and individual empowerment. However, in many parts of the world, particularly underdeveloped nations like Bangladesh, considerable barriers still prevent women from gaining access to educational opportunities, and this factor directly influences the rate of women in the labour market. Previous literature intends to critically assess and identify the crucial elements impacting women's access to education in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2017; Akhter, 2018).

However, various economic circumstances also heavily influence the availability of educational opportunities for women. Poverty, a lack of available financial resources, and the opportunity cost that comes along with obtaining an education all serve as barriers. Existing literature has explained that families invest more in educating male children than female children because of the perceived economic returns (Akhter et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2020). Moreover, previous studies have addressed the high unemployment rate of women even after completing upper secondary and tertiary level education. The social structure has been identified as one of the core reasons behind it, as women are expected to do housework and look after children as a moral duty (Chowdhury et al., 2019)

Figure 2.1: Unemployment rate after completion of higher secondary level in Bangladesh



Source: Ministry of Education, Bangladesh (2020)

The standard of instruction is another factor that influences the proportion of female

students who enrol and continue their studies. Several studies revealed that gender disparities exist in the quality of education that is obtained, with girls often confronting insufficient learning conditions, a shortage of female teachers, and gender-biased curricula. In addition, girls are more likely to be the victims of sexual harassment and assault in schools. To improve girls' educational access and outcomes, it is essential to provide an egalitarian and inclusive education that caters to the unique requirements of young women (Chowdhury et al., 2019; Khan & Islam, 2020).

Previous studies precisely state the wage difference between men and women even after working in the same conditions and similar levels of jobs. In addition, the societal biases toward women in choosing their work and career patterns have been highlighted in previous studies. Women are influenced to choose career options according to cultural norms and values, affecting the country's overall economy as women are almost half of the population in most nations, keeping this considerable proportion confined to a fixed pattern of career options impacts the economy (Akhter, 1999; Ahmed & Maitra, 2010; Blau & Kahn, 2017). Access to education and other resources play a significant role in achieving success in work life. In addition, informal jobs provide minimum incentives, and women find it hard to maintain a work-life balance. This discrimination towards women is high in developing countries (Budden, 2019; Ahmed & Ullah, 2015; Islam & Uddin, 2019).

However, there are some gaps in the existing literature. Previous studies have failed to address the dynamics of employment and the situation of women in the labour force. In addition, any sort of comparative analysis of the existing disparity in the labour force between Bangladesh and Japan is absent in the previous literature. Also, previous studies have not addressed the analysis of labour force participation and the nature of employment. The existing literature also fails to analyse the organisational structure and its relation to discrimination towards women. Therefore, this study attempts to fill these gaps by creating a comparative analysis of the labour force of Japan and Bangladesh. In order to underpin the objectives, this study answers the following research questions:

- a) How does gender inequality vary in the labour force between Japan and Bangladesh?
- b) What are the underlying reasons behind this disparity?

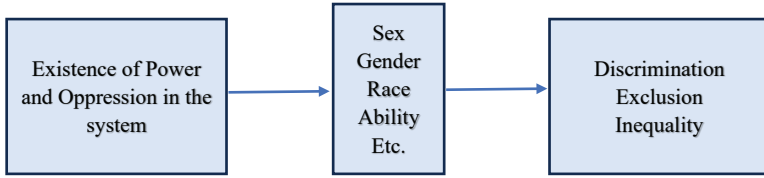
### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework of Gender Inequality**

This study is anchored by Mary Wollstonecraft's "Feminist theory" to explain women's discrimination and inequality in the labor market. This theory aims to tackle the system of power and oppression against a significant part of society. In addition, feminist theory enables how people interact with the system and explores

suggestions to confront our society's obsessive structure (Hooks, 2000).

Figure 3.1: Theoretical Framework



Source: Created by the author based on Egbert & Sanden (2019)

### 3.2 Conceptual Framework

This study focuses on the gender disparity and inequality in the labour force of Japan and Bangladesh, considering the participation rate in the labour force by gender, employment by occupation, and employment based on the nature of work. Here, research question 1 will find how gender inequality varies between the two countries, and research question 2 explores the possible factors behind this gender inequality.

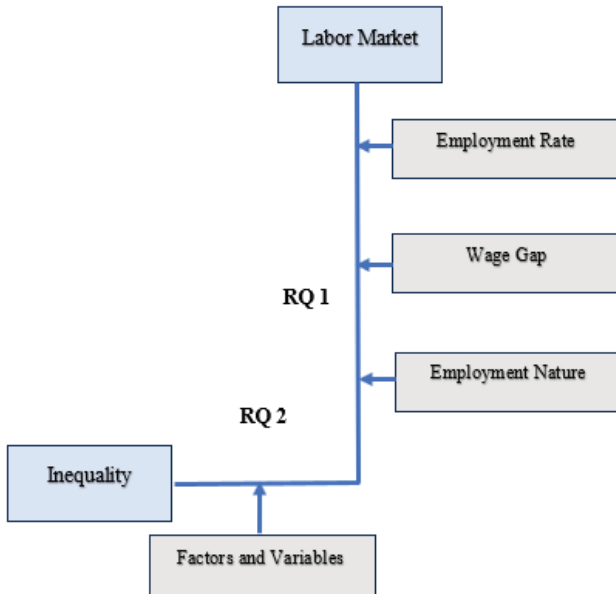


Figure 3.2: Conceptual Framework of the research

Source: Created by author

### **3.3 Materials and Methods**

This study has been conducted based on secondary data, using the qualitative method as a mode of inquiry. It has detailedly compared Bangladesh's labour market with Japan's. Bangladesh is a developing nation that was promoted from the least Developed nation (LDC) status in 2021. On the contrary, Japan is a developed country that was selected purposively because of the availability of the data.

The research questions for this study require a detailed analysis of the labour market for both countries and explore possible reasons behind gender inequality. In order to carry out the content analysis, this study uses a database like the Labor Force Survey 2016-17, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, published in 2018. In addition, the Labor Force Survey of Japan, published by the Statistics Bureau of Japan (2018), has been used to compare the parameters of gender inequality. Besides, reports, journals, articles, and book chapters related to the labour market have been used in the research.

Moreover, secondary data for this study were retrieved from official government websites in Japan and Bangladesh. All the reports were gathered between 2017 and 2022, the latest one. It included articles and reports, the articles' titles, the authors' names and numbers, the study design, and the sampling process. In addition, the abstract of each relevant article was appropriately investigated for this study.

### **3.4 Analysis Process**

Three aspects have been chosen from the gathered reports and data to analyse gender inequality in the labour market. They include the nature of work, employment rate, and wage differences. Various descriptive statistics, including mean, percentage, and frequency for all variables, have been computed to analyse and compare gender inequality in the labour force.

In addition, tables and graphs were also used to compare variables according to this study's research question. Microsoft Excel 2019 was used to present graphs for the extracted data. Moreover, data were merged in some cases to provide a vivid understanding of the labour market.

### **3.5 Ethical Issues**

In this study, data utilisation, access to information, and interpretation of the results have been made very clear. Further, all judgments have been made to avoid conscious personal biases and ensure fair and transparent research. Strict coding structures and inter-coder reliability checks have been done to reduce bias and improve the results' validity. All intellectual property rights and fair use guidelines have been considered when replicating and citing content during the analytic process. In addition, as this is a cross-national comparative study, content from other cultures, communities, or marginalised groups has been used carefully with



cultural sensitivity, respect, and awareness of any potential power dynamics.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Employment by gender and age

The data in Table 1 represent the employment rate of Japan and Bangladesh by gender and age group. In 2017, the rate of female employment in the labor market was higher than that of men in Bangladesh. Young females (15-34) had a higher employment rate than men (47%). On the other hand, Japan's employment rates were almost similar for men and women.

Table 1: Employment by age and gender in Japan and Bangladesh 2017

Age Group	Japan		Bangladesh	
	% of M	% of F	% of M	% of F
15-24	7.4	9.1	15.8	16.3
25-34	16.9	17.4	25.7	31.4
35-44	22.1	21.8	24.1	27.1
45-54	22.5	23.3	17.9	16.9
55-64	17.7	16.9	11.3	6.7
65 or above	13.4	11.5	5.1	1.6
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Labor Force Survey,2017; Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2018

The largest employment opportunity for females is in the garments (RMG) sector, which employs a high proportion of young females. However, the employment rate for older women (55 or over) in Bangladesh is very low (8.3%). It is difficult for older women to be independent in Bangladesh. On the contrary, Japan has a close employment rate for older men and women (55 or above). So, gender inequality is evident in Bangladesh for women belonging to the age group of 45 or over compared with Japan. However, in terms of participation in the workforce, the difference between men and women is insignificant. Due to the high enrolment of women in secondary and higher secondary level education in Bangladesh, women are coming to the workforce and competing with men. On the other hand, the structural reform brought by Abenomics 2.0 has increased female employment opportunities in Japan (Hausman & Wieland, 2015).

### 4.2 Labor force participation by gender and industry

There is a crucial difference in the labor force participation rate by industry between Japan and Bangladesh. Data in Fig 4.1 represents labour force participation by gender and industry. In Bangladesh, a larger portion of women are in agriculture (60%). This percentage is almost double that of their male counterpart (32%). The agriculture sector in Bangladesh offers a very low wage rate, and a significant number of women work voluntarily or unpaid.

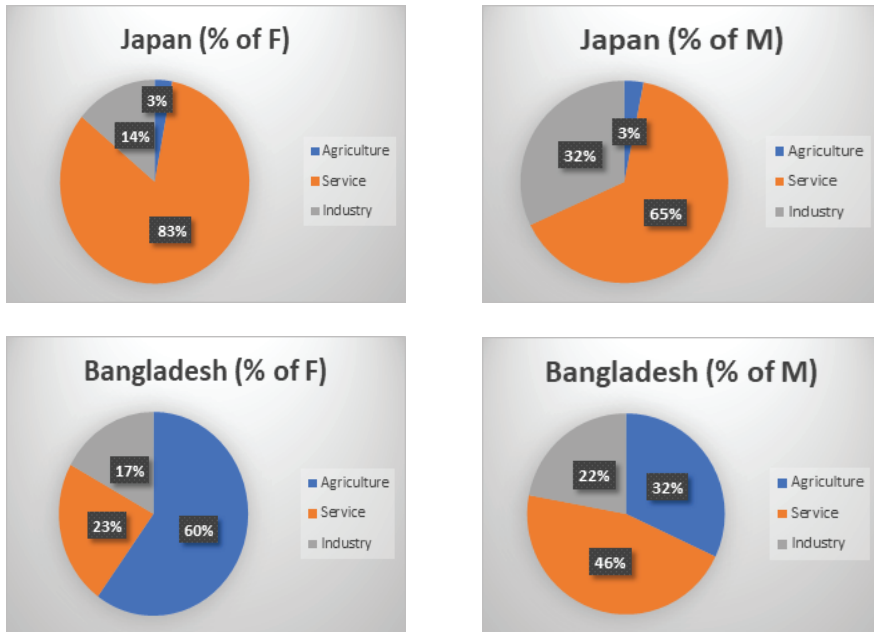


Figure 4.1: Employment by gender and industry in Japan and Bangladesh 2017

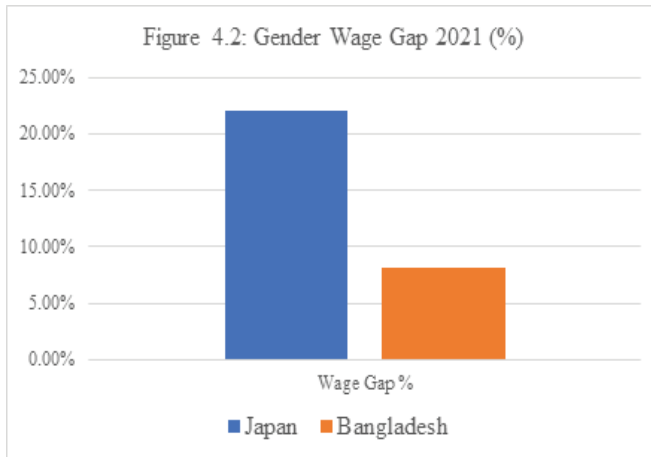
Source: Labor Force Survey,2017; Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2018

On the other hand, Japanese females mostly work in the service sector (83%), including real estate, finance, information and communications, etc. (METI, 2016). The number of females in the service sector is higher than that of their male counterparts (65%). Bangladeshi women's representation in the manufacturing or service sectors is relatively lower than that of Japan. However, due to lower representation in the manufacturing industries, women in both countries tend to get less paid than their male counterparts.

### 4.3 Wage gap by gender

Being a developed country, Japan's per capita income is significantly higher than Bangladesh's. However, women in Japan are less paid than men, even at the same level of work. According to the data in Fig 4.2, Japan has a wage gap of 22.1% in 2021, whereas the average wage gap in OECD countries is 11.9 percent (OECD, 2022).

On the other hand, Bangladesh has a wage gap of 8.1% in 2021. The wage difference in the labour force of Bangladesh has been reduced over the years by effective government policies. However, the average wage rate in Bangladesh is very low compared to that of developed nations.



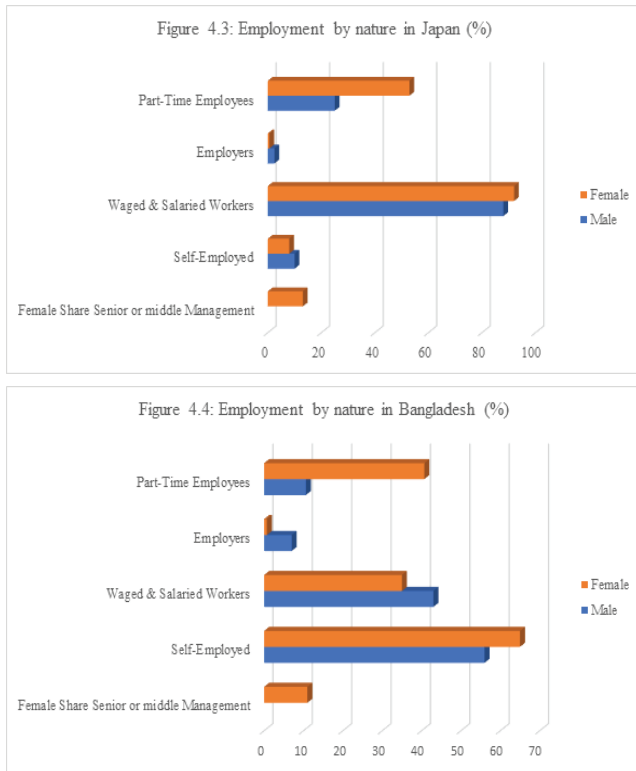
Source: Labor Force Survey Bangladesh, 2017; The World Bank, 2022

#### 4.4 Employment by nature

The data in Figures 4.3 and 4.4 represent the employment rate by nature in Japan and Bangladesh in 2022. It has been divided into five sections: part-time employees, employers, self-employment, salary workers, and female share in top management or middle posts. The nature of employment is different in both countries. Japan has a high percentage of waged and salaried workers (90%), whereas in Bangladesh, the majority is self-employed (60%).

However, gender inequality persists clearly in the data on women's share in top or middle management posts. Japan and Bangladesh have only 13.1 percent and 13.1 percent of women working in these positions, respectively. Japan has more than 52% of women working part-time or irregular jobs that are underpaid and have no employee benefits. On the other hand, over 40% of women in Bangladesh are in part-time jobs, which is almost four times higher than their male counterparts (10.6%).

Gender inequality is evident in both countries as a large portion of women work in part-time or irregular jobs. Moreover, the female share in middle and top management positions is considerably low in Japan and Bangladesh.



Source: The World Bank, 2022

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Sector Based Discrimination

Gender inequality and discrimination in the labour force of Japan and Bangladesh are analysed in this section by the prominent “Feminist theory”, which seeks to establish equal opportunity for women in education and employment. It is necessary to ensure equal participation and recognition for women in every sector of the society. The results of this study clearly state the existence of gender disparity in both countries, extensively in terms of employment opportunity, wage gap, and nature of employment. However, the magnitude and nature of inequality vary between Japan and Bangladesh.

The majority of the population in Bangladesh is young generation. As a result, the labour market is dominated by youths (15-35 years). On the other hand, demographic change and low birth rates have negatively impacted Japan's labour force. The proportion of older people is larger than that of youths. In addition, the number of NEETs (not in employment, education, and training) is gradually

increasing in Japan. However, considering the gender inequality by employment rate, both countries have similar gender participation ratios, except for women above 55 years in Bangladesh. The extent of inequality is higher for older women in Bangladesh. As a result, they have to depend more on their husbands and children in their old age.

However, employment distribution in terms of industry indicates unequal participation across industries. Most women in Bangladesh are engaged in the agricultural sector (59 percent). This indicates that women in rural areas are more engaged in the labour force than in urban areas in Bangladesh. In addition, the nature of employment in the agricultural sector can be considered informal or irregular as it is underpaid and has no employee benefits. So, the income level in this sector is significantly low, expanding the wage gap with their male counterparts in Bangladesh.

On the contrary, only 3 percent of women in Japan are engaged in the agricultural sector. Women in Japan are more engaged in the service sector (83.5 percent). This includes airlines, finance, banking, information and communication, and health sectors. As a developed nation, Japan's service sector is booming, and men and women are highly employed (Figure 4.1). However, the manufacturing industry is highly dominated by male employees in Japan, which offers regular employment and other benefits. The cause of this disparity is interlinked with the employment nature of the current organisational structure of Japanese companies.

## **5.2 Employment Nature and Organizational Structure:**

This study has analysed the nature of employment in these two countries. The result shows that 54 percent of women in Japan are in part-time or irregular employment (Global Gender Gap Report, 2023). This is because of the adverse effect of the government's economic revitalisation policy, known as "Abenomics". The third arrow of this policy aims for structural change to tackle economic stagnation by including women and older people in the labour market (Lincoln, 2020). However, the economic recession has forced employers to hire women for low-paying part-time jobs. These jobs provide no benefits to the employees that full-time employment usually does. In addition, the number of female employees in middle or top-level management posts is significantly low in Japan (11 percent). Women are usually on the entry or executive level, and their career progression is unsatisfactory compared to men.

Japanese manufacturing industries have a dual-track recruitment system. This system offers a transparent and competitive recruitment process, but it is causing women to work in irregular or part-time jobs more than their male counterparts.

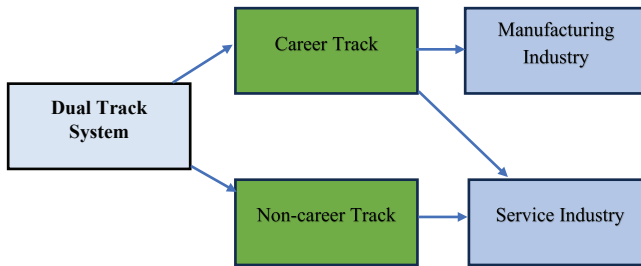


Figure 5.1: \Organizational Structure and Pathway to Industry (Created by author based on IMF Report, 2019)

In addition, the career track system tends to hire employees who are less likely to switch jobs and be more committed to the company. So, the company policies are usually rigid, which women naturally don't prefer, and the company's human resource departments prefer to hire male employees. Due to working on a non-career track, women are more likely to work in service industries and are paid much less than male employees, which results in the wage gap between males and females.

On the other hand, the nature of employment in Bangladesh also does not indicate equal employment for men and women. For example, women's engagement in part-time or irregular jobs is four times higher than their male counterparts. This inequality also results in the wage gap between males and females in the labour market. However, the proportion of self-employed people in Bangladesh is much higher than in Japan. This includes small stores, boutiques, hair salons or parlours, vegetable shops, and other informal sectors. The number of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh who contribute to the country's GDP is also increasing. On the other hand, Japan has a low self-employed ratio in the labour market; most men and women are waged or salaried workers.

### 5.3 Unfavourable Social Structure

Women's participation in the labour force and employment can depend on society's structure and the husband's cooperation. The white middle-class ideology portrays homemaking as suitable work for women. As a result, the male-dominated organisational system discriminates against women and undermines their efforts (Acker, 2006). In addition, women forcefully choose jobs that pay less than men so that they can integrate with the housework and look after their children.

In Japan, the percentage of women continuing to work after the birth of children is only 26.8 percent. Women taking birth retirement is nearly 45 percent in Japan, and around 24.1 percent leave their jobs after pregnancy (Ministry of Health, Labor & Welfare Statistics, 2017). The organisational structure is one of the main reasons

behind this early retirement of women from the labour force. Firstly, women who take maternity leave are unlikely to continue in the position they left. Promotion in Japanese companies depends on the years of service, so if a woman gives birth to 2 children, she will have to take leave for about a year. The management of the companies prefers male employees over females to avoid this situation. This phenomenon is linked with women getting less preference for career track job opportunities in the manufacturing and service industries. In addition, women with the same qualifications as men tend to be paid less just because of maternity leave. Secondly, the waiting list for day-care services in Japan is too long. Parents fail to manage daycare services for their newborn babies, and ultimately, the mother has to sacrifice her career and job to look after the baby. Fathers are uncooperative in most situations, as deep inside, they believe it is the job of the women to do the housework and take care of the baby.

The case is almost similar to Bangladesh's. Due to urbanisation, joint families have been transformed into nuclear families. As a result, grandparents usually do not live with their son or daughter anymore. So, the mother has to quit her job and look after the children for two to three years after the baby's birth.

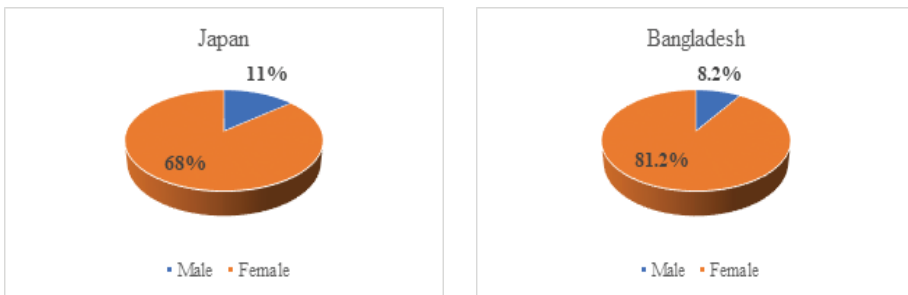


Figure 5.2: Unemployment rate of Males and Females due to housework in Japan and Bangladesh 2015  
Source: Labor Force Survey Bangladesh, 2017; The World Bank, 2018

As a result, the cause of women's unemployment in both countries is the lack of support from their male counterparts or husbands in managing housework. Women have to sacrifice their careers to avoid domestic violence in some cases. In addition, as the property rent is very high in Japan, many men tend to live with their parents and expect that the woman they get married to will look after their old parents without thinking of her career. Japanese society is witnessing the adverse effects of this type of ideology and expectation. The marriage rate has dropped alarmingly in Japanese society, impacting the overall population growth, which has been negative for more than ten years.

So, the male-dominated social structure and unsupportive partners of women happen to be a key factor behind the gender inequality in the labour market for both Japan and Bangladesh.

## 5.4 Limitations and Scope for Future Research

It is essential to comprehend the social and cultural aspects of gender inequality in the workplace. Future studies can examine how cultural beliefs, gender roles, and conventions affect employment prospects and patterns for men and women in Bangladesh and Japan. Studying the effects of social programmes and policies intended to alter and challenge these cultural norms might also be beneficial. Future research could evaluate the application and results of particular regulations, like gender quotas, affirmative action plans, and family-friendly regulations, in both nations. Global employment markets have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has also exacerbated gender disparities already present. Future studies should look into the specific impacts of the pandemic on gender disparity in the Bangladeshi and Japanese employment markets. Examining shifts in employment rates, home-based work arrangements, job losses, and the disproportionate impact of unpaid caregiving on women are a few examples of what this could entail.

## 6. Conclusion

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, gender inequality persists in Japan and Bangladesh. This inequality can be observed in the labour market, education attainment, social or political rights and many other spheres. So, inequality and discrimination against women are not only an issue in lower-middle-income countries like Bangladesh but also in developed nations like Japan. In addition, sex segregation in the labour market is having a negative impact on the economic growth of these nations. Moreover, differentiating men and women in the labour force only based on gender reduces the economy's productivity. This study has identified the extent and nature of gender inequality in two countries with different cultural backgrounds and economic conditions.

The wage difference in both countries is reasoned by embedded cultural norms and socialisation processes that portray women as less capable than men. Women cannot prove themselves in growing industries like manufacturing, engineering or IT, which has been the case for both Japan and Bangladesh due to the organisational structure and recruitment process. In addition, the uncooperative attitude of husbands and the unfavourable social structure bind women to career progression and equal opportunities like their male counterparts. Although women's employment in the service sector of Japan is considerably higher, the wage gap still exists. In addition, women are mainly recruited for part-time jobs that pay very little and offer minimum employee benefits. In Bangladesh, most women are in the informal sector and contribute to the nation's GDP but remain unrecognised in terms of social appreciation and financial benefits. Moreover, the share of women in the middle of top managerial roles is meagre in both countries, which indicates



gender inequality and discrimination against women.

The lowest ranking among the OECD nations calls for reconsidering government policies and changing traditional norms. Demographic change and the ongoing labour shortage can be tackled effectively using the huge female labour force. In addition, the organisational structure in both Japan and Bangladesh needs to be women-friendly to encourage more women to join the labour force. The scope for women in STEM and IT sectors has to be increased to provide equal employment opportunities and benefits.

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