

GENDER INEQUALITY PERCEPTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN IN JAPAN AND INDONESIA

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“A woman is human. She is not better, wiser, stronger, more intelligent, more creative, or more responsible than a man. Likewise, she is never less. Equality is a given. A woman is human.”

— Vera Nazarian, *The Perpetual Calendar of Inspiration*

“Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers, and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth.”

— Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

I. INTRODUCTION

These two quotes represent liberal strivings to be respectful of all people. At the heart of these ideals are the endorsement of equality for members of all social categories, including racial, cultural, and gender groups and the freedom that should be given to individuals and social groups to pursue their values and beliefs. This may appear to be simple and straightforward goal. However, the case of gender inequality in many societies still poses a dilemma in the pursuit of these ideals.

Gender inequality is still a major contemporary social problem and is not an individual matter, therefore it is deeply ingrained in the structure of societies. Gender inequality is built into the organization of marriage and families, work and economy, politics, religions, the arts, and other cultural productions, even the very language we speak.

One of the most fundamental forms of gender inequality in society may be seen at the basic level of social unit, namely the gender division of roles within a family. Married women’s labor force participation has increased in the past several decades (Cohen and Bianchi 1999; Goldin 1990). In Japan, for example, as it underwent a radical transformation from an industrial to a post industrial economy since 1960s, and especially, as it promulgated the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1985 and the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society in 1999, women’s participation in the labor force has shown a steady increase.

Nevertheless, in spite of Japanese women's new role, both as a housewife as well as a worker, the traditional division of roles---“women at home and men at work”--- has not changed much. They still do the majority of housework (Bianchi et al. 2000; Coltrane 2000), which is to say that women's primary task is still considered to be housekeeping and child rearing. In other words, the division of role within a family remains unequal for Japanese women (Fansellow 1995; Gelb and Palley et.al. 1994; Iwao 1993; Lebra 1984; Imamura 1996).

This “anomaly” has been researched extensively in recent years, but these previous studies have been predominantly focused on the effects of individuals' and couples' characteristics, such as income, working hours and gender ideology (Coverman 1985; Kiyomi 1987; Ross 1987), on the gender inequality within a family. Also, while cross-national comparison between Japan and other industrialized countries has been researched extensively (Batalova and Cohen 2002; Fuwa 2004; Kamo 1994), a comparative study between Japan with developing countries, such as Indonesia, has not been adequately explored.

Taking into account the shortcomings of these studies, namely (1)the lack of the analysis of the effect of macro-level gender inequality as represented in GEM indicators (wages, career trajectories, political power, etc) on the division of roles within a family, and (2)the absence of comparison with a developing country, I have examined in my previous research, “Gender and Household Labor: A Sociological Comparison of Women in Japan and Indonesia,” the relevance of society level gender inequality on gender inequality in the division of labor, highlighting the similarities and differences between industrialized and developing nations.

My previous research brought about the following relevant findings. First, gender ideology as an independent variable seems to be directly responsible for a greater degree of inequality. Second, a test of correlation between the GEM rank and the average division of household labor shows that, while Indonesia has indicated a relatively equal gender division of household labor in spite of their lower GEM score, Japan demonstrates a more unequal division of roles within a family despite its higher GEM score.

Having completed such a research project, now having access to AsiaBarometer Data, I have grown increasingly curious as to whether there is any variable that I can supplement my previous comparative research, and found that the comparison of gender inequality perception measured in Japan and Indonesia can possibly shed further lights into my inquiry.

Furthermore, while a large body of academic work has been devoted to

analyzing the substantive relevance of gender inequality and division of roles within a family, some scholars argue that people's perception of gender and its relations with social demographic backgrounds such as the organization of marriage and families, work and economy, politics, religions or education are as much important as analyzing the gender inequality in any given societies and that the effects can differ from one country to another (Davis and Greenstein 2009; Davis and Robinson 1991).

However, while most of the scholarly works on gender inequality perception emphasize the effect of gender inequality on other social facts such as psychological consequencesception on education (Shehu, Kasale, Moreri 2012), psychological consequences (Kinias and Kim 2012), children's and adolescents' developing perception (Neff, Cooper and Woodruff 2007), elite's perception in Norway and Sweden (Teigen 2009), division of paid and unpaid work and partnership dissolution in Sweden (Olah and Gahler 2012), gender quality action learning program (Alim and Rashid 2005), and the representation of women in parliament in South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe (Jacobs 2009), there are still few studies addressing how the gender inequality perception is actually perceived by individuals and how it differ between countries.

Capitalizing on these works and findings, in this final paper entitled "Gender Inequality Perception: A Comparative Study of Women in Japan and Indonesia", I intend to examine the ways in which gender inequality is perceived by women in Japan and Indonesia by deploying sociological perspectives. I believe "gender inequality perception" based upon a sociological approach will definitely enhance and complete my previous works, which primarily focus on sociological comparison of gender inequality and the division of household labor among women in Japan and Indonesia.

GENDER EQUALITY PERCEPTION; GENDER, AGE, MARITAL STATUS and EMPLOYMENT

But first, we shall deal with the question of gender inequality perception. What do we really know about how people perceive gender inequality in their societies.

Drawing on the theory of consciousness (Giddens 1973; 112-116), this study argues that individuals must first perceive that inequality exists, and then decide that this inequality is sufficiently unfair that some corrective action is warranted. Consciousness of inequality includes the self-awareness of subordinate groups as well as awareness of inequality on the part of those who are not disadvantaged. By this definition, men who favor action to reduce discrimination against women are conscious

of gender inequality. I propose further that perceptions of the extent of gender inequality *in general* and support for efforts to combat it arise from social and demographic factors such as gender, age, marital status, and employment. In accordance with this theory, Davis and Greenstein (2000) argue that social and demographic characteristics may also influence gender inequality perception.

Gender and Socioeconomic Status. Individuals who are disadvantaged by the distribution of opportunities, treatment, and conditions will be more conscious of inequality than individuals who are advantaged (Robinson and Bell 1978). According to this thesis, women will be more conscious of gender inequality than men. This thesis also predicts that individuals with low prestige jobs and/or low incomes will be more conscious of gender inequality.

Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) further endorse this thesis by arguing that because women have more vested interests in increased egalitarianism, men are expected to be less egalitarian than women. Both longitudinal trend studies and panel studies note that men are less gender egalitarian than are women. Young men in particular are hesitant to challenge the cultural standard of the mother role and the expectation of negative child outcomes due to maternal employment. Perhaps this hesitation is because in general men benefit from women's unequal performance of family and household task.

Age. According to the *egalitarian Zeitgeist thesis*, individuals' perceptions toward inequality are strongly affected by the historical context when they were coming of age politically (Lipset and Ladd 1971:654). In the U.S., the 1960s and early 1970s were a period of "rediscovery" of inequalities of class, race, and gender that saw the rise of movements (New Left, civil rights, feminist) to eliminate these inequalities. Many European countries also experienced strong New Left movements in the 1960s pressing for a greater role for students in the educational process and for greater equality and democracy in the larger society. The resurgence of feminism in Europe began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a few years later than in the U.S. (Chafetz and Dworkin 1986:171-190).

From the egalitarian *Zeitgeist thesis*, we expect young people to be more conscious of gender inequality than older people, reflecting their coming of age in the 1960s through the early 1980s. I am uncertain whether an egalitarian *Zeitgeist* effect in the U.S. would be limited to individuals who came of age during the most active phase of the American feminist movement (making the middle generation more conscious of gender inequality than older or younger generation), or whether it would also include younger persons who came of age during a time of less dramatic, more institutionalized

feminism and the rise of anti-feminism (making the younger and middle generations more conscious of gender inequality than the older generation).

Moreover, Neff, Cooper and Woodruff (2007) work on children's and adolescents' developing perceptions of gender inequality also strongly argue that young children are less explicitly aware of gender inequality than might be assumed given their extensive knowledge of power loaded gender role stereotypes. Thus the results from this study provide further support for the idea that perceptions of gender inequality increase with age.

Marital Status and Spouse Employment. Previous research on U.S. women points to the importance of family situation in feminist orientations (Lucker 1984; Gerson 1987). Marital status and a spouse's employment status interact with sex: women who are single, divorced, widowed, or married to a man who is not employed are harder hit by women's lower average wages than women whose family includes a male wage earner. Therefore, such women tend to be more conscious of gender inequality than married women with unemployed spouses.

Some other researchers advocates this thesis. Marriage is a highly gendered institution. Men who enter coresidential unions (either marriages or cohabitations) behave in more traditional ways than they did when living as a single person (Gupta 1999). Fan and Marini (2000) found that entering marriage typically led to young women becoming less egalitarian, whereas men in their early twenties who married become slightly more egalitarian. Moore and Vannemen (2003) found that individuals who were divorced or separated were more egalitarian than were currently married individuals. Furthermore, the gender role approach posits that men and women are socialized to conform to socially constructed gender roles in a marriage and housework is divided accordingly. Previous studies found a positive relationship between husbands and/or wives satisfaction in the division of housework in their marriage and egalitarian attitude toward gender (Greenstein 1996; Kamo 1988). Furthermore, research performed in United States found that couples in standard marriages hold more egalitarian gender attitude than those in covenant marriages. Covenant couples see their marriage choice as an outward expression of their gender ideologies, intentionally using their relationships to perform a patriarchal model of gender within marriage.

Employment. Most U.S. studies have found that women's labor force participation is an important factor in their support of feminist principles. Work outside home gives women direct experience with sex disparities in earnings, promotion, and work conditions that are not faced by women who work in the unpaid domestic economy. Employed women also have a clear economic interest in gender inequality in

the work place. Non-employed women who depend on a male wage earner and who face rising divorce rates and the declining status of housewifery may have an interest in maintaining traditional gender roles and their attendant sex disparities (Gerson 1987). It has also been argued that women's support for feminist goals depends more on their current employment status than on past employment statuses (Gerson 1987). The greater women's attachment to the labour force, the more likely she will be to perceive gender inequality than women who are not currently but were employed, and that the latter, in turn, will be more conscious of gender inequality than women who have never been employed.

Moreover, labor force participation also provides exposure to new ideas and people. For young women and working mothers in particular, the labor force participation increases confidence and expectations for financial independence and provides additional role models for negotiating family and work roles (Klein 1984). Being in the labour force and having a job and income, does seem to be related to holding more gender egalitarian perception among women, depending on the age at which the relationship is measured (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004), with no corresponding effect for men. However, men whose wives work less than full time have more traditional gender perception than men whose wives work full time.

Seen as such, I have summarized the gender inequality perception and the ways in which it is affected by gender, age, marital status and employment. In this study, I do not intend to find significant relationship between these factors and gender inequality perception in both countries, but my original intention is that by doing this literature review on social demographic factors in relation to gender inequality perception, I intend to narrow down my research subjects from women in general to young and middle generation, working married women in urban Tokyo and Jakarta. Therefore, the scope of my research is limited to the women in their young and middle age, working, married and lives in urban area in these respective cities. This intention has also an important link to the qualitative method I employed in this study, namely, in-depth interviews, so that the women I interviewed are those who would fit into these categories.

MOVING BEYOND GIDDEN'S THEORY of CONSCIOUSNESS: AN INTEGRATIVE ACCOUNT of GENDER INEQUALITY PERCEPTION

As explained in the introduction, the consciousness theory proposed by Giddens considered only differences among women in any given societies. A more systematic comparison of gender inequality perception across countries may be needed

to be able capture cross-national similarities and differences.

As individual social demographic characteristics vary within and between societies, which is to say that gender inequality perception within different societies also manifest different degrees of male domination. Further, the degree of male domination in a society may influence the gender inequality perception at individual levels.

Blumberg (1984) introduces the concept of “nesting” of macro-level units, such as households, in a series of macro-level units from community, class, and state, to the world economy. She suggests that “society’s various micro- and macro-levels can be conceived of as a ‘nesting’ system in which gender inequality perception may vary at least somewhat independently at each level” (1984:48). This multi-level conception of gender inequality in macro-level male domination enters into micro-level women’s perception.

Thus, individual women’s gender inequality perception is a function of their individual social demographic characteristics *and* society-level male domination in economic, political and ideological areas (Blumberg 1984; Blumberg and Coleman 1989). Women may possess egalitarian gender perception at the individual level but this may be reduced by male dominance at the country level. Therefore, male control over the political economy and male dominated ideologies at the country level may act as a “discount rate” against the perception of individual women.

Blumberg and Coleman (1989:234) maintain that “male control of the top echelons of the political economy affects the national policy agenda, the opportunity structure that women encounter, and the prevailing ideology of what women’s place in that structure should be”. The unequal distribution of opportunities may affect women’s perception toward gender inequality. Also, dominant gender ideologies that devalue women’s work may condition the perception over gender inequality.

Furthermore, there are two ways country-level gender inequality may influence the gender inequality perception. First, gender-egalitarian social conditions may lead women to perceive existing gender relation in their societies as being equal regardless of their social demographic characteristics. However, country-level gender-inequality also may modify the gender inequality perception at individual level. Using Blumberg’s macro-level discount factor argument, this study tests how individual women in Japan and Indonesia perceive gender inequality in both respective countries. Emphasis is placed on how such country level inequality conditions the gender inequality perception within specific social demographic characteristics.

Such being the long-standing theory of consciousness over the major contributing factors of gender inequality perception, this study seeks to move beyond

this position by introducing an innovative and integrative account of gender inequality perception which incorporates individual-level social demographic factors into the social embeddedness of inequality in a larger framework, and demonstrate how gender inequality is perceived in Japan and Indonesia. It is therefore the major contention of this study that such country-level gender inequality would enable one to see the relationship between gender inequality perception in individual-level with the macro-level gender inequality.

Drawing upon these assessments of scientific works pertinent to contributing factors to gender inequality perception the research problem of this study is defined as: how gender inequality perception is differently perceived in Japan and Indonesia, and how macro-level gender inequality helps to explain the similarities and differences. This study purports to answer the aforementioned theoretical question by focusing on how young and middle generation, working, married women in Japan and Indonesia perceived gender inequality in their society and how the existing macro-level gender inequality in each given country helps to explain.

OBJECTIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE of THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is first, that the comparative study of gender inequality perception in Japan and Indonesia may suggest some means by which to examine similarities and differences in the perception towards gender inequality Japan as developed country and Indonesia as developing one, which had not been adequately examined. Therefore it has a further objective of contributing to the advancement of knowledge of gender inequality in the division of household labor by bringing to light one example, especially from the developing country's experience.

Second, this study purports to shed light on the interactive of individual- and country-level's gender inequality on gender inequality perception in a way that demonstrates the central role of *both* individual characteristics and country-level political, economic, and cultural gender inequality. Of particular import in this regard is obviously the concept of "gender inequality perception" used to capture the interactive nature of how gender inequality perception in the division of household labor in Japan and Indonesia is influenced by both individual and country-level factors

The theoretical significance of examining the gender inequality perception at individual level between countries, this study challenges the social scientific paradigms which reifies *either* `individual social demographic characteristics` *or* `country-level gender inequality`, and thereby seeking to develop integrative analytical tools by placing the central role of *both* individual- *and* country-level. The further objective of

this study therefore, is not merely to provide empirical case studies that challenge established perspectives or theoretical traditions in the study of gender inequality in the division of labor, but also to explore the interactive links between individual characteristics *and* country-level gender inequality between developed country and developing one.

Consequently, this study is conceived partly as an attempt and hopefully the realization of a wish to breakout from simplistic ways of perceiving and explaining gender inequality in both Japan and Indonesia. The aim is to cut a little deeper into the process of analyzing the individual's voices of both Japanese and Indonesian, as well as to analyze and delineate the political, economic, and cultural gender inequality of both countries.

Finally, from a practical point of view, this study enables one to see that achievement to a gender equal society could not happen without reduction of country-level gender inequality. Thus, this study may serve as a basis for both countries to focus on implementing social policy that reduce country-level political, economic and cultural gender inequality, such as laws and institutions which create a better working environment for women in balancing their families and careers. And as part of efforts to build a gender-equal society, this study may serve as a call for re-examination of conventional gender-role for both countries, to better promote equality.

Based on these body of literature reviews and theoretical framework, I shall propose a set of hypothesis on the gender inequality perception on young-middle generation of working married women in urban Tokyo and Jakarta:

Hypothesis 1a: Individual women in country with more gender equality are more likely to perceive the existing gender relation in their society as being equal

Hypothesis 1b: Individual women in country where gender equality is more severe are less likely to perceive the existing gender relation in their society as being equal

In the next section, I shall proceed to testify these hypotheses.

II. DATA and DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This study uses two waves of survey data, respectively on 2004 and 2007 in Indonesia, and four waves of survey data, respectively on 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2008 in Japan from the AsiaBarometer survey dataset. Since this study focuses on the

sub-groups with specific criteria, i.e., young-middle generation (20~29, 30~39, 40~49) working (employed) married women, the sample size would be too small if we use only one year survey data. To increase sample size of analysis, we merge cases of both countries and get 386 and 139 cases respectively for Japan and Indonesia.

I use only descriptive statistics, namely, frequencies to analyze the data and in addition to that, I have conducted in-depth interviews with 8 Japanese women and 8 Indonesian women with given characteristics. The analytical variable is the Gender Equality. The respondents are required to score each statement from (1)Men are treated much more favourably than women, (2). Men are treated somewhat more favourably than women; (3).Men and women are treated equally; (4).Women are treated somewhat more favourably than men; (5).Women are treated much more favourably than men; 9.(a).(Don't know). The statement is:

q106 Gender equality: Do you think that on the whole men and women are treated equally in your country?

The descriptive statistics in both countries are as follows:

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS IN JAPAN and INDONESIA

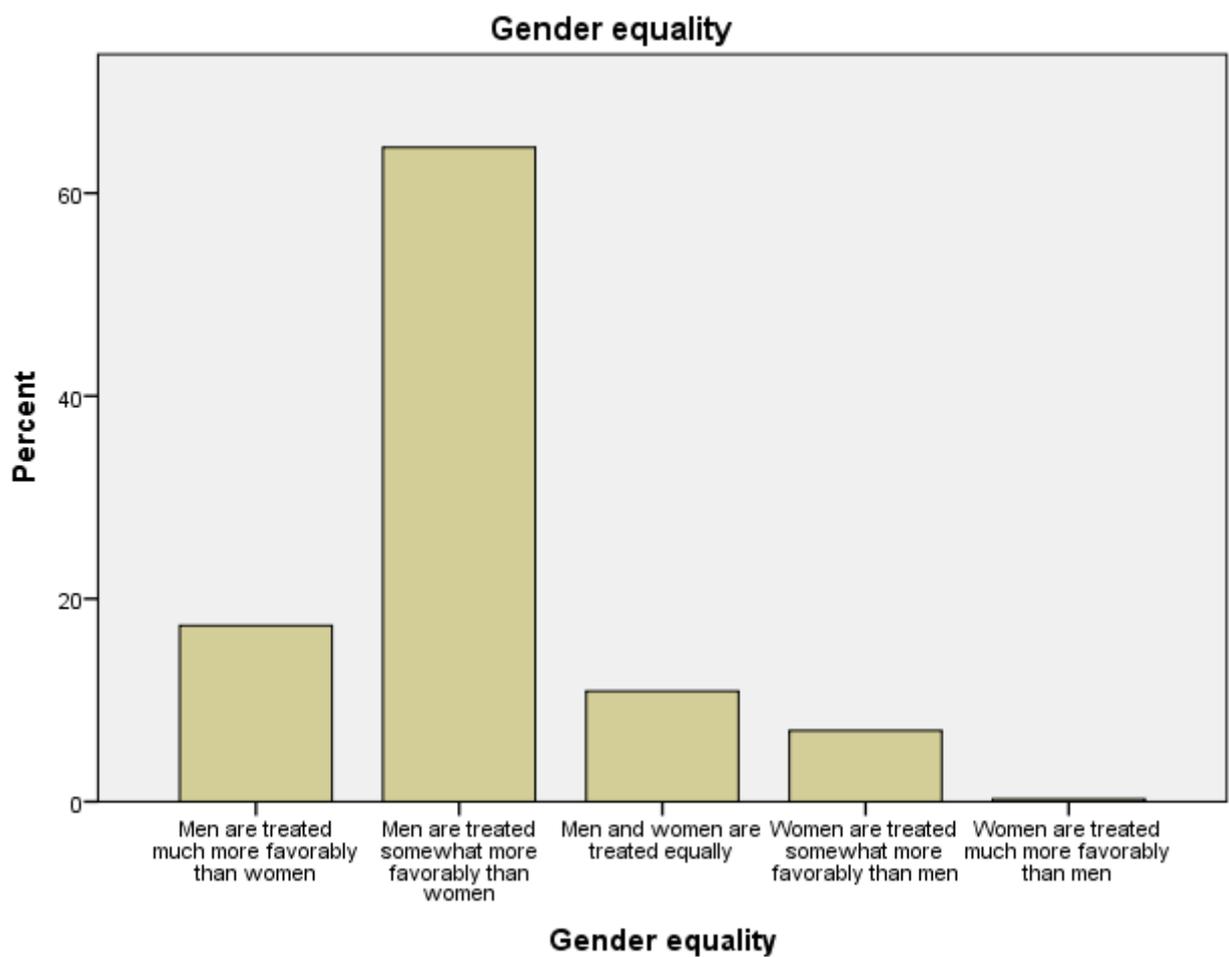
Japan

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to their Gender Inequality Perception in Japan

		Gender equality			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Men are treated much more favorably than women	67	16.7	17.4	17.4
	Men are treated somewhat more favorably than women	249	62.1	64.5	81.9
	Men and women are treated equally	42	10.5	10.9	92.7
	Women are treated somewhat more favorably than men	27	6.7	7.0	99.7

Women are treated much more favorably than men	1	.2	.3	100.0
Total	386	96.3	100.0	
Missing Don't know	15	3.7		
Total	401	100.0		

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to their Gender Inequality Perception in Japan



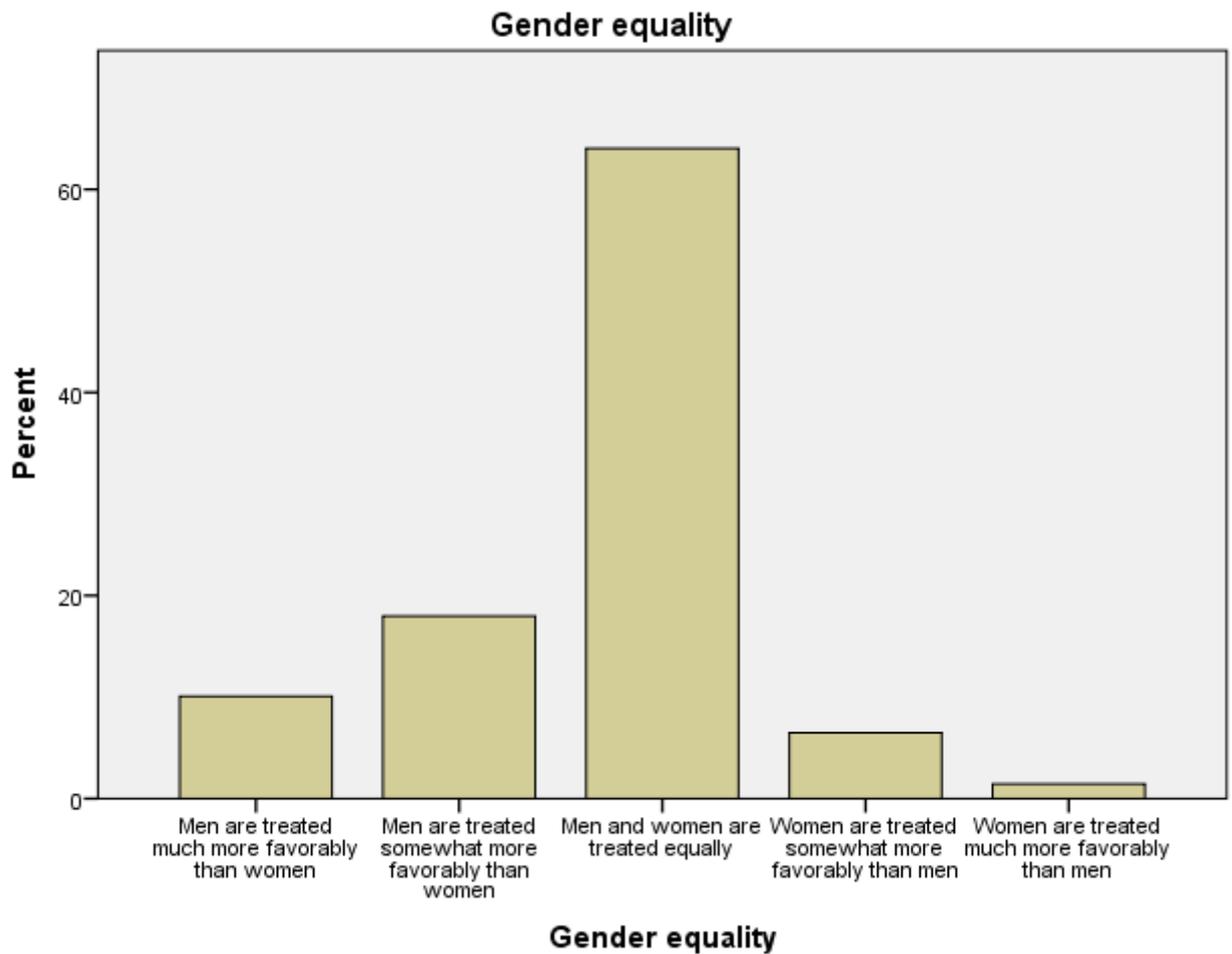
Indonesia

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents According to their Gender Inequality Perception in Indonesia

Gender equality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Men are treated much more favorably than women	14	10.0	10.1	10.1
	Men are treated somewhat more favorably than women	25	17.9	18.0	28.1
Valid	Men and women are treated equally	89	63.6	64.0	92.1
	Women are treated somewhat more favorably than men	9	6.4	6.5	98.6
	Women are treated much more favorably than men	2	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	139	99.3	100.0	
Missing	Don't know	1	.7		
Total		140	100.0		

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents According to their Gender Inequality Perception in Indonesia



From these four tables, we see that the majority of Japanese women (62.1%), are likely to perceive that men are treated somewhat more favorably than women in their society. In stark contrast, the majority of Indonesian women (63.6%) are likely to perceive that men and women are treated equally in their society. If we take a look into the mean score of both countries as indicated by Table 6 and Table 7, the contrast is similar. While the mean score for the Japanese respondents is 2.08, the mean score for the Indonesian respondent is 2.71, a score that is relatively higher than Japan and they are more likely to perceive that the existing gender relation in their society as being equal.

Japan

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics in Japan

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender equality	386	1	5	2.08	.762
Valid N (listwise)	386				

Indonesia

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics in Indonesia

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender equality	139	1	5	2.71	.792
Valid N (listwise)	139				

Tabel 8: Mean Score and GEM Rank from UNDP Report 2009

Country	N	Gender Inequality Perception	GEM Rank
Japan	386	2.08	96
Indonesia	139	2.71	57

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 to 7 display results from descriptive statistics predicting the gender inequality perception in Japan and Indonesia.

Now let us first examine Table 1, 2, 3 and 4, the frequency distribution of the gender inequality perception in Japan and Indonesia. The results, surprisingly, do not support the hypothesis of this study. The most enlightening finding of all is that despite their lower GEM rank compared to Japan, Indonesian respondents are more likely to perceive the existing gender relation in their society as being equal.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 5 and 6, Indonesia has a moderate perception toward gender inequality in spite of their lower GEM score average. On the contrary, Japan, regardless of their higher GEM score, does not suggest a more moderate perception toward gender inequality.

Based on these simple but fundamental findings, we may put forth several arguments.

First and foremost, in terms of comparing Japan and Indonesian women's perception toward gender inequality, the diametrically opposed results between these two countries indicate a very similar pattern to the results from my previous research,

where, regardless of their lower GEM rank compared to Japan, Indonesian respondents have relatively egalitarian division of labor in their household, and on the contrary, Japan, regardless of their higher GEM rank, does not suggest a more egalitarian division of household labor. Furthermore, individual women in Indonesia who live in a less-gender egalitarian country are more likely to be burdened with a traditional division of household labor, but benefit more from their individual assets such as working hours, income and gender ideology in the negotiation over housework. Japan, which according to its GEM rank could be regarded as a more-gender egalitarian country, benefit less from their individual level resources. This suggests that country-level gender inequality in economic and political spheres may not be enough to determine the effect of working hours, income and gender ideology on negotiation over housework in family units (Wulansari 2009:59-61).

These findings based on statistical data, however, should be supported by qualitative analysis which provides a deeper explanation in determining the gender inequality perception in both countries.

To fulfill this purpose, in the next section we shall discuss the respondents' individual explanations obtained from in-depth interviews.

The Japanese Context

1. The Cultural Context: State Gender Ideology

This study posits that individual women in a country with more gender equality are more likely to perceive the existing gender relation in their society as being equal and on the contrary, individual women in a country where gender equality is more severe are less likely to perceive the existing gender relation in their society as being equal

Surprisingly, this study found the contradictory results. The next explanation may shed light on the results.

In the Japanese context, the perception toward gender inequality has an important link to *the gender ideology* where nurturing children, husband, and elderly parents has been considered woman's major task. As argued by Imamura (1996) the explanation lies on the *cultural ideal of women as primary caregivers* of impaired elderly relatives.¹ Elderly women are less likely to receive care giving from their

¹ In a survey of bedridden elderly, the Japanese National Council of Social Welfare found that sixty-one percent of elderly bedridden men were being cared for by their wives, but only eleven percent of bedridden women received care from their husbands. Half of bedridden women received care from a daughter-in-law and another twenty-eight percent from their own child. See Campbell and Brody,

spouses than from other female relatives not only because they often outlive their husbands, but also because gender roles throughout the life course encourage nurturing behavior of women more so than of men. In an exploratory study of seventy-five caregivers in Shiga prefecture, eighty-six percent of the caregivers were women (Harris and Long 1993: 97-118). These caregivers receive help from husbands (primarily for heavy work such as airing bedding, bathing the elderly family members, and taking them to the doctor), children, siblings, and others, but frequently this assistance is provided only when primary caretakers must go out or are involved in the time-consuming task of feeding the elderly. But as a women respondent commented in the in-depth interview:

“My husband (age 52) does not try to help (his mother) at all. He believes that women are supposed to take care of the elderly.”

Moreover, care of ageing parents and in-laws or partners is a more pressing consideration for working women than care of dependent children. A survey by the General Institute of Employment and Occupation found over 40 per cent of working women aged in their forties and fifties stopped paid work or changed their work hours to take care of aged or sick family members in 1989 (*Daily Yomiuri* 1991).

Although there is variation in such factors as who provides the care (nursing home, day care, home care, rehabilitative program) which assists, and the seriousness of the elder's disabilities, the study found that *the effects of the cultural ideal---how women must choose or be forced to compromise the culturally ideal role---*do not show any variation. Two young women confirmed this notion:

“I have always been worried about how I would be able to take care of my parents and parents-in-law without quitting my job and making (a) mess (of my) “face” in the traditional Japanese society. For women who have new and rational ideas, it is obvious that they would be torn between the traditional social norms and the new values.”

“Today young women have a choice to stay home and raise their children or to put them in a day care. But with an elder care, we have no choice. It destroys our own life and the life of the family. I decided to protect myself while caring for my mother, but it was exhausting, and I wanted to give up.”

“Women's Changing Lives,” and D. Maeda, “Family care in Japan”, *The Gerontologist* 23 (1983): 579-583.

In the Indonesian context, the perception toward gender inequality has also an important link with the gender ideology. However, the concept of “caring” in Indonesia is quite different from that in Japan. In a sense that the ways in which the concept of ‘caring’, especially for the elderly, is used and carried out in Indonesian society has not been primarily regarded as a woman’s task.

However, before we discuss how caring for the elderly is carried out in Indonesia, one has to realize that Indonesian society has diversified types of family, in terms of caring for the elderly. Some are nuclear units; some are three generational cohabitation (parents live with their children and grand children), mostly on a patrilocal principle. Only small number of households has their parents placed in a nursing home or care facilities.

For three generational cohabitation, the most common pattern is that the married eldest child (whether it is son or daughter) is obligated to reside with and care for his/her aging parents, as placing parents in a nursing home is stigmatized as immoral and irresponsible. However, the actual work of caring aging parents is performed mostly by both a wife and a husband. In one case, the husband, while serves as the major breadwinner, mainly provides economic support for his parents, while his wife offers care and service on daily basis. But in other cases, it could be the other way around.

In another case, if the parents are living separately from the children, or when the daughter or daughter in law has a job, the children will hire a non-family “helper” to take care of the increasingly frail parents, who need daily assistance and personal care. In this case, the daughter or daughter in law then transfers most of her previous duties, including preparing meals, bathing, and changing diapers, to a helper. Some high-class people might have been hiring the so-called “elderly helper”, but their wage is usually very high (Rp1,000,000-Rp 1,500,000/month) by Indonesian standards.

However, in contrast to the traditional ideal of care giving in many societies which is associated with the hierarchical concept of “*servicing*”, Indonesian societies is associated with the more egalitarian notion of “*caring*”. Therefore, unlike many societies, which have traditional stereotype of a caregiver such as female relatives in subordinate position, such as wife serving her husband or a daughter in law serving her parents in law, *Indonesian society doesn’t have the so-called traditional stereotype of caregiver. The act of care giving is also not so strongly tied to the ideal of womanhood, and the failure to fulfill these gendered responsibilities does not always incurs a social stigma. Therefore, the nature of “caring” for the elderly could be done by any of family members, and in some cases supported by a non-family “helper” as well.*

Since a large number of Indonesians have a housekeeper to assist daily household work, including caring for the elderly, individual wives are able to redistribute the housework to the hands of other family member (s) or domestic helper (s). Their assistance made elderly care possible to be carried out on a daily basis.

Given these two circumstances from the Japanese and Indonesian respondents, the Japanese cultural ideal of female nurturing and the absence of traditional stereotype of care giving for the elderly in Indonesia, can have precisely inverse effect on the gender inequality perception.

Based on the in-depth interviews, this study found that the Japanese working women are facing “the double burden”, especially on elderly care, in that they are the primary care for the aging parents. One woman said,

“The extent of my husband’s participation in elderly care is far from equal sharing although my working hours for a paid job are the same as his....”

Therefore, it could be argued that while previous study shows that a wife's employment could affect the gender inequality perception, the Japanese woman respondents’ employment status does not significantly influence this perception. This holds true regardless of wives' type of job since career women do not differ significantly from other full-time employed wives in hours of elderly care performed. In other words, wives' employment has virtually no effect on husbands' participation in elderly care, so much so the perception that men are treated somewhat favorably than women still persist.

In a stark contrast, the majority of women respondents in Indonesia said that their employment decreases the time they spend in housework in general and specifically on elderly care. However, this is only manifested in families with no housekeeper (s) or helper (s). As mentioned above, since majority of Indonesian respondents have housekeeper (s) to assist daily housework, including caring for the elderly, individual wives are able to redistribute the housework to the hands of their housekeeper (s). Their assistance made elderly care possible to be carried out on a daily basis, regardless the employment status.

As stated above, this study argues that the Japanese state gender ideology has played a significant role in producing constraining a social system which disadvantages Japanese women and which in turn shapes the ways in which they perceive gender inequality in the society.

If we take a look at modern Japanese history, in the early Meiji period, the family (*Ie*), functioned as an administrative organ of the government. Under the Meiji Civil

Code, an individual's life was totally ruled by the family system, and the family head had authority to govern the behavior of all family members. State authority supported this patriarchal structure as the head of the family was obligated to notify authorities of changes in the status of all family members (Yoshizumi 1995:187-188). In theory and policy, the family functioned symbolically as the larger nation-family with the Emperor occupying the role of patriarchal head. The family was chosen as the means of social control and in order to achieve this goal, the government needed to control and regulate relationships within the family. To this end, "Motherhood was emphasized within the context of a social hierarchy structured to support the state" (Ohinata 1995:200). Ohinata argues that the emphasis on motherly love and raising children properly focused on the mother's role as "breast feeder" and coincided with the development of capitalism and moves by working-class families into industrial jobs (1995:2000).

As women entered the work force since the mid of 1970s, whereas greater numbers of married women or women with dependants in full-time paid work have contributed to pressure governments into providing more extensive welfare services and have jeopardized employers' ability to continue guaranteeing full-time male workers' employment conditions, the increasing numbers of working women complements both the government's and the employer's goals.

As will be explained below, social mores and obstacles for women who continue with employment after marriage, including the short hours of childcare facilities, mean children are cared for at home. This reduces the incentive for the government to extend child care hours. The scarcity of elderly care services and facilities means women are forced to quit their jobs to care for elderly dependants when the time comes; again there is no incentive for the government to address issues relating to services for elderly care.

This analysis of the construction of women within the Japanese state is clearly applicable to explain the contradictory findings regarding the gender inequality perception demonstrated in this study.

This study concludes that Japanese governments have glorified mothers without glorifying women, providing an ideological instrument for subordinating all women. The underlying assumptions determining the construction of the role of women and the impact of this on the division of household labor, and welfare policies encouraging women to enter or exit the paid workforce have been modified depending on specific historical circumstances. As working women, such as the ones surveyed in this study, are central to the restructuring of the domestic Japanese economy, the constitution of their role has remained focused on the function they fulfill as caregivers of husbands,

children, and aging parents.

2. *The Constraining Social Structure Based on the Gendered Division of Labor*

It can also be argued that the state gender ideology has powerfully formed a division of labor which put men on the position of advantage over women. This division of labor along gender lines tenaciously exists not only in the individual psyche, but also in families, enterprises and society, and there is a continuation of practices in line with it. The gendered division of labor has been reproduced and maintained amid these practices. Even now, in the twenty first century, there continues a vicious cycle in which practices connected with the gendered division of labor at home has made the *gendered labor division* in the business world built into an impregnable system (Suzuki 2006a).

Though there are more women continuing paid work even after giving birth, there are still many women who have quit their jobs in spite of a desire to stay at work and to be financially independent, because conditions are not in place to enable them to keep working upon marriage or childbirth, let alone if there is an elderly family member they have to take care of. This fact again illustrates that there are still insufficient arrangements in the working environment aimed at gender equality at family and work.

According to the in-depth interviews, for the *younger (late 20s)* Japanese respondents, the *majority* of them do not agree with the notion that “A man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family”. A similar proportion of respondents believed that a father should actively participate in raising his children. This suggests a support for an ideal in which women are not necessarily caretakers of the home and family, but also indicates that men should nurture and discipline as well.

Some Japanese women particularly in “dual career families”, said that their husband share housework and turned out to excel the wives in cooking, child care taking, or home management sometimes. An exceptional case is shown by a young women in her late twenties whose husband is working, also a government official, shares more housework than she expected---preparing breakfast, giving the infant child a bath, house-cleaning, trash collection, grocery shopping, dishwashing, and so on.

However, while there is a change in the young Japanese women respondents’ perception refuting the gendered division of labor, *the actual work* of household chores and child care *is far from equal*. Men who perform household tasks and child

care are only 1% of the surveyed cases. Given the small proportion of husbands' share in the household labor and child care, this study argues that *there is a gendered division of labor, even among young couples in the actual life or lived experience, regardless of their more egalitarian perception toward gender inequality*. The home remains a place of inequality, in spite of the perception of gender inequality having been intensified and egalitarian gender-role attitudes have risen among the younger generation of Japanese women.

Regardless their employment status, Japanese women do nearly all of the housework and child rearing, as noted by some women respondents as follows:

“I have always done most of the housework before I leave for work. I often get up at 5.00 a.m. to wash, cook breakfast and make lunches and clean. If I think I would be home late, I partially prepared a dinner too. I often do the ironing in the evenings. My children are still young so I couldn't count on them. I never expect my husband to do housework because his working hours are so long, and he would get home very late in the evening.”

“My husband works from the morning to the late evening. So he does very little around the house. I do almost everything. I couldn't ask my mother in law who lives with us to do some things, because she is in poor health.”

“I do a lot of housework such as cooking, house cleaning, washing up, ironing and so on....When the children were young and still at school, I got up early to make their lunch and then went back to bed for a while. Now I am less fussy about housework which may also be related to my age. When my eldest child moved out (1994) and the youngest starts to work, I suspect my husband and I will be less fussy about what we eat. When my children were younger I took time off when necessary for PTA meetings and attended parent-teachers days.”

Yet, a small proportion of these women responded that certain tasks are primarily done by others---namely extended family members. When women are assisted in balancing domestic and paid work, the assistance is usually from other women family members such as daughters, mothers, mothers or mothers-in-law. Or in another case, working mothers could put their young children in the care of childcare facilities.

Nevertheless, due to the widespread unavailability of the childcare facilities, or economic reasons for employing outside housekeeping assistance, wives continue to do most of the housework, have the major responsibility for child rearing and seem to remain the primary care of the elderly.

In short, *in the reality of day to day lives of contemporary Japan, the ideal of egalitarian gender-role has not been realized yet, and this may influence women's perception towards gender inequality.*

It may be tempting to argue that men spend little time on housework and related activities because their paid work hours are longer than women's, and they presume to commute further than women. However, average working hours for women with a full-time employee status only differs from those of men by 90 minutes per week. Given the extra-work activities employers expect of Japanese men, it is not surprising that working women arrive home before their partners. Another viable explanation to this phenomena will be discussed as follows.

Workplace Organization, the Care Insurance System, Child-Care Leave

Though there has been a certain amount of progress in legislative improvements (the revised equal employment opportunity law prohibiting gender discrimination and direct discrimination against men and women will come into effect from April 2007), which would make it easier for married women to continue working, *the social system, workplace organization, workplace climate, and workplace support and services do not constitute a framework commensurate with these legal developments.* There are contradictions between the laws and various systems. Examples of the latter include the care insurance system, under which the elderly will not receive sufficient care unless families also look after them because the system alone is inadequate, and the system of taxation, pensions and wages which is more advantageous to homemaker wives than to working wives.

Because these systems are modeled upon a 'standard household' (husband, homemaker wife and two children) where the gendered division of labor in the home is established, from before World War II through to the present day, the work of married women in Japan has often been for the sake of supplementing household finances. In other words, it has been non-regular employment for such purposes as children's educational expenses or housing loan repayments, and, moreover, women have stayed in jobs for a shorter period than men (Suzuki 2007:6). This has made women come to fulfill the function of an economic control-valve. In addition, women who are able to work similarly long hours to men can become regular employees, but women who cannot work such hours are in a position where they have no alternative but to take jobs as non-regular employees.

The constraining social structure does not place the burden on the woman's side alone. In recent years, due to the impact of protracted economic stagnation from the

1990s, there was an increase in corporate structuring which results in increasing overtime work as the number of regular employees fell. Moreover, there still remains a deep-seated value which defines a loyal company employee as one who puts in long hours at work. Though there has been an increase in men who do wish to balance their work and home lives (Sorifu 2000), in reality, however, most males likely to be socially dominant over females are also constricted by job-centered values such as those epitomized by a large amount of overtime and long hours of work, and it is hard to say that they have autonomously established an affluent life career while prioritizing the private life (Suzuki 2006).

Another important system to discuss is the child-care leave. There is a fact that in a stark contrast with other developed country it is still difficult in Japan for men and women to take child-care leave. Workers taking child care leave accounted for 70.6 per cent of all those who gave birth in the 2003 fiscal year end, and, in comparison by gender, 96.1 per cent of people who took the leave were females, as opposed to the 3.9 per cent who were males (Kosei Rodosho Koyo Kinto/Jido katei Kyoku 2006). The greatest factor hindering men from taking such leave is its unpaid nature. In addition, as corporate attitudes are often not clearly articulated in relation to how the taking of this leave might impact upon the taker's personnel evaluation, men's fears that promotions and pay increases might be delayed are intensified. In fact, such delays do often occur. Moreover, the workplace atmosphere and the reaction of superiors are not necessarily conducive to the taking of leave, either. Irrespective of the increasing numbers of young men who desire to participate in child-rearing, flaws in the personnel-evaluation system and ambiguities in its operation have made it difficult for that wish to become reality. Though the law for measure to support the development of the next generation was enacted in 2005, there have been numerous disadvantages to taking such time off—not only in economic aspects, but also in terms of career development, and this fact has made it especially hard for men to take a leave.

Therefore, given the social structures based on the rigid gendered division of labor in Japanese society, the situation makes it difficult for both women and men to juggle private life and work purely through individual effort. In other words, it is difficult to negotiate division of labor solely on individual assets alone.

The Indonesian Context

3. *The Cultural Context: Diversified Gender Ideology of Individuals*

As for the Indonesian context, based on a number of interviews with some women, a preliminary consideration was drawn regarding the contradictive finding of

the gender inequality perception in both countries. It may be that the results are largely influenced by the diversified gender ideology of individual women rooted in variations in ethnicity, religion, and patterns of socialization in the family. Such diversity is evident in some of the women's statements presented below:

“According to Islam, a wife is not forbidden to make a living, only everything goes back to the fundamental rule that everything must be done with her husband's permission. This fundamental rule is not meant to corner women into the weak side, but on the contrary, to open up chances for the husband and wife to have discussions and to find the best results instead.

“I come from an ethnic group that has a matrilineal kinship system. I can't stand and feel really upset with a woman who only agrees to whatever her husband says. And there is nothing wrong with a woman as a “wage earner”

“Sometimes I'm not really satisfied, because I'm still thinking that as a wife I don't have to work and I just rely on my husband for everything. Now I'm not only earning money but also doing housework. I think I've got double things to do, while my husband's got less things to do. In fact, if we were to calculate it, the counts are balance. Sometimes I tell this to my Mom, and my Mom says “you're a woman and that's what a woman has to do”. Sometimes I think that because I am a woman I don't have to earn money, but that is actually totally wrong.

4. *“The Enabling Social Structure” with Support System from Extended Families and Domestic Helper*

Furthermore, for Indonesian respondents, structural reasons refer to the flexibility of social structure that produces a support system for housework in the family. Similar to Japan, parents are prominent figure for childcare tasks, but there are other figures that may help the parents to ensure the childcare tasks run perfectly. Other figures mainly are extended family and a household helper hired to help with household chore and childcare tasks.

It is common in Indonesia, especially for urban people to entrust part of their household labor to other people. As the economic demands get higher, it is common for both men and women to work to support their family. Household labor is as important as workplace tasks, and for the people who work outside of their home, to be able to run one's work and household labor perfectly at the same time, will required a good skill of time management. As a result of the situation, some Indonesian respondents hire a

household helper to do parts of household chore and baby sit their children. Otherwise, during working hours some parents leave their children in the supervision of their family, such as their parents (grandparents of the children), siblings, or even distant relatives such as cousins, uncle and aunts.

Unlike in Japan, there are norms in Indonesia that allowed or supported extended family helping their relatives to take care of their children. By the existence of these helpers (family and household helpers), parents could have proportional time for work and household labor. And this of course give a certain influence to gender equality among men and women, where household labors are handled by other people, all they need to do is to divide small share of chore that could be compromised with each other. Results of the compromise will determine the equality level.

V. CONCLUSION

As stated in the beginning of this paper, this study seeks to examine the ways in which gender inequality is perceived by women in Japan and Indonesia by deploying sociological perspectives.

By using the AsiaBarometer Data set, this study has found that while Japan has a higher GEM rank compared to Indonesia, Japanese respondents tend to perceive the prevalent gender relations as being unequal. On the other hand, while Indonesia has a lower GEM rank compared to Japan, Indonesian respondents seem to view the existing gender relations as being equal.

As this finding is diametrically opposed to what has been theorized by Blumberg that gender-egalitarian social conditions may lead women to perceive existing gender relation in their societies as being equal regardless of their social demographic characteristics, this study has attempted to seek the reason for this disparity by conducting a sociological analysis of socio-cultural factors prevalent in Japan and Indonesia, as well as in-depth interviews of Japanese and Indonesian women, and found that a number socio-cultural factors may need to be taken into consideration if this finding is to be comprehended adequately.

These factors are: (1)the cultural ideal of female nurturing and the constraining social structures based on the gendered division of labor in Japan, and (2)diversified individual gender ideologies based on ethnicity, religion, family values and enabling social structures with a support system from extended family(s) or helper(s) in Indonesia.

It should also be pointed out here that this finding has also revealed that in a comparison of Japan and Indonesia, the gender ideology and the gender inequality

perception have shown an intriguingly similar pattern in their relation to the GEM rank, i.e. a contradictive pattern to Blumberg's thesis about the relationship between the gender egalitarian conditions and women's gender equality perception. And this is indeed a topic worth exploring further in my upcoming research.

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