

Summary

Women account for 64% of the world illiterate population (UNESCO 2010). Promotion of female education is an important agenda for the international community, and efforts are being made through the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. Although it is unlikely that all countries will have achieved the goal by 2015, the primary enrolment ratio for girls is increasing and the gap in education between men and women is decreasing. Women's access to secondary and tertiary education is on the rise, and the enrolment of females surpasses that of males in some countries.

Education is an important means for empowerment, and empowerment is an essential concept in the improvement of women's status which is presented in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted by the fourth World Conference on Women. Past research has proved that female education contributes to physical, psychological, social, economic and political empowerment of women. It is, therefore, considered that women with higher education are more empowered than other women, but it is also recognised that the increase in women's educational levels does not lead to the improvement of women's status.

Japan is a developed country where more and more women participate in higher education and the labour market. There is an impression that the Japanese society is gender-equal. However, Japan does lag behind from other developed and developing countries in terms of the women's participation in economy, politics and decision-making. Similarly, the state of Kerala in India has achieved the high level of social development in terms of social indicators, such as literacy rate and life expectancy. The differences in these indicators between men and women are small. It is, therefore, often said that women's status is high in Kerala. However, its female labour participation rate is lower than the Indian average.

Japan and Kerala differs in socio-economic situations, but they face a common situation in which female labour participation remains low while women's educational levels become higher and higher. In order to promote women's participation in society, the improvement of relevant laws is important. Also, influences of social customs and people's mindset towards women's work and marriage cannot be ignored.

Therefore, it was decided to conduct a questionnaire survey in Kitakyushu city in Japan and Trivandrum city in Kerala state of India, which asked female university/college students about their views on study, work and marriage. The objective of the survey was to examine their choices for going to higher education, working and getting married/giving birth and reasons behind the choices. The survey explores the relationships between these choices and factors which affect their views on work in terms of experience in social participation, sense of independence, gender awareness, family situation and others. The results of the survey are compiled in this working paper.

After the introductory chapter, Chapter 1 provides the background to the survey. It shows socio-economic situations of Japan and Kerala using related indicators, overviews the development of female education, and points out problems in women's education and work. Then, the significance of this research is explained.

Chapter 2 presents the analytical framework of this working paper, which is constructed from the perspective of women's empowerment with references to past research. Chapter 3 outlines the objective, target and methods of the survey, and briefly explains Kitakyushu city and Trivandrum city.

Chapters 4 and 5 report the results of the questionnaire survey in Kitakyushu and Trivandrum respectively. The first section describes primary and secondary schools to which female students went and reasons for selecting the universities/colleges to which they are now going. The second section, on the basis of the analytical framework, analyses female students' choices for study, work and marriage/giving birth and reasons behind the choices. The last section considers the relationships between the choices.

Female students who want to continue working after getting married/giving birth account for 56.1% in Kitakyushu and 71.7% in Trivandrum. 19.5% of female students in Kitakyushu intend to return to part-time work and 23.2% of female students in Trivandrum intend to return to full-time work after their children become older. Although many students choose universities/colleges giving consideration to future employment and are thinking of occupations taking account of possibility to continue working after getting married or giving birth, they feel that they may have to leave jobs. Female students in Kitakyushu strongly want to raise their children by themselves, while female students in Trivandrum raise difficulties in balancing work inside and outside of home, desire to raise children by themselves and lack of nursery schools as reasons.

Chapter 6 examines factors which affect female students' choices on work by comparing those who want to continue working and those who intend to leave jobs at the times of marriage or giving birth from the perspectives of social, economic and psychological empowerment as well as family environment. Female students in both Kitakyushu and Trivandrum who have sense of economic independence, gender awareness and working mothers are more likely to intend to continue working after getting married/giving birth. Other factors include experience in social participation and psychological empowerment, such as self-confidence, for female students in Kitakyushu and mobility for female students in Trivandrum.

The last chapter summarises factors which have influences on female students' views on how they will work in the future and include some conclusions and prospects for future research.