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## THE SITUATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE JAPANESE LABOR MARKET. BETWEEN REJECTION AND INTEGRATION

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**Abstract:** The Japan Statistical Office publishes its report on the situation of the labor market every five years. The results serve as a reference for public bodies to implement government measures to reduce the gender gap within the Japanese labor market. This study analyzes labor inequality through the parameters of gender, age and social class. The absence of other categories in the analysis of the data in this type of study makes it impossible to know the specific employment situation of different groups of women.

My research intends, through a socio-economic study, to analyze the situation of Muslim women in the Japanese labor market. To do this, I carry out a quantitative study by means of surveys of female Muslim workers living in Japan to compare the data with the results of the state survey. The first results of the work show a series of inequalities at the employment level of Muslim women with respect to non-Muslim women. In summary, the incorporation of other categories in the data analysis shows the existence of employment inequalities for Muslim women that the state study does not contemplate.

**Keywords:** gender gap, inequality, Japan, labor market, Muslim women

## INTRODUCTION

The Japan Statistical Office (E-stat) publishes its report on the labor market situation every five years.<sup>1</sup> The objective of the study is to know the possible inequalities that arise within the Japanese labor market during this period of five years. This study analyzes the situation of the labor market through a series of indicators, such as salary, the type of contract or the job they perform,

among others.<sup>2</sup>

In this type of study, the parameters of gender, age and social class are used to analyze labor inequality. Therefore, they study the trend of the gender gap in the workplace due to the increase in inequalities in recent decades (Tanaka, 2018). Thus, this report guides public institutions and bodies in the diagnosis for the implementation of measures and public policies in the work environment, which allow reducing the gender gap. The segregation of the data is vital in this type of study to observe possible changes in trends and detect specific situations of inequality between men and women. For example, the results of this same study indicate a greater wage gap between men and women from the age of thirty<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, the use of different categories in the analysis of the data in this type of study allows a better diagnosis of labor inequalities. The lack of these other categories in the study of the data means that we are unaware of the employment situation of specific collectives or groups of women. For example, there is no specific data on employment inequalities for lesbian or transgender women in Japan, or for Afro-descendant or Muslim women (Abdelhadi and England, 2018).

My research aims to know, for the first time, the situation of Muslim women in the Japanese labor market. What remuneration they receive, what type of day they work, if they work full-time or part-time, if they have an indefinite or temporary contract or what type of work they do are some of the questions that I intend to answer through this study.

1. Statistics Bureau Japan (2017). *Employment Status Survey*. Link: <https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/shugyou/index.html>. Consultado el 08/07/2023.

2. Within each of the indicators, specific aspects are analyzed: Salary remuneration (comparison by hours and work); type of contract (full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent contract) and job position (category; skilled and unskilled).

3. Statistics Bureau Japan (2017). *Employment Status Survey*. Link: <https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/shugyou/index.html>. Consultado el 08/07/2023.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

For data collection, I carry out a quantitative study through a ten-item questionnaire. I perform an analysis of the questions in the Japan Statistical Office report to adapt the statements to my survey. I pose three blocks of questions; at the salary level, at the hiring level and at the type of work level. Within these levels, I analyze the different labor aspects (part-time and full-time, temporary and indefinite contract, etc.).

To carry out the survey, I contact the association Ahmadiyya Muslim Women Association in Japan <sup>4</sup> Made up of Muslim women. Muslim female workers residing in Japan, between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five, participated in the survey. <sup>5</sup> Include in the study group both Japanese Muslim women and immigrant Muslim workers in Japan <sup>6</sup>. The reason is to know if the aspect of origin influences the labor inequality of Muslim women. In total, about one hundred and eight women participated in the study between March and August 2020. The survey is carried out by telephone in view of the health crisis situation caused by COVID-19.

After completing the surveys, I segregate the data by age into four groups (15-30, 31-45; 46-65), origin (born in Japan, not born in Japan) and studies (basic, intermediate, advanced). With these data, I carry out a comparative analysis with the results of the 2017 report of the Japanese Statistical Office.

## RESULTS

After analyzing the data on the situation of Muslim and non-Muslim female workers in the Japanese labor market, in this section I

will explain the most significant and relevant results of this comparative study. To do this, I classify the results by salary level, level of hiring and level of type of paid work.

At the salary level, Muslim women receive an average of 2.8% less salary for the same work, compared to non-Muslim workers. There are no significant changes in terms of the indicator of age. The wage inequality is maintained proportionally over the years between Muslim and non-Muslim women.

When analyzing the data according to the origin or nationality of the worker, a clear salary inequality is observed. The gap between Japanese-born Muslim women and non-Muslim Japanese women barely exceeds 0.1, while immigrant Muslim women earn around 2.1% less salary, compared to Japanese-born women, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Also, the level of studies influences the wage inequality of Muslim immigrant women. Not only in women with basic studies (1.1% compared to non-Muslim women with basic studies), but also in workers with higher education (1% difference).

At the recruitment level, Muslim women have greater difficulties in accessing the Japanese labor market, compared to non-Muslim women. The data segregated by age hardly show a great difference in the first years between both groups of women (0.21%). However, the greatest differences appear after thirty years. The hiring rate of non-Muslim Japanese women decreases at this stage, while the hiring of Muslim workers increases between the ages of 31-45 and remains stable from the age of 46-65. Therefore, a significant change is observed with respect to the usual trend included in the E-Stat report, largely due to the need to remain in the labor market

4. Ahmadiyya Muslim Women Association in Japan is an association of Muslim women in Japan under the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Japan. Participate in a multitude of social and cultural events for the integration of Muslim women into Japanese society.

5. Official age range of the workforce in Japan.

6. According to data from the Pew Research Center, there were 230,000 Muslims residing in Japan in 2019. Of these, approximately 50,000 are converts.

to complement the family economy (Sakurai, 2008).

The analysis of the results segregated by origin again reveals a series of relevant data. The hiring rate among non-Muslim and Muslim Japanese women decreases from the age of thirty, but in the case of immigrant Muslim women it increases progressively both in the 31-45 and 46-65 age range (1.2% and 1% respectively). Finally, among the hiring results according to educational level, the highest employment rate stands out among Muslim immigrant women with basic studies compared to qualified migrant workers (1.8%).

Within contracting, it is worth highlighting some results on the type of contract they sign. 66.7% of Japanese women have a temporary employment contract compared to 34.6% of men, according to data from the Institute of Statistics <sup>7</sup>. Compared to the results of the study on Muslim women, 67.4% of Muslim workers have a part-time contract. This gap is maintained constantly in the different age groups. However, there are significant differences in the results between the study of Japanese Muslim women and immigrant Muslim women. The data from the first group on part-time hiring (64.2%) hardly show any great differences compared to the results on temporary employment for Japanese workers. However, the data for Muslim immigrant women indicate an exponential increase in temporary employment (77.3% on average among immigrant Muslim women with basic, intermediate, and higher education).

It is also necessary to highlight some results on the type of working day they carry out. Japanese women work 2.5% more part-time than men <sup>8</sup>. Compared to survey data on Muslim women, non-Muslim Japanese

workers work 0.8 percent more part-time than their Muslim counterparts. However, there are large differences in outcomes between Japanese Muslim women and immigrant Muslim women. Most of the latter women work part-time compared to Japanese Muslim women (4.3% difference).

Finally, it is also worth highlighting a series of results regarding the type of paid work they perform. Japanese employees work in the field of administration (33%), civil service (21%), education (17%) and health (15%), according to data from the Japanese Statistical Office report <sup>9</sup>. The data from the study on the situation of Muslim women in the Japanese labor market show little difference in terms of the type of work they do compared to the results of the report from the Bureau of Statistics. The main positions they hold are within the administration (14%), the public function (9%), with the exception of health (8%) and education (5%) which, in this case, is reversed. There are significant differences in terms of immigrant Muslim women. Foreign female workers with higher qualifications (university studies) hold positions in banking, research and development, and healthcare. On the other hand, Muslim migrant women with little training perform maintenance jobs in accommodation, care for dependent people and catering.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research achieves the initial objective of knowing the situation of Muslim workers in the Japanese labor market. The study allows us to know the different inequalities in the workplace suffered by Muslim women. The incorporation of other parameters in the analysis of this study facilitates the identification of a series of inequalities that the

7. Statistics Bureau Japan (2017). *Employment Status Survey*. Enlace: <https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/shugyou/index.html>. Consultado el 08/07/2023.

8. The same issue

9. The same issue

study by the Japanese Statistical Office does not contemplate. Specifically, the segregated analysis of the data according to their origin shows how socio-cultural categories influence the inequality of working women.

In the study, the most significant employment inequalities at the different levels of analysis are found in immigrant Muslim women. This aspect is due to the influence of the Japanese socio-cultural discourse on being Japanese (*Nihonjinron*). This discourse on identity marks the differences in terms of belonging to the group of equals (Nakane, 1970). Therefore, all non-Japanese beings are left out of the group. The results of the study show how this aspect has a decisive influence on the labor inequality of immigrant Muslim workers in the different indicators proposed in this study.

Despite reaching the intended objective, a further study is necessary. The health emergency situation derived from COVID-19 influences the study sample. The impossibility of completing the questionnaire in person and the reluctance of the participants, together with other technical aspects, influence the low participation in this study. Therefore, a larger sample is required to obtain a series of data that allows a more detailed study on the

situation of Muslim women in the Japanese labor market. In addition, this subsequent study makes it possible to detect changes in trends in the employment situation of these women.

Another complex aspect in this study is the analysis of the data from different parameters. The segregation of the results by age, origin and educational level for a comparative study shows specific inequalities due to the intersection of different categories. The incorporation of different categories in the analysis implies greater complexity when it comes to addressing inequalities. It supposes a tangle or network of aspects that makes it difficult when it comes to developing measures or public policies to reverse inequalities and the labor gap.

As a result of this study, a posteriori work can be proposed on the situation of women from the LGBTQ+ collective or other groups of women such as workers of African descent, Chinese or other Japanese social and cultural minorities and compare it with the data from the report on the employment situation in Japan from the Japanese Statistical Office. This type of study is necessary to reduce inequalities towards people from these groups.

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