

GLASS CEILINGS, STICKING FLOORS... A SOCIETY THAT DAMPENS WOMEN'S CONFIDENCE

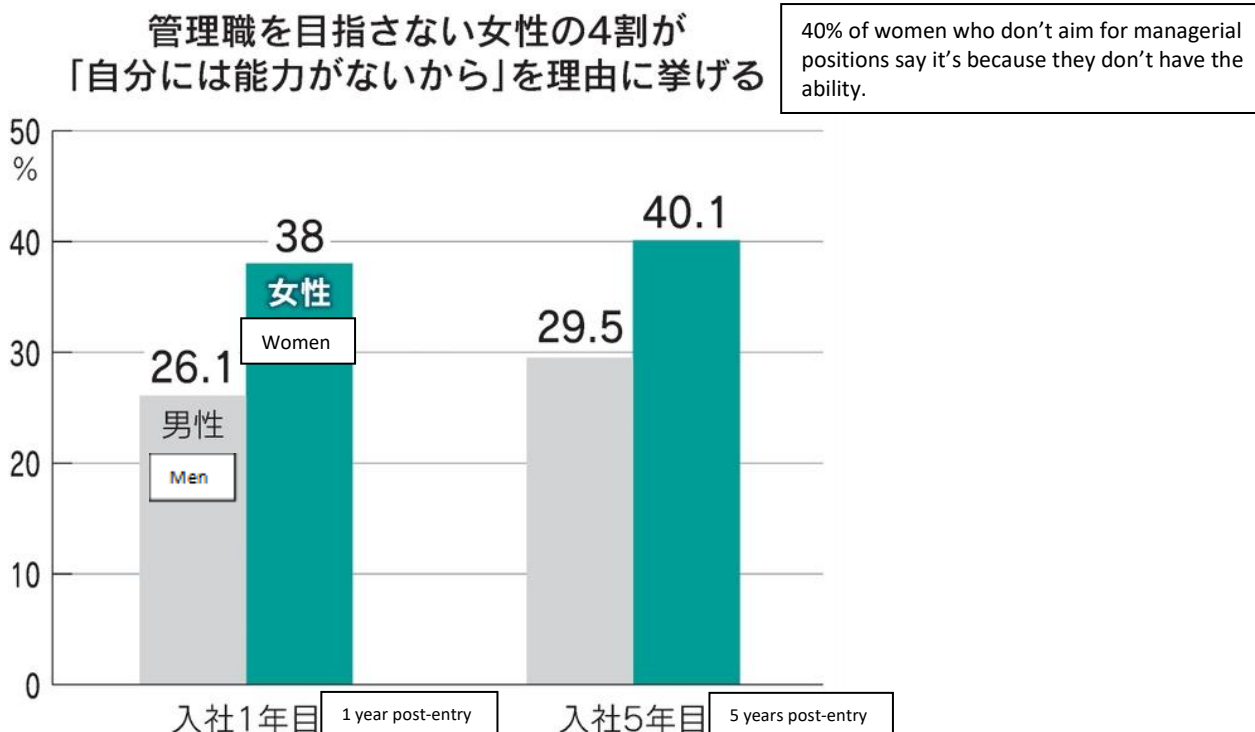
It was supposed to be that if you put your mind to the task at hand and acquire the ability, the way would open up. In the midst of all the talk of promoting the advancement of women, women who have been working ambitiously are now faced with a wall of "self-confidence. They tend to underestimate their own abilities compared to men and are timid about challenges and promotions. Where do women go astray and how far do they have to go to be accepted?

Even world leaders are unsure of themselves.

In late July, an article with the title "Billie Eilish Battles Imposter Syndrome" appeared on the Internet. "I felt I wasn't doing a good enough job, that I didn't have much talent," she said. She is the youngest person ever to win four major Grammy Awards and is overwhelmingly supported by young people. The interview video has been viewed more than 1.8 million times.

The "Imposter Syndrome" was proposed by psychologists in the 1970s. It refers to the psychological state of being like a fraud who is deceiving the people around him or her by not being able to see his or her abilities and accomplishments in a positive light, even if they are objectively highly regarded. It is said to be more common among women who tend to underestimate their own abilities, but their beliefs are often unfounded.

The term became famous when Sheryl Sandberg, who rose to the position of COO of Facebook, confided in her best-selling book "Lean In" in 2013, "There are still days when I think I'm a fraud.



(出所) 国立女性教育会館、2020年「男女の初期キャリア形成と活躍推進に関する調査 ～入社5年で何が変わったのか～」

Source: National Women's Education Center 2020 "Survey on early career development and promotion of active participation of Men and Women – what has changed in five years of joining the company?"




Many women were encouraged by the confession of one of the world's most influential leaders as she shared her own experiences. On the other hand, these women may have had some anxiety in their minds. "I wonder how far I have to go to find myself capable.

According to a survey conducted by the National Women's Education Center of Japan on approximately 2,100 new employees in 2003, 26.1% of men and 38% of women in their first year of employment said that the reason they did not aim for management positions was because they were not capable.

In a survey conducted by professors at Sacred Heart University from 2007 to 2010 among men and women aged 25 to 30 in various countries (25- to 34-year-olds in Korea), only 26% of Japanese women answered, "very much so" or "fairly much so" to the question "Do you want to be a manager?"

"Unconscious Prejudice" Takes Away Confidence

"In all aspects of life, women tend to doubt their own abilities. Machiko Osawa, a professor emeritus at Japan Women's University, points out that "unconscious bias," which takes root in society, is one of the reasons why women lose confidence.

女性の自信はこうして奪われる		WOMEN ARE DEPRIVED OF SELF-CONFIDENCE
家庭	「良い子」でいることを求められる 	AT HOME: Be a good "child" is the desired action
社会	補佐的な役割の女性を目にする機会が多い 	IN SOCIETY: Be a good assistant / be supportive
学校	進学は積極的に応援してもらえない 	AT SCHOOL: No positive support for higher education
職場	難しい仕事は男性に振られる 	WORKPLACE: Difficult jobs are mean for men
(注)日本女子大学、大沢名誉教授の話などを基に作成		Information based on Japan Women's University's <u>Osawa</u>

At home and at school, girls are often expected to be "good" children who listen better than boys. In commercials and TV dramas, scenes of women assisting men are frequently shown, and this is ingrained as "the way of society.

In the early stages of a woman's career, Ms. Osawa says, "There is a 'glass ceiling' that prevents women from getting promoted, but there is also a 'sticking floor'. In exchange for avoiding failure, they do not gain confidence and start to act "at their own size," such as refraining from speaking at meetings or getting promotions.

Efforts are underway to eliminate these prejudices from the generation that will carry the future. "In February 2009, students from Showa Women's University spoke to about 240 first-year students of

Komaba Toho Junior High School (a boys' school) on the topic, "What would you do if your wife became president? The theme was "First Gentleman," which refers to the husband of a female president or prime minister. The theme was "First Gentleman," referring to the husbands of female presidents and prime ministers.

One of the male students who attended the lecture said, "I had assumed that a job like the president's would be held by a man," and "I thought there was no discrimination between men and women." In a preliminary questionnaire, about 30% of the students were positive about the idea that "husbands should work and wives should take care of the home," and this was an opportunity for them to realize their own bias, including the results of the questionnaire. Akiko Komori, a full-time lecturer at Showa Women's University who is in charge of the project, hopes that "the younger generation will realize their unconscious biases and change them.

Let's bluff our way to the table

Ms. Harumi Kodama, who became the first female representative to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Japan in 2007, has been courageously fighting against prejudice. The important thing is to sit at the same table as men, even if you have to bluff," she said.

She grew up in a strict family in Kagoshima Prefecture and was taught in high school to be "a good wife and mother." Feeling suffocated, she abruptly ran away from home and transferred to a high school in the United States. In Japan, she became a policy secretary for a member of the Diet, but in those days all the people she met were older men, and when she handed out materials she had prepared, she was mistaken for a delivery person. "Even so," she said, "the experience of participating in an international conference and dealing with two former prime ministers in the absence of a member of the Diet, which made me break out in a cold sweat, naturally gave me confidence."

The ADB is taking measures to increase the presence of women, such as not allowing conferences to be held without a certain number of women. Ms. Kodama also says, "It is my duty to inspire and raise the spirits of women. This kind of support will support the women in their efforts to become "capable".

(This article was written by Niki Mizuguchi)