

## Abstract In English

Living through post-adolescence in the case of Highly Educated Single Women: Based on Research in Shimane Prefecture and Tokyo Metropolitan Area

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### INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, researchers have found that young people's transition into adulthood is greatly prolonged in terms of finishing education, entering the job market, leaving their parental home and getting married. Among researchers on youth transition, some contend to regard this prolonged transition into adulthood as a separate and normative life stage - post-adolescence – which falls between adolescence and adulthood. Recently, a shift towards individualization and de-standardization is apparent among youths. However, individual transition to adulthood is socially constructed. Individuals under different social and cultural contexts may have various transition experiences. A recent review of the transition into adulthood literature indicates that a systematic analysis of gender, social class differences and residential area is needed. In Japan, with the growth of higher education opportunities and the increase of women's participation in job market, the experiences of women transitioning into adulthood have vastly changed. This study explores the post-adolescence experiences of highly educated Japanese single women.

### METHOD

This study based on longitudinal qualitative research of 31 women (aged 21 to 39) over different times and locations (Shimane prefecture and Tokyo metropolitan area). There are three groups in this study. The first group includes 12 single women who were born and live in Shimane Prefecture (S group). The second group includes 11 single women who were born and live in Tokyo (T group). The third group is composed of 8 single women who were born in the countryside and live in Tokyo (Y group).

### RESULTS

Firstly, we could observe that 3 groups started with a very wide diversity of jobs just after their graduation from school. Some of them got regular full-time jobs, while others found work as part-time employees. The interviewees of S group who started work as an irregular employee could not easily change their occupational status for a long periods of time. For these women, it was difficult to find stable work in Shimane. On the other hand, members of T group and Y group who started work as a regular full-time employee in Tokyo easily succeeded at finding new jobs. When they found that their job was no

longer meeting their career expectations, they would begin the search for a new one.

Getting one's first job is the first step towards independence from one's parents. However, most of S group and T group continued to live with their parents even after starting work. These women believed living with their parents would not only help them save money but also make their parents happy.

Secondly, we observed that most of the interviewees had high expectations of marriage. S group had strong expectations of their future marriage partner due to their unstable and low-income status. T group and Y group wanted to continue to work as full time employees, but they also would like to change their work style flexibly depending on their future husbands' incomes and occupational status. In the case of S group and T group, they expected to live near to their parents in the future so that they could receive child-rearing support which would give them the possibility to continue their career afterwards. However, most of the interviewees felt the social pressures of being single due to being of marriageable age and childbearing age. Mixed feelings of high expectations of marriage and wanting to enjoy single life had caused struggles and psychological stress.

Finally, the meaning of independence has changed over time. Getting one's first job is the first step towards independence. After that, personal independence becomes much more important during career development. In the late stage of post-adolescence, getting married and giving birth becomes another standard of evaluating independence.

## CONCLUSION

Nowadays, there are higher expectations of women. Women must work and be as financially independent as men. Being a Japanese female, it is the social normative in Japan to get married and bear children. On the other hand, being financially dependent on a husband or parents is still socially acceptable for Japanese women. This study revealed the diversities of occupational status and a standardized view of marriage expectations among the highly educated Japanese single women. The variance of occupational status was caused by the gender norms and the residential area's economic situation. Moreover, a standardization of marriage expectations reflected that highly educated Japanese single women want to conform to more traditional norms.