

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON THE PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN AMBASSADORS IN JAPAN

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This research investigated the effect of gender on the performance of female ambassadors in Japan. The researcher hypothesized that the highly patriarchal culture of Japan would affect the performance of female ambassadors posted to Japan, though it would also cause them to devise strategies to perform effectively, including overworking.

From the findings and the discussions that followed, the research concludes that:

- i) There is gender discrimination against female ambassadors accredited to and working in Japan. However, the discrimination is subtle and covert.
- ii) Sexism exists as well but the female ambassadors ignore them or take them in stride.
- iii) The female ambassadors are cognizant of the discrimination and the male dominated culture of Japan. However, they have developed coping strategies which include not challenging the established social norm, remaining respectful of the culture and moving with the flow, remaining soft-spoken, respectful, focused on their mandate, patient and persistent but subtle in their approach to issues.
- iv) The research confirms, as shown in other research findings, that most of the female ambassadors work extra hard, most times more than their male colleagues to project a positive image and show their visibility, knowledge, competence, and capability. They need to succeed in not disappointing their governments, but also not to cast a slur on fellow women diplomats in general.
- v) Japanese Confucian values of respect for authority, loyalty to company, hard work, trustworthiness and honesty, help to promote effective performance of female ambassadors in Japan.
- vi) The female ambassadors use outside support from their governments for difficult and high level negotiations but have also formed networks of influential and professional friends to support and advise them on difficult issues.
- vii) The female ambassadors use the media: print, electronic and social media to promote their countries sparingly because they are aware of the often negative portrayal of women in the press. They fear that familiarity could breed contempt or misrepresentation in this area.
- viii) Despite the reported challenges and because of the female ambassadors' respect for Japanese culture, most of the women ambassadors in Japan are coping very well and representing their countries effectively.