

# **The Prevention of the Workplace Harassment at Japanese Universities: The perspective of the research and The Findings From the Complete Count Survey<sup>1</sup>**

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This article shows the perspective of this research and the result of the complete count survey performed from October to November in 2013 to examine the attitude toward the prevention and the resolution of the workplace harassment at the Japanese universities. The questionnaire was distributed to 1131 universities, two years colleges, and postgraduate schools in Japan to collect the guidelines related to workplace harassment. The number of the respondents was 394. The response rate was 34.8%. The number of the documents collected was 168 of the total respondents, that is 42.6% of the total respondents and 6.7% of the 1131 schools. The total number of the documents related to the harassment prevention was 347. Only the half of the respondents answered that they have the guidelines for harassment prevention and 40% of the respondents answered that they do not have the guidelines. It is expected that the Japanese universities should pay more attention to the harassment prevention.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This research is to examine a collective view of the definition and that of the concrete examples of workplace harassment at Japanese universities to enlarge the possibilities of prevention and the resolution of workplace harassment at universities in Japan.

*Fig.1 The two stages of the research* This research is divided into two stages. In the first stage of the research, the questionnaire was performed to collect the documents related to the harassment prevention and to collect the basic information about the respondents that have the documents. And in the second stage of this research, I am going to analyze the documents as a text to find the common view of the definitions of the workplace harassment and the cases of workplace harassment written in the documents.

In the first half of this article, I will explain the background and the perspectives of this research. And in the next half of this article, I will show the progress at the first stage of the research and the outcome of the questionnaire that was performed from October and November in 2014. The style of the questionnaire was the complete count survey.

Fig.1 The two stages of the research

## **BACKGROUND**

“Workplace harassment” in higher education in Japan has been called “academic

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<sup>1</sup> The objectives of research are to identify the common view of the definitions of workplace harassment among the Japanese universities. This research is granted by the Japanese Ministry of Education; “Basic Studies C” No.25380682. The title of the research is “The definition of workplace harassment at universities in Japan and the roles of career counselors”

harassment” since 1995. According to Ogoshi(2004) who performed a questionnaire survey with random sampling method for full-time teachers working at Japanese universities in 2002; response rate 38%, number of responses 931, it is reported that there were from a few percent to 20 percent of the respondents each in every items answered that they were victims of harassment and that the lower the rank of the position, the more vulnerable to harassment. They also reported that one fourth of the respondents knew that there were some damaged from academic harassment in their surroundings and the total number of the damaged people reached to 750.

In the report of “Individual Dispute Resolution System ” by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare(2012), the number of people used this system for workplace harassment cases in 2011 was 45,939 and recently the number of the users of part-time workers is increasing. In January 2012, the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare publicly announced the definition of workplace harassment. They stated that the purpose of the prevention of workplace harassment is to respect the dignity and personal rights of workers and that they emphasized that active involvement in prevention and resolution of workplace harassment is important.

The national universities<sup>2</sup> were privatized in 2004 in Japan. Since then, the number of part-time teachers, researchers and clerical workers has been increased and the type employment was diversified among workers in the same office. This work environment seems to cause troubles easily and the possibility of the trouble cannot be denied. The damages from workplace harassment on one’s career seem to be very serious.

However, the preventive measure for “*Ijime and Iyagarase*” or workplace harassment at university is not enough in Japan. It is necessary that the universities as the major institutions of higher education should have a collective view of the definition of workplace harassment and of concrete examples of work harassment and it is important that they should share the view to prevent and resolve the problem for the sake of the dignity and personal rights of researchers. However, there has not been any collective view of them among Japanese universities. In this article, I will report the progress and the outcomes of the complete count survey which I started in October 2013 for all the universities in Japan

According to the report of the first research performed by Ogoshi et al in 2002 ; the rate of response was 51%, the number of respondents was 114 universities, with regard to the “harassment without sexual harassment”, there was neither consulting service nor prevention system found in Japanese universities and 25% of universities were carrying out the dispute resolution procedures. The guidelines of almost all the respondents put priority on the pros and cons of harassment approval. They were not aimed for problem resolution. The workplace harassment was not included in “academic harassment” and it was meant to be the one between teacher and student in the guidelines. Furthermore, it is reported that there was no training system for counseling service, no fast remedial action for the people damaged by harassment and no guidelines for harassers (Ogoshi 2004).

Ogoshi’s research and findings are very important to know the situation of workers and researchers of the Japanese university and how people involved in the harassment are treated in Japanese universities. However, there is a limit in Ogoshi’s work. Ogoshi used her own classification of the workplace harassment in her survey and she did not define what actions consist of the workplace harassment. To construct the preventive measurement for the workplace harassment, it is necessary to give people the basic ideas of what kinds of actions consist of the workplace harassment to make it preventable before it happens. This means that the definition of the workplace harassment is necessary for prevention and the collective view of the workplace harassment should be identified by empirical research data. If there is no common view of what kinds of actions are taken as the workplace harassment by the people working at the Japanese university, it is difficult for the third party to report the problems and to give practical support for others in trouble at the early stage of prevention.

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<sup>2</sup> Although all the Japanese national universities were privatized, they add the title *Kokuritsu Daigaku Hojin* or “National University Corporation” before their names. e.g. National University Corporation Hokkaido University

## PERSPECTIVES

It is considered that one of the conditions to recognize the harassment is whether one feels unpleasant to other's act or not. This seems to have caused the misunderstanding among people that unless the victim reports the third person that he or she was harassed, the third person should not report that there is the harassment against the person. This is because what is taken as the harassment all depends on how one feels and it is different from one another. Whether the act that one witnessed is the harassment or not is always covered with uncertainty unless the victim reports by themselves. As the result, the support has been given after the problems happened and people surrounding the victim could not take actions before it happens easily.

However, it is often the case that the victims do not report the harassment because they are afraid that it could get worse if the harasser knew the fact of reporting. This situation rather makes it difficult for the victims to escape from the problem to suffer for the long period of time. The longer the victim suffers, the more serious the damage is. By the time when they report the harassment, the damage will be so serious that it will take longer to be cured.

The victim centered approach is effective to prevent the secondary harassment that rejects the claim of the victims that he or she was harassed. However, it seems that this approach has not been working for the benefit of the victims but for the managers of the workplace. The reason for this is that the managers could use the approach as a good excuse to escape from the problem. It seems that the misunderstanding about the meaning of the approach and the uncertainty to identify the harassment case among people made the prevention of the workplace harassment more difficult.

There are three stages of the prevention in the field of preventive medicine. Primary prevention is the prevention of the illness. It includes the education to health, health enhancement, special prevention (education, a vaccination, etc.). Secondary prevention is the prevention of serious illness. It includes the early detection, the early measure and the suitable medical treatment, and the measures against the illness (medical examination etc.). Third prevention is the recurrence prevention of the illness and rehabilitation.

It is quite common for Japanese universities to give a lecture on the harassment prevention once in a year. To apply the three stages of preventive medicine for the prevention of the workplace harassment at the Japanese universities, it seems that the primary prevention and the third prevention are the main preventive measures that have been taken so far and the secondary prevention has been forgotten or skipped.

There is the common phrase of the prevention of the harassment. It says, "Don't harass others, Don't be harassed, and Don't let someone harass or be harassed". This research puts the priority on the last phrase "Don't let someone harass or be harassed". This perspective is much closer to the secondary prevention than to the other two. The secondary prevention is often taken as a preventive measure such as a reporting system by the third person for the domestic violence, the child abuse and the elderly abuse because the violence and the abuse often take place in the private spheres such as at home where it is difficult for the outsiders to detect the problems.

The witness of the violence against other children at home has been taken problematical in the case of domestic violence and finally the child abuse prevention law was amended in 2006 in Japan. Since then the reporting system has been taken as a useful measurement for the early detection of the child abuse and it has been the obligation of the citizen to report the child abuse when the witness doubts that it might be the case but he or she is not sure if it is the case. This made the way to the introduction of the reporting system in other cases.

The reporting system became important measure for the prevention against the workplace harassment by the announcement of the definition of the workplace harassment by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in January 2012. It says that the definition of workplace harassment is "*The act which gives mental and physical pain or worsens workplace environment to those who work in the same office exceeding the proper range of business taking advantage of the background of the predominance at workplace, such as a status in the course of duties and human relations*".

According to the definition, "*the act which worsens workplace environment to those who work in the same office*" is also included in the workplace harassment. This means that the range of the victims is not limited to the harassed but people working in the same office. It can be interpreted that the victim centered approach is not limited to only the direct relationship but also to the indirect

relationship and that anyone in the same office who thinks that the environment became worse by the act have the right to claim against the workplace harassment.

By enlarging the range of the victim, they made the workers in the same office not just the witness or the third person but also the victim. This means that reporting system is no longer limited to the direct victims. To make the reporting system work, it is necessary to have the common view of workplace harassment. It is suggested by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare that each industry should have its common view of the definition so that each workplace in the industry can develop its own preventive measure.

The announcement by the Japanese Ministry should be evaluated as they stepped forward to take actions for the secondary prevention of the workplace harassment. It is interesting that they successfully resolved the problem of making an excuse for the managers to escape from the responsibility and at the same time they kept the importance of the victim centered approach.

In the complete count survey, I collected the guidelines for the prevention of the workplace harassment and other related documents as written texts to identify the collective view of what kind actions should be taken as the workplace harassment at each university. There might be a variety of classifications and definitions of the workplace harassment among universities. Each university must have its own policies and rules and the uniqueness in the ways of expression to prevent the workplace harassment. This will be also a live picture of the experiences of the Japanese university and it will be important written resource in the field of higher education.

The questionnaire was not performed to the individual workers or researchers working at the Japanese universities because the purpose of this research is to get the picture of collective view of different organizations to find the way towards the prevention and the resolution of the workplace harassment at each organization. In this sense, this research is expected to meet the needs of the Japanese society.

However, the social meaning of this research is not limited to meet the needs of the Japanese society. This research is going to explore the possibility to build a practical measurement for the early detection of the workplace harassment by the third party. To make it possible for the third party to detect the problematic situations of others at the early stage it is necessary to have the consultation windows at each workplace where the career counselors take the consultation not only for the people in trouble but also the people working in the same office. The career counselors help individuals to develop one's career by active listening. It is one of their roles that they help workers keep their workplace environment safer and better. Workplace harassment is the violation of human rights and at the same time it gives serious damage on one's career development.

Recently, the introduction of career counselors has increased at the Japanese schools to reconnect the education and the career development. The career counselors are often located in the career service office and help students find jobs by advising. But the role of them should not be limited to job hunting or job counseling only. In the field of career development, the meaning of "career" is often taken as the experience of one's life roles. The definition of "career" is vast and diversified. At the final stage of this research, I am going to explore the possibility of the role of career counselors in this field. In this sense, it is expected that this research will contribute to offer a picture of the more practical secondary preventive measure against the workplace harassment for the future.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

*Fig. 1 The outline of the complete count survey* the distribution of the questionnaire was started on the 3rd of Oct 2013 and finished collecting the entire questionnaire by the beginning of December 2013. The questionnaire was sent to the General Office, "Soumuka" that usually take in charge of the questionnaire response. It was collected by mails or by e-mail. *Fig. 2 The process of the complete count survey* shows the process of the distribution. *Fig. 3 Items of the Questionnaire* there are 13 items in the questionnaire.

### **Fig. 1 The outline of the complete count survey**

OBJECTIVES: To collect the guidelines related to workplace harassment at universities in

Japan.  
 SURVEY TARGETS: All of the universities, the colleges, the postgraduate schools in Japan  
 SURVEY TYPE: Complete count survey  
 SURVEY PERIOD: 3rd October 2013 – the beginning of December 2013  
 SURVEY METHODS: Mailing

**Fig. 2 The Process of the Complete Count Survey**

**Fig. 3 The Items of the Questionnaire**

**Basic items: 8 items**

1. The types of the schools :4 items

- National, public or private – “Type 1”
- Universities, colleges or postgraduate schools – “Type 2”
- Single sex schools or mixed sex schools – “Type 3”

2. The location areas of the schools: 2 items

- Areas by six districts by the Japanese Ministry of Education. – “Area 1”
- Areas by eleven districts by the Japanese Ministry of Health and Labor. – “Area 2”

3. The number of students: 2 items

- The number of students by sex
- The number of students by the area of studies; Liberal Arts or Science

**Main items: 5 items**

The documents related to the harassment prevention

- The possession of the guidelines
- The possession of any other documents
- The types of the documents; paper, electrical file, or both
- The accessibility of the documents; open to the public or closed

**RESULTS**

The questionnaire distributed was 1131. The number of respondents was 394. The response rate was 34.8%. *Table 1. The Distribution of the Population and the Respondents*

shows the similarity between the distribution of the respondents and that of the population. There is a little difference in the distribution in the Type 1 and Type 2. *Table 2 Types of Schools 1* *Table 3 Types of Schools 2* shows that there are more “national universities” and less “private universities” in the distribution of the respondents than in the distribution of the population. *Table 6. Areas by eleven districts*

shows that there are more in Hokkaido and Tohoku areas. This is because this survey was performed by one of the national universities in Hokkaido.

**Table 1. The Distribution of the Population and the Respondents**

Population							
	N	Ave.	SE	SD	Var.	W	K
Type 1	1131	2.76	0.017	0.579	0.335	-2.282	3.814
Type 2	1131	1.38	0.018	0.602	0.363	1.94	5.135
single / mixed	1131	1.13	0.01	0.335	0.113	2.215	2.913
area1	1131	2.73	0.034	1.135	1.289	0.606	-0.021
area2	1131	5.31	0.079	2.644	6.993	0.288	-0.998
Respondent							
	n	ave.	se	sd	var.	w	k
Type 1	394	2.58	0.036	0.713	0.508	-1.399	0.404
Type 2	394	1.36	0.032	0.632	0.399	2.212	6.013
single / mixed	394	1.12	0.016	0.328	0.107	2.321	3.405
area1	394	2.69	0.059	1.169	1.365	0.483	-0.265
area2	394	5.26	0.136	2.706	7.321	0.207	-1.037

Table 2. Types of Schools 1

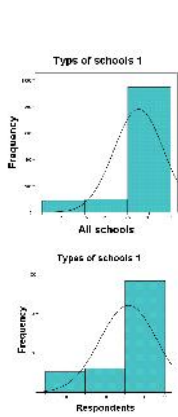


Table 3. Types of Schools 2

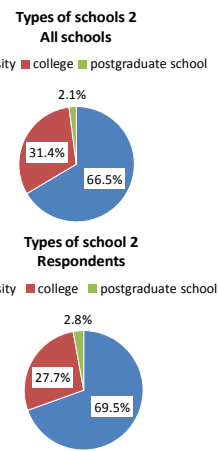
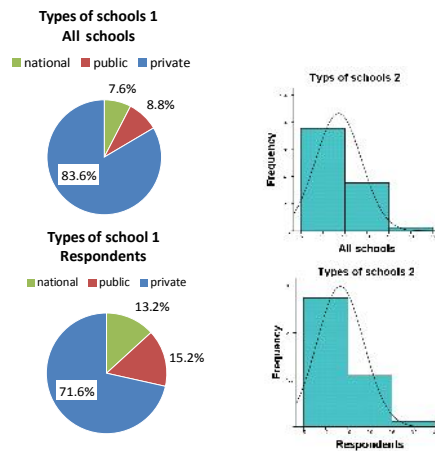


Table 4. Single / Mixed schools

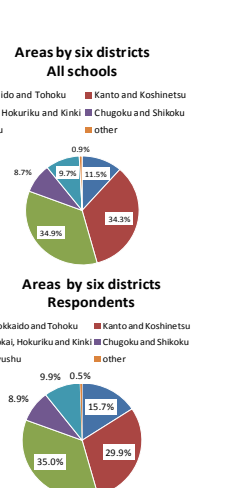
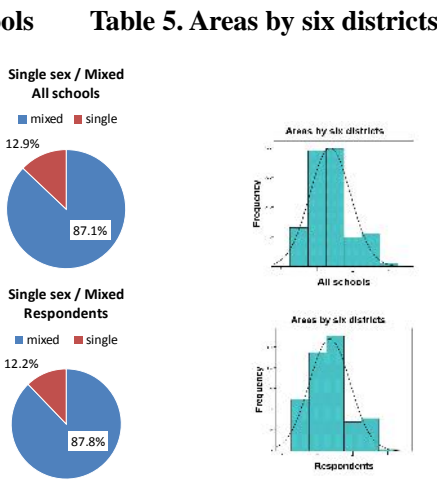
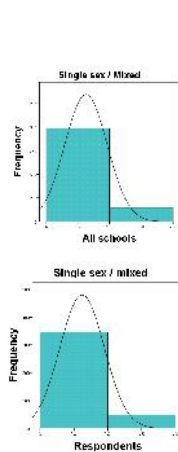
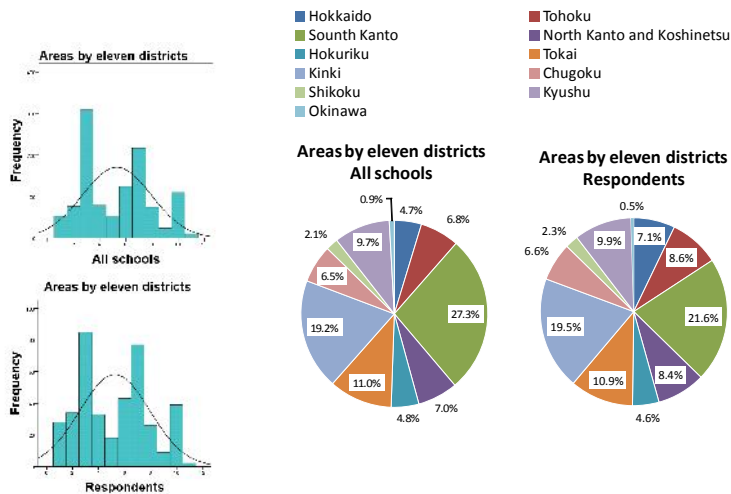


Table 6. Areas by eleven districts

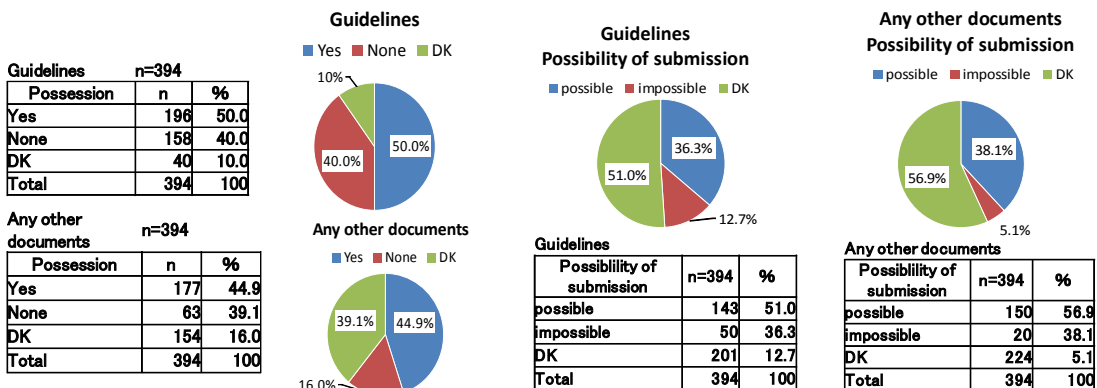


**THE BASIC INFORMATION OF THE DOCUMENTS COLLECTED**

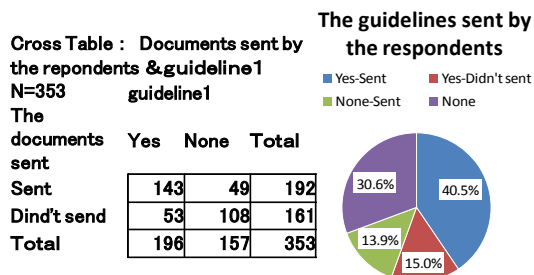
*Table 7. The possession of the guidelines* shows that only the half of the respondents answered that they have the guidelines for harassment prevention and 40% of them answered that they do not have the guidelines. Ten years have passed since the privatization of universities in 2004, but there is almost no change in the percentage of the possession among schools in higher education in Japan. *Table 8. The possibility of Submission of the Documents* shows that in the case of the guidelines for harassment prevention, less than 40% of respondents answered it's possible. 12.7% of

respondents answered it's impossible. *Table 9. The guidelines Sent by the Respondents* more than the half of the respondents sent the documents related to the harassment prevention. About 40% of the respondents who answered that they have the guidelines sent the documents. *Table 10. Other Documents Sent by the Respondents* more than 40% the respondents sent any other documents related to the harassment prevention. 37.2% of the respondents who answered that they have any other documents sent the documents. The number of answers of "Yes" and that of the documents sent are not the same. *Table 11. The Documents Sent by the Respondents* shows that 83.5%, 168 out of 201, of the respondents answered the items sent their documents. 42.6% of respondents ;168 out of 394 sent their documents. The number of the answers of "Yes" and that of the documents sent are not the same. In summary, the total number of the respondents that sent the documents was 168 out of 394. The rate was 42.6. And the total number of the documents related to the harassment prevention was 347.

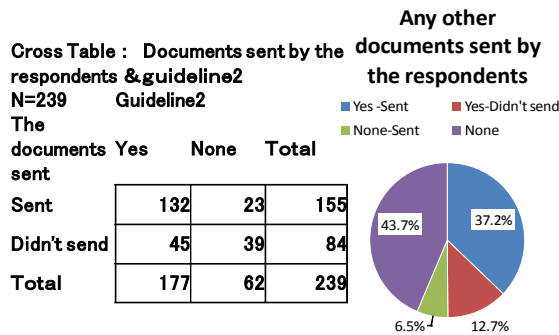
**Table 7. The Possession of the Guidelines**      **Table 8. The Possibility of Submission of the Documents**



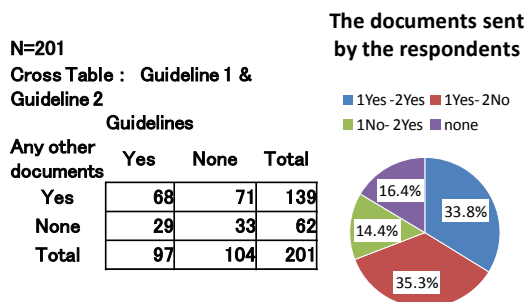
**Table 9. The Guidelines Sent by the Respondents**



**Table 10. Other Documents Sent by the Respondents**



**Table 11. The Documents Sent by the Respondents**



**DISCUSSION**

There are some notes related to the collection of the basic information of the respondents. The place of the survey and the sponsorship of the survey might have some effects on the results. However, there are the similarities between the distribution of the respondents and the population. The answers of the questionnaire were written by the clerical workers who usually do not know the



guidelines much. There is a lot of missing information and “Don’t Knows” in their answers. There are also a lot of confusing answers and wrong answers written by the clerical workers.

## CONCLUSION

Only the half of the respondents answered that they have the guidelines for harassment prevention and 40% of them answered that they do not have the guidelines. The Japanese universities are expected to pay more attention to the harassment prevention.

This survey collected the documents from 168 respondents in total. This is 42.6% of the total number of the respondents. Those documents with the basic information of the senders are the important texts for the next stage of the research that is to identify the common view of the definitions of workplace harassment.

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