

Company Policy VS Domestic : LGBT Discourse in Japan

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Abstract. With the globalization, the idea of recognizing same-sex marriage becomes more expanding throughout the world. Japan doesn't want to be left out, especially the companies. Some Japanese companies have implemented LGBT inclusion policies and benefits for their employees. On the outside, the public seems to show their full support for the LGBT community in Japan. However, in the domestic sector there are still many dismays and disagreement towards the LGBT. Coming out as LGBT to the parents is especially very difficult. Many parents show disagreements and even lash out at their children who are a part of LGBT. This paper will examine the different points of view regarding LGBT in the domestic sector and the company sector using qualitative methods and analyzing the result of the value difference.

Keywords: LGBT, Japan Society, Company Policy, Domestic, Discord

1 Introduction

Historically gays and lesbianism in Japan isn't something that was seen as taboo, criminal, or even breaking religious rules [1]. Unlike in many countries which seen homosexuality as a threat or enemy cultures' [2], Japan associated *nanshoku*, sex between men, and *joshoku*, sex between women, as something refined and even as a teaching or way of life [3]. After the opening of the country, there are many reports about the bizarreness and "otherness" of Japanese values regarding sexuality. The Victorians and Jesuit visitors found it unusual and they feel such great dismay over the open display of cross-dressing and government regulated brothels and pleasure quarters in Japan [4]. We can conclude that Japan has a history of accommodating and welcoming the same-sex relationship and heterosexual relationship.

With the globalization, the idea of recognizing same-sex marriage becomes more expanding throughout the world [1]. America, Uruguay, England, and France are among the countries that allowed same-sex marriage. Japan didn't want to be left alone. On November 2015, Shibuya and Setagaya became the first cities which recognize same-sex marriage by giving the couples a marriage certificate. Other wards soon are following and up until now in 2019 there are 25 cities and 1 prefecture, Ibaraki, that recognized same-sex marriage [5]. Among those wards are Osaka, Chiba, Miyazaki, and Nagasaki. Other cities than plans to do the same things are Saitama, Yokohama, and Koga. Based on the survey which was conducted Japan Trade Union Federation or *Nihon Roudougumiai Sourengoukai*, 8% of the survey participant identify themselves as a part of LGBT community [6].

Table 1. The Internet Survey by Japan Trade Union Federation on Japan's LGBT Population (1000 participant)

Identify as	Percentage
LGB (lesbian, gay, bisexual)	3.1%
T (transgender)	1.8%
Asexual	2.6%
Others	0.5%
Total	8%

Japanese companies also begin to accommodate to LGBT communities. They provide services towards their LGBT customers, in particular LGBT couples. In the report about LGBT Status and Current Issues that was written by National Diet of Japan, they listed some companies that provide services towards LGBT community [6].

Table 2. The Service Provided by Japanese Companies Towards LGBT Community

Company	Services
Lifenet Life Insurance, Daiichi Life Insurance, Nippon Life Insurance	Same-sex partner can be appointed as beneficiaries with easier procedure
KDDI, NTT Docomo, Softbank	Family discount services to same-sex partners
Japan Airlines, All Nippon Airlines	Shared air miles with same sex partners

In a glance, Japan has become more accepting towards LGBT with the government giving out same-sex marriage certificate and companies giving out services and discount to LGBT couples. However, if we dig deeper, in the domestic sectors LGBT is not easily accepted. When a person admitted that they are a part of LGBT community, the responses that they got aren't always a pleasant one. This paper will examine what makes some of the Japanese companies lenient towards LGBT community and what makes LGBT community is not well accepted in the domestic sector. It will also look into some of the cases of LGBT individuals who had confessed or coming out as an LGBT person and analyze them.

2 Methodology

This paper uses qualitative methods with literature review. The data was collected from various literature sources such as the government website and reports, various interviews and survey conducted by the media, researcher and governmental agencies. Various companies' websites are also being examined to look upon the policy implemented in the companies. The graphics and tables were analyzed and modified such as changing the language from Japanese to English so the data could be understood and well-received.

3 Findings and Discussion

It was mentioned in the introduction that some of the companies in Japan has offered discounts and services for their LGBT customer. But how about the LGBT employees? Do they get supports and benefits from the companies they worked for? Some of the companies in Japan have already implemented some policies change in order to accommodate their LGBT

employees. The companies that will be discussed in here are Rakuten, IRIS Realtor, and KIRIN Holdings.

Rakuten, Inc. is a Japanese e-commerce and retailing company and one of the biggest e-commerce companies in Japan. They also have a worldwide e-commerce website for international consumers. Since 2016, Rakuten, Inc. has been accommodating towards their LGBT employees. Taken from Rakuten, Inc. website regarding Diversity Policy section, in 2016 Rakuten, Inc. revised its' definition of "spouse" and employees with the same-sex partners are all eligible for the company benefits. According to their company blog, they are one of the first major companies in Japan to offer equal benefits for every couple regardless of gender [7]. The benefits they provide includes honeymoon leaves to condolence payments. Not only that, since June 2016 they have an internal LGBT support network which hosts lectures about LGBT issues to raise awareness and support for LGBT employees and allies. Allies is a term used to refer non-LGBT people who openly support rights and protections for LGBT people. Rakuten LGBT+ Network is the name of this support system in Rakuten, Inc. for LGBT community. They also have multi-purpose toilets for any gender. In their company blog, rakuten.today/blog, they informed that they had proudly joined Tokyo Rainbow Pride Parade 2019 and made a booth which was staffed by Rakuten LGBT employees and allies [8]. With these effort and policies, Rakuten, Inc. has won a gold level in the Work with Pride Index for four consecutive years since 2016 until 2019.

The next company that will be discussed is IRIS Realtor. IRIS Realtor is a real-estate agency located in Tokyo and has been established at 1st April 2016. Akihiro Sudo, a financial planner, is the one who built this company. Taken from IRIS Realtor website, the main focus of IRIS Realtor is helping LGBT couples in searching the house and apartment to stay [9]. The services they offer such as housing, real estate, insurance and future funding plans are mainly focusing in LGBT people. IRIS Realtor is run by LGBT people and ally. IRIS Realtor also has an active company blog which is used to recommend LGBT friendly places such as which gym and bar to visit, which cities that are LGBT friendly, which apartments are LGBT friendly and accessible and so forth.

Kirin Holdings is most famous as one of Japan's biggest beer companies. Kirin Holdings has also engaged in efforts concerning LGBT issues. Taken from their company website regarding "Efforts to promote the active role of differently abled individuals, senior citizens, and sexual minorities (LGBT)", Kirin Holdings has revised their compliance guideline to be more inclusive towards LGBT employees since 2017. It is stated that individuals are to be respected, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and sexual identity will not be tolerated. They also extend benefits that are applicable for straight employees to same-sex married employees. Included in those benefits are parental leave, bereavement leave, and company housing [10]. Same with Rakuten, Inc, Kirin Holdings also won a gold level in the Work with Pride Index in 2017.

We can conclude that Japanese companies seem to accepting and accommodating both their LGBT customers and employees. With such high acceptance in the public sector, one would think that surely friends and families of LGBT people in Japan also accept their identity. However, the reality is LGBT isn't easily accepted within the family [11]. Scholars and activists that focus in LGBT as their main subject stated that coming out as an LGBT is very difficult in Japanese society. Coming out to parents is even more difficult and even borderline impossible [11]. Although based on the online survey conducted by Hidaka Laboratory, Faculty of Nursing of Takarazuka University in 2016, among 15.064 participants almost 50% answered that they had come out as an LGBT at some point in their live [12]. With 22% of the participants said

that they confessed to their parents and 27.6% said that they confessed to their friends at school or workplace.

Table 3. LGBT Coming Out to Their Parents Based on Region

Prefecture (Total Participant)	Participants who had Come Out	Percentage of LGBT Participant who had Come Out
Hokkaido (644 people)	127 people	19.7%
Tohoku (726 people)	134 people	18.5%
Kanto (Goyamanashi) (3.333 people)	756 people	22.7%
Tokyo (3.690 people)	913 people	24.7%
Hokuriku Shinetsu (461 people)	77 people	16.7%
Toukai region (600 people)	129 people	21.5%
Aichi (860 people)	208 people	24.2%
Kinki (1.002 people)	214 people	21.4%
Osaka (1.377 people)	322 people	23.4%
Chu-Shikoku (806 people)	159 people	19.7%
Fukuoka (637 people)	103 people	16.2%
Kyushu (631 people)	106 people	16.8%
Okinawa (297 people)	61 people	20.5%
Total (15.064 people)	3309 people	22%

Table 4. LGBT Coming Out to Their Friends at School or Workplace Based on Region

Prefecture (Total Participant)	Participants who had Come Out	Percentage of LGBT Participant who had Come Out
Hokkaido (644 people)	149 people	23.1%
Tohoku (726 people)	184 people	25.3%
Kanto (Goyamanashi) (3.333 people)	916 people	27.5%
Tokyo (3.690 people)	1138 people	30.8%
Hokuriku Shinetsu (461 people)	94 people	20.4%
Toukai region (600 people)	144 people	24%
Aichi (860 people)	232 people	27%
Kinki (1.002 people)	267 people	26.6%
Osaka (1.377 people)	426 people	30.9%
Chu-Shikoku (806 people)	201 people	24.9%
Fukuoka (637 people)	154 people	24.2%
Kyushu (631 people)	161 people	25.5%
Okinawa (297 people)	88 people	29.6%
Total (15.064 people)	4154 people	27.6%

The reason why LGBT people aren't accepted well in the family domain is because of *uchi* (familial) homophobia [11] despite the public domain seemingly accepting them. Even so there is an *otonashii* (quiet) homophobia among the contemporary Japanese society [11]. McVeigh [13] point out that since Japanese society emphasis heavily on *tatema* or maintaining "good" public stance, homophobic attitude will not be expressed explicitly even though it's there [11]. Familial homophobia is aimed at one's family member who is a part of LGBT community. Shulman stated that the closer an inner circle is, the familial homophobia inside the circle will be much stronger and intense [14]. When an LGBT person decided to come out to their parents, their response were often times unwelcomed. Either they get dismissed or get a verbal abuse.

Most of the people who have come out to their parents prefer to come out to their mother first than their father because they thought that their mother will be more accepting of their coming out. Oftentimes their mother responds with verbal abuse; being dismissive, mocking or even lashing out at them.

Mina, now in her early 20s, came out as lesbian when she was in high school. Her response from her friends had been positive. Feeling optimistic with her friends' good response and overall positive experience coming out, she decided to come out as a lesbian to her mother. However, her mother dismissed her coming out as a mere adolescent thing. Instead, she immediately arranged an *omiai* or marriage meeting for Mina with one of her childhood friends. She left home for five years to attend a university in Tokyo then came home with her girlfriend. From then, she had a long fight with her mother until her mother finally accepted her second coming out. This negative coming out experience has affected not only Mina's relationship with her mother, but also towards her sexuality. She never intended to come out to her father because she is never close with her father and she explained that she will never be able to talk heart to heart with her father [11].

DK, a 41-year-old woman, experienced a similar thing with Mina about her coming out. She went to an all-girls junior high and senior high. She told that giving Valentine chocolate between her girlfriends is a normal thing and how her heart skips a beat when she exchanged a secret diary with her senior. It was only after entering the university that DK realized that unlike her friends who ended up having a relationship with a man, she has an interest in women. DK kept her sexual choice a secret until she was in her 30s. She hasn't told her coworkers yet, but she told her friends and parents. DK's mother did not react positively to DK's confession. After years of asking DK when she would marry and have children, her mother did not expect such confession from DK. DK's mother lashed out and angrily said emotionally, "It's really absurd that you have a uterus but you aren't using it!" Until now DK wondered if her decision to tell her parents was the right thing to do [15].

Jun is a transgender who transitioned from male to female and in her late 20's now. She came out to her mother in her 20's. Hearing this, her mother become worried about keeping up appearances to the public and also asked Jun not to come out to other people as well as lead a "normal" life. Her mother even told Jun to marry someone as a man to which Jun respond with "It's impossible in my heart". Jun's mother is still objecting her identity and worried about keeping up appearances to the public [11].

The differences in accepting LGBT in company and domestic domain can be caused by the different value that is uphold among the company and domestic sector. Moscovici and Doise [16] explained that values are like molds that shaped the mental space in which decisions take place. The values contain privileged directives for communication and establish a hierarchy of opinions and practices for the member of the group. Values also shape the relationship between them and filtering everything that comes from the outside.

Values orientate the mental space of decision which is considered superficially to be homogenous and neutral. Any person who is a part of a group asses the information given then discuss and seek the common element that will help them understand one another. It also can be used to persuade one another. Values functioned as a means to introduce order and give meaning to communication between individuals and also provide a relatively secure haven for opinions, judgments, and knowledge. They become an anchor point for opinions and judgments in a situation that favors extreme positions at the expense of average positions [16].

Companies hold values that are different with the ones being held in the domestic sector. Companies prioritized on business opportunity and other aspects that will make them earn as much income as possible. A study that was conducted by The Williams Institute in 2018 found

that the inclusion of LGBT community affects positively in said country GDP per capita [16]. The inclusion could be reflected by the policy of the companies like prohibiting the discrimination towards LGBT or the rights to receive the same benefits like their non-LGBT employees.

With more than 20 cities in Japan implemented the recognition of same-sex marriage by handing the certificate to LGBT couples, the companies feel the need to take the same measure as the government. They slowly but surely begin to embrace LGBT in their companies because it's in parallel with what the government set and the massive business opportunity that they could get. Takahito Morinaga, institute chief at Hakuhodo DY Holdings, a major Japanese advertisement company, explicitly stated that LGBT market is an uncharted territory and there are tremendous big business opportunities [17]. His research furthers his claim; LGBT people have the tendency to spend more on travelling, art and pet goods. By providing service and implementing inclusive policies towards LGBT customers and employees, there is no doubt that said companies will be preferred whether their products or a place to work.

On the other hand, the value that is being held on the domestic sector greatly differs with the companies. The parents think that the ultimate happiness in life is when you found a partner in different gender, get married, then have children. The values that they have likely based on the society where they grew up have such value; therefore, they expect their children to do the same things. Based on the survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2013, more than 60% Japanese on the 50+ age category agree that LGBT should not be accepted [18]. When their children came out as an LGBT, it clashes with their value and it causes them to respond in a negative way. The result is the LGBT individual is trapped between two different values; the company's which accommodate and support LGBT and the parents' who wants them to have opposite sex partner.

4 Conclusion

This paper finds that the globalization has made the acceptance of LGBT spread worldwide. The developed countries have acknowledged LGBT and allowed for a legal same-sex marriage. Japan also starts to make progress with cities starting to handing out same-sex marriage certificate, although up until now there has been no nationwide legal laws regarding same-sex marriage. Companies which see including LGBT customers and employees as a promising business opportunity started to change their policies to be more accommodating to LGBT employees, make an LGBT organization within the companies, and giving extra services and discount for their LGBT customer. They also begin to openly show their support for LGBT community by taking part in Rainbow Pride, an LGBT events hosted to raise awareness and as a support system for LGBT.

The domestic sector which value is to have different sex marriage and have children clashes really hard with the companies' value. When their children decide to come out as an LGBT, this has become a shocking thing for them especially mothers. They have difficulties in accepting their children identity partly because of familial homophobia and the pressure on maintaining good image in the public. The reactions are mostly verbal abuse and ended up straining their parent-child relationship.

Further studies can try to look upon on how Japanese national government is handling this situation. Where they lean towards to; the domestic or company domain and how the government's attitude towards this matter can affect Japan as a nation.

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