

What is Real “Jyoshiryoku”? 本当の女子力とは？

UKAWA Moe 宇川 萌絵

Kobe Kaisei Girls' High School 神戸海星女子学院高等学校

2nd Year 2学年

Have you heard of “Jyoshiryoku”? It’s a new word in Japan. “Jyoshi” means “girl” and “ryoku” means “power.” So, directly translated it means “the power of a girl.” However, we usually use it to mean “the skills of a woman.”

When my friend told me that I had “Jyoshiryoku,” I was happy, because it’s regarded as a compliment for women, and even for men in Japan. Having “Jyoshiryoku,” means we are good at doing housework like cooking and cleaning. If I met a guy who could cook well, I might say that he had “Jyoshiryoku” to show my respect. However, is “Jyoshiryoku” really a compliment?

The context behind this word is that Japanese people generally regard housework as the work of women. In global terms, it is normal for couples to share housework and childcare, especially in developed nations. In Japan, however, according to a Public Opinion Survey by the Cabinet Office in July 2020, working wives spend twice as much time as their husbands, doing housework and three times as long raising children. Therefore, women often choose part-time jobs, despite wanting to work full time. A recent survey by the Labor Ministry shows that only one in ten women are in management positions in Japan.

“Wow! So many young women!” I thought, on seeing a photo of the Finnish Cabinet last year. Twelve out of nineteen ministers were female. On the other hand, when the Japanese Cabinet was inaugurated in September 2019, there were only two women among twenty-four ministers. Despite saying that they’ll support women to advance in society, the Japanese government has not taken serious measures to improve this situation.

According to the Global Gender Gap Index measuring gender equality, Japan was the one hundred and twenty-first of the 153 countries surveyed. In fact, Japan got a lower score than any other developed country in the world. Iceland has been getting the highest score for 11 years!

In Iceland, on 24th October 1975, ninety percent of women did not go to work; nor did they do any housework or child-rearing for the whole day. Their strike completely paralyzed the country and opened the eyes of the men. After repeated strikes, Iceland became the first country to have a female president in 1980, and now 41% of members of her parliament are women.

Presently I am a student at an all-girls high school. My friends and I are studying very hard, hoping that we can make a significant contribution to society in the future. Are we wasting our time? Are we destined to spend our lives only doing housework and raising children? We need to take action to ensure that our skills are recognized.

I think that Japanese women should follow the Icelandic women’s example. If all Japanese women were to boycott their work for 24 hours tomorrow, what would happen? Just imagining it, Japanese men should notice how much they rely on women. So, I want to say, “Let’s work together to promote gender equality!” Real “Jyoshiryoku” should be, “the power of women to take action for women’s rights.”