

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Japan has been struggling to fight its birth rate and aging population problem for a long time. Its population has been declining and experiencing change for about 1 percent since the 1960s and the 1970s, then a sharp decline started in the 1980s.<sup>1</sup> In 2015, the population of people aged 65 years old and over was 26.6 percent.<sup>2</sup> This number surpassed other countries like United States (14.6%), Sweden (19.6%), France (18.9%), Italy (21.9%), and Germany (21.2%).<sup>3</sup> The elderly people population has been bigger than the child population since 1997, and in 2019, the child population or those who are 0-14 years old was only around 12.1 percent.<sup>4</sup> The estimated number of birth in 2019 also fell to 864,000 in 2019, making it the lowest since the record first started in 1899.<sup>5</sup>

Birth rate and aging population problem give a significant impact to Japan's economy. Since the early 1990s, Japan's economy has experienced stagnation due to the equity bubble and real estate bubble collapse.<sup>6</sup> From 1990 to 2011, the growth rate

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. "Statistical Handbook of Japan 2020." *Statistics Bureau Home Page/Statistical Handbook of Japan 2020*. Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2020. Accessed September 15, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> "Statistical Handbook of Japan 2020."

<sup>3</sup> "Statistical Handbook of Japan 2020."

<sup>4</sup> "Statistical Handbook of Japan 2020."

<sup>5</sup> Jozuka, Emiko, Jessie Yeung, and Jake Kwon. "Japan's Birth Rate Hits Another Record Low in 2019." *CNN*. Cable News Network, December 30, 2019. Accessed September 15, 2020. <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/25/asia/japan-birthrate-hnk-intl/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Tanweer Akram, "The Economics of Japan's Stagnation." *Business Economics* 49, no. 3 (July 2014): 156–157, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43678151>.

of Japan's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per year was very little, only 0.9 percent.<sup>7</sup> One of the main reasons Japan's growth slowed down is due to its slow labor force growth.<sup>8</sup> Slow labor force growth will make it harder for Japanese economy to maintain a positive growth trend, while Japan's relative size of economy will shrink in the middle of the emerging Asian nations and globalization.<sup>9</sup>

Japan is said to have experienced two transitions of fertility. The first fertility transition was after World War II, which mostly happened due to declining rates of childbearing among those who had married.<sup>10</sup> The second transition started in the mid-1970s and has been closely related with decline in marriage rates.<sup>11</sup> In 2010, at age 50, 11 percent of women and 20 percent of men were never married.<sup>12</sup> Most likely, many Japanese people nowadays do not get married because there are more employment opportunities for young women and less opportunities for young men.<sup>13</sup>

In responding to the low birth rate, Japan has tried to implement various measures since the 1990s. There was the Parental Leave Act that was implemented in 1992 which allow full-time employees to take parental leave to raise children below

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<sup>7</sup> Akram, "The Economics of Japan's Stagnation," 157.

<sup>8</sup> Akram, "The Economics of Japan's Stagnation," 157.

<sup>9</sup> "Future Depopulation in Japan: A Cabinet Committee Report." *Population and Development Review* 41, no. 2 (2015): 369–372, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24639372>.

<sup>10</sup> "Government Response to Low Fertility in Japan." *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division*, October 28, 2015. [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/24/Policy\\_Briefs/PB\\_Japan.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/24/Policy_Briefs/PB_Japan.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> "Government Response to Low Fertility in Japan."

<sup>12</sup> "Government Response to Low Fertility in Japan."

<sup>13</sup> "Government Response to Low Fertility in Japan."

one year old without any income compensation.<sup>14</sup> In 1994, there was also the “Angel Plan” that was targeted to improve childcare services.<sup>15</sup> But these policies do not seem to produce desirable result, as the birth rate in Japan remains to be low until now.

The failure of the previous policies to increase the birth rate pushes Japan to think of another strategy to keep its economy going. Then, the term “womenomics” emerged, which is created by Goldman Sachs Corporation to focus on women’s value in the workforce as an investment strategy.<sup>16</sup> Kathy Matsui, the analyst of Goldman Sachs (GS) Japan investment calculated the potential economic growth that could be produced by increased women participation in the labor market.<sup>17</sup> She also estimated the 13% growth in Japan’s GDP that could result from women’s purchasing power, which would attract foreign investors from increased consumption of housing, food, or cosmetics.<sup>18</sup>

In September 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe introduced the theory of womenomics in his address to the United Nations (UN).<sup>19</sup> Abe declared his intention to create “a society in which women shine” that is not only limited to domestic matters,

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<sup>14</sup> Makoto Atoh et al., “Low Fertility and Family Policy in Japan.” *Journal of Population and Social Security (Population)*, Supplement to Volume 1, n.d, 7, [http://www.ipss.go.jp/webjournal/Webjournal.files/population/2003\\_6/1.Atoh.pdf](http://www.ipss.go.jp/webjournal/Webjournal.files/population/2003_6/1.Atoh.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Atoh et al., “Low Fertility and Family Policy in Japan,” 7.

<sup>16</sup> Annette Schad-Seifert, “Womenomics: A Model for a New Family Policy in Japan?” in *Family Life in Japan and Germany. Challenges for a gender sensitive family policy* (Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2019), 10.

<sup>17</sup> Seifert, “Womenomics: A Model for a New Family Policy in Japan?” 10.

<sup>18</sup> Seifert, “Womenomics: A Model for a New Family Policy in Japan?” 10.

<sup>19</sup> “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, at The Sixty-Eighth Session of The General Assembly of The United Nations (Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister).” Accessed October 5, 2020. [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/statement/201309/26generaldebate\\_e.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201309/26generaldebate_e.html).

but will be a thread guiding Japan's diplomacy as well.<sup>20</sup> Women's active role is also incorporated to be an important element of the "third arrow" of Abenomics in Japan's Revitalization Strategy.<sup>21</sup> The third arrow is a growth strategy aimed to stimulate private investment, and womenomics is seen to be the solution of maintaining economic growth in the situation of Japan's declining birthrate and aging society by promoting policies that will encourage women's participation in the society.<sup>22</sup>

Other than domestic economic needs, womenomics is also a product of international pressure from various international organizations within the past years, for example the UN, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), or the World Economic Forum (WEF) that have consistently published reports regarding gender equality, in which Japan have been at the low ranks.<sup>23</sup> Aside from these low rankings, Japan also has the stigma of women's rights violator regarding the comfort women issue after World War II, where ten thousand women from Asia, mostly from the Korean peninsula, were recruited to provide sexual service for Japanese army from 1932 to 1945, often by force or deception.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, at The Sixty-Eighth Session of The General Assembly of The United Nations (Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister)."

<sup>21</sup> "Women's Empowerment." *JapanGov*. Accessed October 5, 2020.  
<https://www.japan.go.jp/diversity/women/>.

<sup>22</sup> "Womenomics Is Pushing Abenomics Forward / *The Government of Japan - JapanGov -*." The Government of Japan - JapanGov -. Accessed October 5, 2020.  
[https://www.japan.go.jp/tomodachi/2014/summer2014/womenomics\\_is\\_pushing\\_abenomics\\_forward.html](https://www.japan.go.jp/tomodachi/2014/summer2014/womenomics_is_pushing_abenomics_forward.html).

<sup>23</sup> Linda C. Hasunuma, "Gender Gaiatsu: An Institutional Perspective on Womenomics." *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 48, no. 1 (2015): 89-90, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26401830>.

<sup>24</sup> Liv Coleman. "Japan's Womenomics Diplomacy: Fighting Stigma and Constructing ODA Leadership on Gender Equality." *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 4 (2017): 496-498, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/japanese-journal-of-political-science/article/japans->

From the international pressure that Japan faced and the reports that was released by several international economic organizations about gender equality, it shows that gender equality is becoming an international project.<sup>25</sup> Gender equality has been receiving attention at international forums since the beginning of 1980s.<sup>26</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that was adopted by the UN General Assembly came into force in 1981 as an international legal instrument that represents gender equality.<sup>27</sup> CEDAW is followed by the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the third millennium development goals (MDGs) that was approved at the Millenium Summit in 2000, which reflects both CEDAW and Beijing Declaration in its content.<sup>28</sup> The three of them become the main written framework of UN's support of gender equality promotion and the interest of women.<sup>29</sup>

However, the Beijing Declaration seems to fail in the collective leadership on progress for women, as there is no country among the 189 that approved the Beijing Declaration has achieved gender equality in 2015.<sup>30</sup> The MDG number 3, which is

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[womenomics-diplomacy-fighting-stigma-and-constructing-oda-leadership-on-gender-equality/48E7C7886F60B74C0C2715B524A55838](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674032000165941).

<sup>25</sup> Coleman, "Japan's Womenomics Diplomacy: Fighting Stigma and Constructing ODA Leadership on Gender Equality," 508.

<sup>26</sup> Nüket Kardam, "The Emerging Global Gender Equality Regime from Neoliberal and Constructivist Perspectives in International Relations." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6, no. 1 (2004): 86, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1461674032000165941>.

<sup>27</sup> Kardam, "The Emerging Global Gender Equality Regime from Neoliberal and Constructivist Perspectives in International Relations," 88.

<sup>28</sup> Bonnie Kettel, "Challenging the Margin: Gender Equality and the UN Reform Process." *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 5 (2007): 874, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20454969>.

<sup>29</sup> Kettel, "Challenging the Margin: Gender Equality and the UN Reform Process," 874.

<sup>30</sup> "Collective Failure of Leadership on Progress for Women." *UN Women*. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/3/collective-failure-of-leadership-on-progress-for-women>.

devoted to “promote gender equality and empower women” also faced difficulties in its fulfillment due to lack of funding.<sup>31</sup> There are other criticism towards MDGs, saying that they are unachievable and were only formulated by a few developed countries with very less involvement from developing countries.<sup>32</sup> Finally, the MDG number 3 were replaced by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 5, which is “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” formulated in a more inclusive and open process encouraged by UN member states if compared to the formulation of the MDGs.<sup>33</sup>

This research will attempt to explain Japan’s womenomics contribution to SDG number 5 (gender equality). Japan desires to be the role model for the world regarding the implementation of measures in achieving the SDGs.<sup>34</sup> Womenomics will support Japan in achieving the 2030 Agenda and becoming the role model for the world, especially regarding SDG number 5 because womenomics is targeting women in its programs. However, the thing that become a question is to what extent does womenomics support SDG number 5. Moreover, womenomics is still in progress until

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<sup>31</sup> “Goal 5-Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls: Is SDG 5 Missing Something?” *United Nations*. United Nations, n.d. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/goal-5-achieving-gender-equality-and-empowering-women-and-girls-sdg-5-missing-something>.

<sup>32</sup> Maya Fehling et al., “Limitations of the Millennium Development Goals: a Literature Review.” *Global Public Health* 8, no. 10 (2013): 1109–1122, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3877943/> (accessed October 12, 2020).

<sup>33</sup> “Goal 5-Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls: Is SDG 5 Missing Something?” *United Nations*. United Nations, n.d. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/goal-5-achieving-gender-equality-and-empowering-women-and-girls-sdg-5-missing-something>.

<sup>34</sup> SDGs Promotion Headquarters, “The SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles.” <https://www.mofa.go.jp/>. Last modified December 22, 2016. Accessed October 11, 2020. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000252819.pdf>.

now, making it an up-to-date topic and interesting to analyze. Based on the argument above, this research will be titled “Contribution of Womenomics Program to Support Sustainable Development Goals Number 5 Under Shinzo Abe Administration from 2013-2019.”

## **1.2 Research Question**

This research will be focused on analyzing the contribution of womenomics program that was initiated under Shinzo Abe Administration to SDG number 5 and identifying the programs that has been done under Shinzo Abe from 2013-2019 for SDG number 5. The research on this topic is needed because gender equality is an issue that becomes an important international agenda, and as the world is becoming more advanced, the equality between men and women is also becoming more demanded. Womenomics itself is a notable policy in Japan that is aiming at women’s active participation in the labor force, so it is a good policy to be analyzed as a representative of Japan’s effort in complying with the SDGs in the area of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

This research will also limit the research period from year 2013-2019, as womenomics first came into effect in 2013. The author picked 2019 as the end of the research period due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation in 2020, which has impacted Japan as well and may cause it to focus less in the implementation of womenomics and focus on handling the pandemic instead. Furthermore, this research is centered on

Shinzo Abe Administration because womenomics was initiated under his administration.

Based on the information that was previously mentioned, the writer suggests the following research question:

How does womenomics program contribute to support sustainable development goal number 5 under Shinzo Abe administration from 2013-2019?

### **1.3 Research Objective**

This research has several objectives, which are:

1. Understanding the contribution of womenomics program towards SDG number 5 under Shinzo Abe administration from 2013-2019.
2. To get a comprehensive overview of what Shinzo Abe has done through his womenomics program for SDG number 5 from 2013-2019.

### **1.4 Research Contribution**

The findings from this research give a clearer understanding about womenomics contributions to SDG number 5. This research also adds general knowledge about womenomics itself by presenting the programs that has been implemented under Shinzo Abe administration from 2013-2019 while also looking at the background of womenomics. Thus, the author believes that this research will serve as a general knowledge to the readers and become a reference for the policymakers or



the upcoming researchers that seeks to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **1.5 Structure of Thesis**

The first chapter, which is the introduction, discusses about the background of the research, which is important to know the context of the research topic. This chapter also includes the research question, research objectives, and research contribution that are needed to shape the direction of the research.

The second chapter, which is the theoretical framework, consist of two parts. First is literature review, where other academic writings that are related with womenomics will be gathered and reviewed. Second is theory or concept, which will be used as a basis of the explanation of womenomics contribution to support SDG number 5 in the fourth chapter.

The third chapter, which is the methodology, talks about the methods used in writing the thesis. It consists of research approach, research method, data collection, and data analysis technique.

The fourth chapter, which is the analysis, is an important part where the topic of thesis will be discussed and analyzed to answer the research question. By using the data from various sources, this chapter will provide the analysis about the contribution of womenomics to SDG number 5 under Shinzo Abe Administration from year 2013-

2019. This chapter will also be done systematically, mostly from general topics to more specific topics.

The fifth chapter, which is the conclusion, will conclude and summarize all the findings from the previous chapters.

