

## Introduction to Featured Articles: “Disabled Women and Sexuality”

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This section that includes two articles on disabled women and sexuality is based on an open seminar conducted at Aichi University (Nagoya Campus) on April 13, 2018. The seminar, at which I acted as chairperson, received a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research on the “Intersectional Approach for Structural Discrimination against Disabled Women” (16K04114)\*1.

I would like to introduce some of the contents of this research. Members of the related study group have maintained an interest in complexity and intersectionality concerning discrimination against disabled women (Crenshaw and Dobson, 2016). An interview survey has also been conducted in this regard.

Women with disabilities are notably at high risk of receiving discrimination based on both attributes. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted at the 2006 United Nations General Assembly, also references this composite sort of discrimination.

Although conventional discrimination has been studied at both the theoretical and political levels (Hoshika 2007; Schiec & Lawson 2013), few studies have specifically examined disabled women.

There are particularly serious circumstances surrounding the sexuality of disabled women.

The DPI Women’s Network conducted a questionnaire survey among 87 individuals. Results indicated that 36% of respondents had experienced sexual injuries (DPI Women's Network 2012; Fujiwara 2015).

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Office performed consultations among 104,082 women who were involved in spousal violence and revealed that 7,296 incidences involved persons with disabilities. Another Cabinet Office survey on sexual violence against young people also revealed that 70 out of the 127 young women respondents who suffered damage were “disabled.”

Details about our research have been described in a paper by Naoko Kawaguchi. To date, we have conducted interview surveys among 40 disabled women.

We asked women with disabilities to discuss experiences in which they had difficulty based on past occurrences (i.e., those related to education, work, home life, community relationships, and relatives). Importantly, we not only focused on events involving “discrimination,” but also studied how discrimination was related to the life histories of these women.

Sexuality and reproductive difficulties were also discussed. We listened to several examples in

which damage resulted from sexual harassment at medical institutions, workplaces, or in the home. In the wake of such damage, many women had given up or felt negatively about their lives in connection with their identity as disabled persons. However, there has been insufficient consideration of these issues.

At that time, we heard that Dr. Julia Bahner, who is conducting vigorous research on obstacles and sexuality, was planning to visit Japan. We definitely wanted to hold a seminar with her at Nagoya, an event that was finally realized.

Many disabled women, researchers, and supporters who were interested in these issues participated in the seminar. Dr. Bahner's lecture encouraged us while providing us with advice on protecting the sexual and reproductive rights of women as well as improving the Japanese educational system. I will briefly describe her paper below.

Dr. Bahner's paper presented a policy analysis in addition to the results of interviews that were conducted with organizations working on issues of sexuality and disability in Sweden, the Netherlands, England, and Australia. She provided examples of policies and organizational work on the rights of disabled women, sex education, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and different sexual support services. She also discussed how sexual rights were variously and culturally understood.

On the other hand, Kawaguchi's report revealed current information on reproduction and sexuality in the Japanese context. This attracted a great deal of interest from participants. Kawaguchi's report focused on 12 people by extracting their narratives on love, marriage, and reproduction.

She pointed out the difficulties involved in playing gender roles, romance, and narrow sexual desires. She stated that these issues were connected with difficulties that disabled women may experience when establishing sexual identities.

I would also like to point out that our own interview survey revealed that disabled women were empowered by their encounters with the disabled movement. It is necessary to examine this point from here forward.

Moreover, the Japanese NPO movement is not completely absurd. However, there is little support for women with disabilities who wish to remain current with movements regarding sex and reproductive affirmation. It is thus necessary to continue analyzing the NPO movement.

\*1. <http://www.nabe-labo.jp/wwd/index.html>

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