Article

Representing Women’s Interests in Japan’s Civil Society

Sae Okura

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki 305-8577, Japan; okura.sae.grn@u.tsukuba.ac.jp

Abstract: Japan has witnessed marginalization and underrepresentation of women in its civil society. This study examines its extent. It also explores who in Japan’s civil society represent women’s interests by using survey data from civil society organizations. This study reveals that civil society organizations are generally led by male leaders, and around half of their staff are male. It also indicates that the number of organizations representing women’s interests is limited, with only 2.2% representing women’s interests. Interestingly, the central actors representing women’s interests include economic and business groups, political groups, labor groups, and civic groups including women’s groups.

Keywords: civil society; women's substantial representation; women's interests; advocacy; Japan; political science

1. Introduction

The involvement of women and the representation of their interests are nowadays major research arenas for scholars of civil society [1–9]. However, civil society theorists and political scientists, as well as feminist scholars, have mainly focused on whether women are appropriately represented and if the presence of women is necessary for creation of new spaces where they can have a voice. Hence, as Kang [10] observed:

“Civil society has advocated for the representation of women’s interests. Yet, relatively little is known about the full range of actors who seek the representation of women’s interests, mobilize around women’s issues, and articulate specific preferences... Who in civil society seeks to influence the representation of women’s interests and how?” (p. 137, emphasis added).

These questions are especially important in Japan, where women seem to have been marginalized and underrepresented in civil society. Interestingly, a survey of the literature shows a considerable range and variety of activities associated with the representation of women’s interests [11–17]. For instance, Asakura et al. [12] found that women’s groups and departments in labor unions had formed alliances to influence political elites and achieve outcomes in the policymaking process regarding the Gender Equality in Employment Act from the 1970s to the 1980s. Moreover, the Gender Equality Bureau [14] revealed that neighborhood associations in Noshiro City (Akita Prefecture), Sagamihara City (Kanagawa Prefecture), and Kurihara City (Miyagi Prefecture) have included women’s perspectives in their activities and have been working to create a community in which all citizens, regardless of age or sex, can live freely [14].

These findings indicate that women’s interests have been represented in Japan’s civil society to some extent. However, relatively little is known about how much women have been represented and who in civil society seeks to influence the political sphere to articulate women’s interests in Japan because scholarship on women and politics has predominantly focused on groups specifically identified as “women’s groups” and their activities in civil society [18–25]. Moreover, civil society studies in Japan pay comparably little attention to gender inequality in civil society, except for studies by Ushiro and Sakamoto [26].
and Ushiro and Yamamoto [27], which have revealed that there are gender biases in the leadership of civil society organizations in Japan. Therefore, this study addresses the extent of women’s representation in civil society and identifies those who represent women’s interests in Japan’s civil society using survey data from civil society organizations in Japan. The next section briefly reviews the existing literature on Japan’s civil society and women’s organizations. The third section outlines the data analyzed and the method of analysis used in this study. The fourth sections discuss the results of the analysis, before offering the paper’s conclusions in the final section.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Operationalizing Women’s Interests in Japan

Celis [28] surveyed past literature to reveal that empirical studies and theoretical reflections of scholars, such as Diamond and Hartsock [29], Phillips [30], and Young [31] have operationalized women’s interests as follows:

“First, women’s interests are defined (or operationalized) as issues that are related to the private sphere; women’s issues are linked to their bodies, sexuality, and the possibility of giving birth. Second, and of course firmly intertwined with the first, women’s issues refer to the position of women in the public domain, and specifically in the labor force and the welfare state. Thirdly, women’s issues might have a feminist aim to overcome discrimination and to achieve equality and autonomy, be it in the private or the public sphere” (p. 6, emphasis added).

As Celis et al. [32] indicated, women’s issues are varied, although the existing literature typically defines “women’s issues” as including reproductive rights, equal pay, violence against women, education, women’s health, maternity leave, childcare, and legal issues surrounding marriage and divorce (pp. 163–164).

The extant literature on Japan’s women’s movements or activities in civil society has shown that they are more active in addressing broader issues related to women’s bodies and daily lives, such as caregiving, social welfare, consumer protection, environment, and social justice, which are occasionally related to existing gendered roles, such as those of mothers or wives, rather than feminist issues [20,21,23,25,33,34]. For instance, Shindo noted the following:

“In Japan, where the traditional gender roles have remained strong, many women tend to play roles associated with birth, nurturing, and caregiving. The value of the preservation of health has been greatly emphasized in relation to processes that have a negative impact on the living environment, such as pollution, over-consumption, and disrupted education. For this reason, they have identified the “3K (environment [Kankyō], education [Kyōiku], and caregiving [Kaigo])” as the main issues to be dealt with in their lives” [25] (pp. 330–340).

Kinoshita [20] (p. 602) also argued that women in Japan tend to participate in social movements primarily focused on educational, consumer, social, and peace issues. Similarly, Park [23] concluded that women in Japan are more likely to join welfare, environmental, and consumer groups, while groups dealing with women’s/feminist issues remain relatively uncommon.

At the same time, however, despite the lack of mainstream acceptance, feminist women’s movements have consistently existed in the Japanese society. Typical examples include the women’s liberation movements in the 1970s, and the #Metoo and #Kutoo movements (the latter aiming to stop Japanese employers from requiring women to wear high heels in the workplace) in the 2010s [15,17]. Given the Japanese context, women’s interests encompass diverse issues. Thus, this paper takes a similarly wide view of women’s issues, including feminist issues and broader matters related to women’s bodies and daily lives, such as caregiving, social welfare, consumer protection, the environment, and social justice.
2.2. Who in Civil Society Represents Women in Japan?

The scholarship on women and politics predominantly focuses on women’s groups and the activities of women in civil society. Although Japan’s second-wave feminism movement is marginal, compared to those in Western countries [35], women’s movements undertake the role of agenda setting and making citizens realize that gender inequality exists in Japanese civil society [36]. As Miura [17] indicated, many women gained awareness, spoke out, and tried to get involved in politics—through platforms, such as the Parite Cafe, Yuru Femi Cafe, and the Angry Girls’ Association—after the Great East Japan Earthquake, which brought various social problems to the surface. The more recent movements such as #MeToo have also been included in this trend of women’s movements led by women.

At the same time, however, women’s groups are not the only actors that care about and represent women’s interests [10,37]. In Japan, civic groups, such as consumer cooperatives or environmental groups, have been regarded as the most important actors for women’s interests [16,17,19–21,23–25,37–44]. Academic groups, who have sometimes been criticized for being too willing to compromise during the policymaking processes, have also been central actors, especially after the 1990s. For instance, Otake [43] reported that academic groups, including male scholars and gender-related project teams led by central government ministries and agencies, prefectures, and municipalities, took initiative after radical feminist groups were gradually marginalized in women’s movements [43] (Chap. 5–6). Moreover, academic groups, such as the Academy for Gender Parity (Parite akademî), also started fostering women candidates to achieve gender equality in national diet and local assemblies in the late 2010s [45].

Although they have been marginalized in women’s history [38], labor unions have also represented women’s interests [12,20]. For instance, Asakura et al. [12] found that during the policymaking process of the Gender Equality in Employment Act from the 1970s to the 1980s, women’s groups, such as the Group for Our Gender Equality in Employment Act (Watashi tachi no danjo koyô kintôhô o tsukuru kai) and women’s departments in labor unions formed an alliance to influence political elites and generate outcomes that were favorable to them [12].

3. Methods

3.1. Research Questions

According to these articles, women’s interest are wide and complex. However, how much women are represented and who represents women’s interests in Japan’s civil society are not necessarily revealed. Therefore, this article addresses the relationship between gender and civil society using survey data from civil society organizations in Japan. Accordingly, it addresses the following research questions to examine the current situation of Japanese civil society:

RQ1: What are the differences in the proportions of male and female leaders and staff in civil society organizations?
RQ2: How much are women’s interests represented?
RQ3: Who in civil society represent women’s interests in Japan?

In answering these questions, this article contributes to the arguments on gender inequality and women’s representation in civil society, a subject that has not been sufficiently considered in previous research.

3.2. Data Set

For this paper, the author used the data set named the Japan Interest Group Study 4 (J-JIGS4), which surveyed 4400 organizations randomly selected from the 9719 listed under “Organizations/Unions” in the telephone directories of Tokyo and Ibaraki Prefecture (the so-called town pages). They used a mail survey format, in which a survey form was sent to the addresses of the 4400 organizations to be filled out and returned. However, the responding organizations could also choose to respond online. Therefore, all mailings were sent by post, but the form of response varied between postal and web surveys. The survey
was conducted between February and March 2017. The questionnaire was mailed to the chosen 4400 organizations, and responses were received from 1303. Therefore, the response rate was 29.6% (1303/4400).

The questionnaire contained 53 questions with five broad sections. It was designed to gather basic information about civil society organizations (goals of organization activities, etc.), the nature of their interactions with administrations and political parties (lobbying strategies, networking, political influence, etc.), relationships among civil society organizations (trust built with other civil society organizations, cooperative/uncooperative relationships with other civil society organizations, etc.), changes in the economic and social environment that affect organizations, and the operation of organizations (year of establishment, resources, etc.). This article mainly focused on the basic information about civil society organizations.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1. Gender Inequality in Japan’s Civil Society

What are the differences in the proportions of leaders and staff in civil society organizations between men and women? Not shown in the figure, women make up only 6.7% of the total number of leaders as a whole, with men making up the majority. These figures are not high compared to other sectors. Table 1 shows the proportion of women in major leadership positions in various fields. Specifically, the percentage of women in leadership positions in various fields is as follows: 10.1% of members of the House of Representatives, 20.7% of members of the House of Councillors, 9.9% of members of prefectural assemblies, 6.4% of prefectural governors, 33.4% of national public employees through the recruitment examination, 21.3% of judges, 23.5% of public prosecutors, 18.4% of lawyers. It indicates that the size of the gender gap in civil society organizations is as wide as, or sometimes wider than, that in the political and economic spheres, which are often criticized as hotbeds of gender inequality, especially in comparison with their international counterparts.

At the same time, however, women account for 44.8% of the total staff in each civil society organization on average, and the median is just 50%. Based on the preliminary figures from the 2018 Labor Force Survey conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the percentage of women in the workforce was 44.1%, so it can be assumed that the percentage of female staff in individual civil society organizations is roughly the same as the percentage of women in the workforce as a whole. Therefore, it can be concluded that the gender bias is small for the employees of individual civil society organizations.

| Table 1. Proportion of women in major leadership positions in various fields (unit: %). |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| <Politics>                       | %                |
| Diet members (House of Representatives) | 10.1             |
| Diet members (House of Councillors)   | 20.7             |
| Members of prefectural assemblies   | 9.9              |
| Members of city and ward assemblies  | 14.6             |
| Members of town and village assemblies | 9.8              |
| Prefectural governors               | 6.4              |
| Mayors                            | 2.3              |
| Mayors of towns and villages       | 0.6              |
| <Politics> | % |
|-----------|---|
| National public employees through the recruitment examination | 33.4 |
| National public employees in positions equivalent to director of central government ministries and agencies | 4.4 |
| Members of national advisory councils and committees | 37.4 |
| Local public employees in positions equivalent to directors of prefectural government offices | 9.8 |
| Members of advisory councils and committees of prefectures | 31.9 |
| Members of advisory councils and committees of city, ward, town, and village governments | 26.2 |

| <Justice> | % |
|-----------|---|
| Public prosecutors | 23.5 |
| Judges | 21.3 |
| Lawyers | 18.4 |

| <Economic Field> | % |
|------------------|---|
| Employees in positions equivalent to section manager level in private corporations | 10.3 |
| Employees in positions equivalent to department manager in private corporations | 6.6 |
| Executives in listed companies | 3.7 |

| <Media> | % |
|---------|---|
| Journalists (Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association) | 19.4 |

Source: Gender Equality Bureau [11].

4.2. How Much Are Women’s Interests Represented?

As mentioned, the range of women’s interests can be wide and complex, and it can cover a broader range of issues than previous notions of what could be considered “women’s issues” in a narrower sense; it includes welfare, peace and security, and the 3K issues (Kankyō, Kyōiku, and Kaigo—that is, “environment, education, and caregiving”). This paper uses factor analysis and cluster analysis to reveal women’s interests and to identify groups that could represent them. Considering the nature of women’s interests, which are covered by various kinds of organizations, these methods were considered appropriate for such analysis.

The survey listed 29 specific issues and asked in which ones each civil society organization was interested. Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics of 29 specific issues that each organization was interested in, and these were used for factor analysis.
Table 2. Average and standard deviation (SD) of each organizational interest.

| Issue                                       | Average | SD   |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|------|
| Fiscal issues                                | 0.10    | 0.305|
| Financial issues                             | 0.09    | 0.283|
| Trade and international commerce issues      | 0.07    | 0.248|
| Industrial promotion issues                  | 0.26    | 0.440|
| Civic engineering, construction, and public works issues | 0.12    | 0.331|
| Transportation and traffic issues            | 0.10    | 0.299|
| Communication and information issues         | 0.08    | 0.272|
| Scientific technology and research issues    | 0.09    | 0.285|
| Local development issues / Rural development | 0.13    | 0.333|
| Diplomatic issues                            | 0.02    | 0.155|
| Peace and security issues                    | 0.06    | 0.243|
| Law and order                                | 0.04    | 0.187|
| Justice and human rights                     | 0.06    | 0.238|
| Educational issues                           | 0.20    | 0.399|
| Women’s issues                               | 0.07    | 0.261|
| Local government and administrative issues    | 0.12    | 0.320|
| Labor issues                                 | 0.15    | 0.360|
| Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries issues  | 0.16    | 0.369|
| Consumer protection                          | 0.12    | 0.322|
| Environment issues                           | 0.21    | 0.409|
| Social welfare issues / Healthcare issues    | 0.25    | 0.431|
| International exchange, cooperation, and aid issues | 0.14 | 0.342|
| Academic, sports, and recreational issues    | 0.22    | 0.411|
| Tourist issues                               | 0.09    | 0.293|
| Energy and natural resources issues          | 0.06    | 0.238|
| Disaster prevention issues                   | 0.14    | 0.345|
| Fire safety issues                           | 0.03    | 0.173|
| Group support issues                         | 0.11    | 0.312|
| Others                                       | 0.06    | 0.239|

Table 3 shows the complete results of the factor analysis. The extraction method used was the principal factor method with Kaiser–Varimax rotation, and nine factors were extracted. Financial issues, fiscal issues, trade and international commerce issues, communication and information issues, transportation and traffic issues, tourist issues, and consumer protection are associated with Factor 1, termed “key industries.” Fire safety issues, disaster prevention issues, and law and order fall under Factor 2 (termed law and order/disaster prevention), while women’s issues, labor issues, social welfare/healthcare issues, justice and human rights, and local government and administrative issues are associated with Factor 3 (termed women, social welfare, and human rights). Peace and security issues, diplomatic issues, international exchange, cooperation, and aid issues are associated with Factor 4 (termed peace and international relations). Academic, sports, and recreational issues, and educational issues are associated with Factor 5 (termed academia, culture, and education), while energy and natural resources issues, science, technology, and research issues are associated with Factor 6 (termed technology and energy). Factor 7 consists of issues related to industrial promotion, while Factor 8 covers civic engineering, construction, and public works issues (termed local development), and local development issues / rural development. Finally, Factor 9 covers environment issues, in general, as well as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries issues (termed environment).
Table 3. Factor analysis of organizations’ issues.

| Issue                                                                 | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 | Factor 6 | Factor 7 | Factor 8 | Factor 9 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Financial issues                                                     | 0.593    | −0.008   | 0.052    | 0.005    | −0.048   | 0.020    | 0.107    | 0.052    | 0.083    |
| Fiscal issues                                                        | 0.467    | 0.035    | 0.149    | 0.049    | −0.011   | 0.038    | −0.021   | 0.059    | 0.073    |
| Trade and international commerce issues                             | 0.441    | −0.003   | −0.078   | 0.074    | −0.024   | 0.191    | 0.190    | 0.066    | 0.071    |
| Communication and information issues                                 | 0.407    | 0.095    | −0.018   | 0.062    | 0.150    | 0.262    | 0.025    | 0.241    | −0.112   |
| Transportation and traffic issues                                   | 0.357    | 0.115    | 0.032    | 0.068    | 0.040    | 0.159    | 0.035    | 0.291    | −0.041   |
| Tourist issues                                                       | 0.343    | 0.142    | −0.002   | 0.004    | 0.372    | −0.014   | 0.082    | 0.138    | 0.198    |
| Consumer protection                                                  | 0.328    | 0.090    | 0.165    | 0.034    | 0.055    | 0.056    | 0.247    | −0.073   | 0.243    |
| Fire safety issues                                                   | 0.018    | 0.626    | 0.000    | 0.022    | 0.010    | 0.031    | 0.007    | 0.021    | 0.017    |
| Disaster prevention issues                                          | −0.037   | 0.568    | 0.082    | 0.017    | 0.075    | 0.110    | 0.034    | 0.212    | 0.128    |
| Law and order                                                        | 0.160    | 0.476    | 0.098    | 0.195    | 0.057    | 0.018    | −0.040   | 0.022    | −0.088   |
| Women’s issues                                                       | 0.079    | 0.023    | 0.556    | 0.266    | 0.174    | 0.149    | 0.061    | 0.037    | 0.137    |
| Labor issues                                                         | 0.173    | 0.032    | 0.408    | 0.107    | 0.022    | 0.017    | 0.128    | 0.207    | 0.012    |
| Social welfare issues/Healthcare issues                              | −0.048   | 0.034    | 0.388    | −0.010   | 0.059    | 0.010    | −0.103   | −0.071   | −0.106   |
| Justice and human rights                                             | 0.108    | 0.118    | 0.361    | 0.327    | 0.080    | 0.010    | 0.001    | 0.033    | −0.087   |
| Local government and administrative issues                           | 0.241    | 0.245    | 0.350    | 0.092    | 0.093    | −0.006   | 0.007    | 0.240    | 0.162    |
| Peace and security issues                                            | 0.050    | 0.132    | 0.263    | 0.653    | 0.069    | 0.026    | −0.075   | 0.010    | 0.064    |
| Diplomatic issues                                                    | 0.074    | 0.055    | 0.021    | 0.534    | 0.166    | 0.113    | 0.045    | 0.024    | 0.009    |
| International exchange, cooperation, and aid issues                  | −0.022   | −0.018   | 0.106    | 0.340    | 0.456    | 0.232    | 0.064    | 0.072    | 0.010    |
| Academic, sports, and recreational issues                            | −0.021   | 0.066    | 0.025    | 0.046    | 0.547    | 0.055    | −0.058   | −0.093   | −0.042   |
| Educational issues                                                   | −0.052   | 0.002    | 0.272    | 0.177    | 0.471    | 0.059    | 0.001    | 0.054    | 0.006    |
| Energy and natural resources issues                                  | 0.079    | 0.131    | 0.113    | 0.104    | 0.048    | 0.552    | 0.019    | 0.092    | 0.189    |
| Science, technology, and research issues                             | 0.167    | −0.011   | −0.011   | 0.053    | 0.102    | 0.484    | 0.086    | 0.046    | 0.021    |
| Industrial promotion issues                                          | 0.234    | −0.011   | −0.038   | −0.024   | −0.021   | 0.131    | 0.704    | 0.170    | 0.005    |
| Civic engineering, construction, and public works issues             | 0.155    | 0.150    | 0.027    | −0.017   | −0.103   | 0.153    | 0.153    | 0.417    | 0.013    |
| Local development issues/Rural development                           | 0.270    | 0.170    | 0.160    | 0.078    | 0.270    | 0.005    | 0.085    | 0.392    | 0.263    |
| Environment issues                                                   | 0.005    | 0.206    | 0.162    | 0.021    | 0.134    | 0.286    | 0.095    | 0.072    | 0.431    |
| Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries issues                          | 0.100    | −0.036   | −0.098   | 0.005    | −0.045   | 0.041    | −0.020   | 0.006    | 0.335    |
| Group support issues                                                 | 0.098    | 0.201    | 0.184    | 0.059    | 0.183    | 0.013    | 0.159    | 0.103    | 0.015    |
| Others                                                               | 0.084    | 0.072    | 0.077    | 0.065    | −0.042   | −0.038   | 0.015    | −0.042   | 0.007    |

| Contribution ratio (%)      | 5.662    | 4.320    | 4.234    | 3.943    | 3.930    | 3.140    | 2.538    | 2.531    | 2.164    |
| Cumulative contribution ratio (%) | 5.662 | 9.982    | 14.216   | 18.158   | 22.089   | 25.229   | 27.767   | 30.298   | 32.462   |

Note: Values of 0.3 or above are highlighted.

Moreover, to find a group representing women’s issues, Ward’s hierarchical cluster analysis was used with principal component scores extracted from the factor analysis above. Six clusters were defined, and Table 4 shows the average value for each factor in each cluster.
Table 4. Average of each cluster.

|                  | N  | Avg. Factor 1 | Avg. Factor 2 | Avg. Factor 3 | Avg. Factor 4 | Avg. Factor 5 | Avg. Factor 6 | Avg. Factor 7 | Avg. Factor 8 | Avg. Factor 9 |
|------------------|----|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Cluster 1        | 759| -0.13         | -0.41         | -0.11         | -0.13         | -0.11         | -0.17         | -0.02         | -0.18         | -0.08         |
| Cluster 2        | 254| 0.15          | 1.22          | 0.12          | -0.18         | -0.26         | -0.17         | -0.07         | -0.05         |               |
| Cluster 3        | 30 | -0.44         | -0.06         | 0.07          | 3.6           | -0.35         | -0.39         | -0.06         | -0.18         | 0.02          |
| Cluster 4        | 28 | 3.3           | 0.69          | 1.34          | 0.55          | 0.86          | 0.63          | 0.19          | 0.55          | 0.18          |
| Cluster 5        | 131| -0.18         | -0.11         | 0.02          | 0.13          | 1.18          | 1.4           | 0.59          | 0.17          | 0.37          |
| Cluster 6        | 64 | 0.11          | -0.06         | 0.21          | 0.02          | -0.33         | -0.26         | -0.34         | 1.97          | 0.33          |

Note: Values of 0.3 or above are highlighted.

Importantly, Cluster 4 with the highest average for Factor 3 (women, social welfare, and human rights) may best fit our theoretical definition of organizations representing women’s interests. Cluster 4 also had high values of Factors 1 (key industries), Factors 2 (law and order/disaster prevention), 4 (peace and international relations), 5 (academia, culture, and education), 6 (technology and energy), and 8 (local development). As this cluster seems to best represent women’s interests in Japan, we can label this cluster “organizations representing women’s interests.”

Regarding other clusters, Cluster 2 had the highest average for Factor 2 (law and order/disaster prevention) and could be labeled “organizations representing law and order/disaster prevention.” Cluster 3 had the highest average for Factor 4 (peace and international relations) and could be termed “organizations representing peace and international relations.” Cluster 5, with the highest average for Factor 5 (academia, culture, and education). Cluster 5 also had high values for Factors 6 (technology and energy), 7 (industrial promotion), and 9 (environment) and could be termed “organizations representing issues in general.” Cluster 6 had the highest average for Factor 8 (local development) and a relatively high average for Factor 9 (environment). This cluster could therefore be termed “organizations representing local development and environment.” Finally, Cluster 1 showed negative values on all variables and thus is termed “apathetic organizations.”

As shown in Table 5, apathetic organizations formed the cluster type with the highest percentage (60.0%), followed by industrial promotion (20.1%) and issues in general (10.3%). Regarding women’s issues, the results indicate that organizations representing women’s interests are limited (2.2 %).

Table 5. The number of organizations in each cluster.

| Label                        | Frequency | %    |
|------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Cluster 1 Apathetic          | 759       | 60.0 |
| Cluster 2 Law and order/Disaster prevention | 254 | 20.1 |
| Cluster 3 Peace and international relations | 30 | 2.4 |
| Cluster 4 Women              | 28        | 2.2  |
| Cluster 5 Issues in general  | 131       | 10.3 |
| Cluster 6 Local development and environment | 64 | 5.1 |
| Total                        | 1266      | 100.0|

4.3. Who in Civil Society Represent Women’s Interests in Japan?

Using these six clusters, this study examines who in Japan’s civil society claims to represent women’s interests. The factor we focused on was the organization type. The survey listed 13 specific organizational types, such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries groups, labor groups, civic groups, religious groups, etc. These organizational types are not the same as the issues mentioned earlier, and a different question was used in this section. Organizations were asked to choose one option as applicable to them. Although “women’s groups” or “environmental groups” were not provided as options, they were included as part of “civic groups.”
Table 6 shows the proportion for each cluster by organizational type. The results indicate that economic and business groups, civic groups (which include women’s groups and environmental groups), administrative groups, political groups, labor groups, and groups are central actors in representing women’s interests. These findings are consistent with the fact that organizations not generally categorized as women’s organizations—consumers’ cooperatives, social welfare councils, labor unions, and academic organizations—have been addressing women’s issues and representing women’s interests, as discussed in the Section 2. Moreover, the fact that labor groups represent women’s interests as much as civic groups, which include women’s organizations, indicates that labor unions, and all organizations with a high proportion of men—have been trying to organize women and articulate women’s interests.

### Table 6. Organization type.

|                           | Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Groups | Economic/ Business Groups | Labor Groups | Educational Groups | Administrative Groups | Health/ Welfare Groups | Professional Groups |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Apathetic                 | 14.00%                                      | 15.10%                    | 6.30%        | 4.50%              | 8.70%                 | 11.00%                | 5.20%               |
| Law and order/Disaster prevention | 11.80%                                      | 61.40%                    | 4.30%        | 2.40%              | 5.10%                 | 2.40%                 | 3.90%               |
| Peace and international relations | 6.70%                                      | 20.00%                    | 0%           | 0%                 | 3.30%                 | 3.30%                 | 3.30%               |
| Women                     | 0%                                          | 57.20%                    | 7.10%        | 0%                 | 10.70%                | 0%                    | 0%                  |
| Issues in general         | 2.30%                                      | 8.60%                     | 19.50%       | 6.30%              | 4.70%                 | 6.30%                 | 4.70%               |
| Local development and environment | 8.10%                                      | 38.70%                    | 3.20%        | 0%                 | 8.10%                 | 0%                    | 9.70%               |
| Total                     | 11.60%                                      | 26.30%                    | 7.00%        | 3.80%              | 7.40%                 | 7.80%                 | 5.00%               |

|                           | Political Groups | Civic Groups | Arts/ Cultural/ Scholarly Groups | Sports/ Recreation Groups | Religious Groups | Other Type of Groups | N  |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----|
| Apathetic                 | 0.40%            | 9.10%        | 12.70%                          | 6.70%                      | 0.70%            | 5.60%                | 748|
| Law and order/Disaster prevention | 0%              | 0%           | 4.70%                           | 0.40%                      | 0%               | 3.50%                | 254|
| Peace and international relations | 0%              | 53.30%       | 0%                              | 3.30%                      | 0%               | 6.70%                | 30 |
| Women                     | 10.70%           | 10.7%        | 3.60%                           | 0%                         | 0%               | 0%                   | 28 |
| Issues in general         | 3.10%            | 21.90%       | 14.10%                          | 3.10%                      | 2.30%            | 3.10%                | 128|
| Local development and environment | 0%              | 6.50%        | 24.20%                          | 0%                         | 0%               | 1.60%                | 62 |
| Total                     | 0.80%            | 9.30%        | 11.30%                          | 4.50%                      | 0.60%            | 4.60%                | 1250|

### 5. Conclusions

This study examined how much women and women’s interests are represented and who represents women’s interests in Japan’s civil society. Feminist scholars have pointed out that gender inequality is embedded in civil society, while mainstream civil society theorists tend to describe civil society as a free and equal space. The extant research on women and politics has predominantly focused on avowedly women’s organizations, such as women’s liberation movements or the various #MeToo movements, as central actors representing women’s interests and acting for gender equality.

As the extant research pointed out, this article found gender inequality in Japan’s civil society. Specifically, civil society organizations generally have male leaders and around half their staff members are male. However, in contrast to the extant research, this analysis makes an original contribution to civil society studies, as well as gender studies, by exploring how much and who in civil society represents women’s interests in Japan. It indicates that the number of organizations representing women’s interests are limited, with only 2.2% representing women’s interests. Interestingly, the central actors representing
women’s interests include economic and business groups, political groups, labor groups, and civic groups such as women’s groups.

Many remaining issues can be explored in further research into women’s interests in civil society. How and why does gender inequality in civil society differ by country? How is gender inequality related to other factors such as traditional gender norms? To make our findings more robust, we will need to conduct a complete enumeration of civil society organizations in Japan. We hope to deal with these areas in more detail in future research projects.

**Funding:** This research was supported by JSPS KAKENHI grant number 20K13399.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Restrictions apply to the availability of these data. Data was obtained from Professor Yutaka Tsujinaka (Tokai University).

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**References**

1. Al-Ali, N. Gender and civil society in the Middle East. *Int. Fem. J. Politics* 2003, 5, 216–232. [CrossRef]
2. Chaney, P. Gendered political space: Civil society, contingency theory, and the substantive representation of women. *J. Civ. Soc.* 2016, 12, 198–223. [CrossRef]
3. Einhorn, B.; Sever, C. Gender and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. *Int. Fem. J. Politics* 2003, 5, 163–190. [CrossRef]
4. Eto, M. Seiji gaku no hihan teki kōdo: jendaa kara no sekkī [Reconceptualizing Politics: From Gender Perspective]; Hosei University Press: Tokyo, Japan, 2017.
5. Goss, K. Gender identity and the shifting basis of advocacy by US women’s groups, 1920–2000. In Nonprofits and Advocacy: Engaging Community and Government in an Era of Retrenchment; Pekkanen, R.J., Smith, S.R., Tsujinaka, Y., Eds.; Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, MD, USA, 2014; pp. 170–201.
6. Hagemann, K.; Michel, S.; Budde, G. *Civil Society and Gender Justice: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*; Berghahn Books: Oxford, UK, 2008.
7. Howell, J.; Mulligan, D. *Gender and Civil Society*, Routledge: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2006.
8. Seckinelgin, H. Civil society and gender. In *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*; Anheier, H.K., Toepfer, S., Eds.; Springer: New York, NY, USA, 2010; pp. 205–209.
9. Waylen, G.; Celis, K.; Kantola, J.; Weldon, S.L.; Strolovitch, D.Z.; Townsend-Bell, E. *Sex, Gender, and Civil Society*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2013.
10. Kang, A.J. How civil society represents women: Feminists, Catholics, and mobilization strategies in Africa. In *Representation: The Case of Women*; Escobar-Lemmon, M.C., Taylor-Robinson, M.M., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2014; pp. 137–157.
11. Gender Equality Bureau. *Women and Men in Japan*; Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan: Tokyo, Japan, 2018.
12. Asakura, M.; Hagiwara, K.; Kamio, M.; Inoue, K. Rengo Research Institute for Advancement of Living Standards. In *Rōdō unedo o kiri hiraku: Josei tachi ni yoru tatakai no kiseki [Pioneering the Labor Movement: History of Women’s Struggle]; Junposha: Tokyo, Japan, 2018.
13. Furawā demo. *Furawē demo o kiroku suru [Report on the Flower Demo Movements]; Etc. Books: Tokyo, Japan, 2020.
14. Gender Equality Bureau. Heisei 30 nendo chiiki katsudou ni okeru danjo kyoudou sankaku no suishin ni kansuru jissenteki chousa kenkyu: josei ichi kaichō katsudō jirei shi [Report on Promotion of Gender Equality in Local Activities in FY2018]; Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan: Tokyo, Japan, 2019.
15. Hasunuma, L.; Shin, K. #MeToo in Japan and South Korea: #WeToo, #WithYou. *J. Women Politics Policy* 2019, 40, 97–111. [CrossRef]
16. McKeen, M.A. Environmental Protest and Citizen Politics in Japan; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 1981.
17. Miura, M. *Nihon no feminizumu: Josei tachi no unedo o furikaeri [Feminism in Japan: Brief history of women’s movements]*. In *Nihon no feminizumu: Since 1886 [Feminism in Japan: Since 1886]*; Kitahara, M., Ed.; Kawade Shobo Shinsha: Tokyo, Japan, 2017; pp. 8–18.
18. Dales, L. *Feminist Movements in Contemporary Japan*; Taylor & Francis: New York, NY, USA, 2009.
19. Dawood, R.S. *Women in Social Movements in Japan: A Study on Women’s Changing Roles and Strategies in Political Participation since the 1970s*; Waseda University: Tokyo, Japan, 2018.
20. Kinoshiba, T. Josei, josei no unedo [Women and women’s movements]. In *Gendai nihon shakai ron: Sengo shi kara genzai wo yomu 30 shō [Contemporary Japanese Society]; Rōdō Junposha: Tokyo, Japan, 1996; pp. 592–615.
21. LeBlanc, R.M. *Bicycle Citizens: The Political World of the Japanese Housewife*; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 1999.
22. Miyake, I. Mainoritei to byōdō: Tokuni danjo byōdō o chūshin ni [Minority and equality: Evidence from gender equality]. In Byōdō o meguru erīto to taihō erīto [Elites and Counter-elites on Equality]; Miyake, I., Watanuki, J., Shima, S., Kabashima, I., Eds.; Sobunsha: Tokyo, Japan, 1985; pp. 173–199.

23. Park, I.K. Senshin shokoku no josei undō kara mita nihon no josei undō no ichizuke [Japanese women’s movements in comparative perspective]. Tsukuba hōsei [Tsukuba Rev. Law Political Sci.] 2005, 38, 321–338.

24. Pharr, S.J. Political Women in Japan: The Search for a Place in Political Life; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 1981.

25. Shindo, K. Gendō de yoru nihon seiji: Rekishī to seisaku [Gendering Japanese Politics: Past, Present, and Future]; Yuhikaku: Tokyo, Japan, 2004.

26. Ushiro, F.; Sakamoto, H. Nihon ni okeru sando sekutā no genjō to kadai: Heisei 29 nendo dai 4 kai sādo sekutā chōsa ni yoru kentō [Current States and Its Challenges of Third Sector Organizations in Japan]; RIETI Discussion Paper Series 17-J-063; 2017. Available online: https://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/publications/dp/17j063.pdf (accessed on 15 February 2021).

27. Ushiro, F.; Yamamoto, H. Sando sekutā soshiki no jinteki shigen [Human resources of third sector organizations]. In Gendai nihon no shinmin shakai: Sando sekutā chōsa ni yoru jisshō bunseki [Changing Japan’s Civil Society]; Ushiro, F., Sakamoto, H., Eds.; Houritsu Bunka Sha: Tokyo, Japan, 2019; pp. 58–73.

28. Celis, K. Substantive representation of women (and improving it): What is and should it be about? Paper presented at the 2008 Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, USA, 28–31 August 2008.

29. Diamond, I.; Hartsock, N. Beyond interests in politics: A comment on Virginia Sapiro’s “when are interests interesting? The problem of political representation of women”. Am. Polit Sci. Rev. 1981, 75, 717–721. [CrossRef]

30. Phillips, A. The Politics of Presence; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 1995.

31. Young, I.M. Inclusion and Democracy; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2000.

32. Celis, K.; Childs, S.H.; Kantola, J.; Krook, M.L. Constituting women’s interests through representative claims. Politics Gend. 2014, 10, 149–174. [CrossRef]

33. Eto, M. Women’s leverage on social policymaking in Japan. PS Political Sci. Politics 2001, 34, 241–246. [CrossRef]

34. Kubo, K.; Gelb, J. Obstacles and opportunities: Women and political participation in Japan. In Women of Japan and Korea: Continuity and Change; Temple University Press: Philadelphia, PA, USA, 1994; pp. 120–149.

35. Iwamoto, M. Onna no inai seiji katei: Nihon no 55nen taisei ni okeru seisaku kettei o chushin ni [Political processes without women]. Womens Stud. 1997, 5, 8–39.

36. Otake, H. Feminisuto tachi no seijishi: Sanseiken, ribu, byōdō hō [Feminists in the Modern Political History]; University of Tokyo Press: Tokyo, Japan, 2017.

37. Yamaguchi, T.; Saito, M.; Ogiue, C. Shakai undō no tomadoi: Feminizumu no ushinawareta jidai to kusanone hoshu undō [Social Movements at a Crossroads: Feminism’s “Lost Years” vs. Grassroots Conservatism]; Keisō Shobō: Tokyo, Japan, 2012.

38. Academy for Gender Parity. Mission. 2020. Available online: http://parity-academy.org/about/index.html (accessed on 11 June 2020).