

# The Predominance of Woman in the Workplace in Doctor X, Legal V, and The Journalist's Films

Hamdan Nafiatur Rosyida<sup>1</sup>, Aditya Dwi Putra Bhakti<sup>2</sup>

[hamdannafiatur@umm.ac.id](mailto:hamdannafiatur@umm.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [aditya@umm.ac.id](mailto:aditya@umm.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

Department of International Relations, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>,

Department of Communication Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract.** As a second society, women are always discriminated against in the workplace. In Japan, formal women employees are merely an office decoration (*shokuba no hana*) and occupy lower positions, making it impossible for them to hold managerial or stakeholder positions. This study aims to present the figure of a lone-wolf woman who realizes her potential in the world of masculine worker masculinity. The main female character portrayed by Ryoko Yonekura in *Doctor X*, *Legal V: Ex. Lawyer Shoko Takanashi*, and *The Journalist* takes the research object. The research took the form of a descriptive-qualitative study, which were subsequently analyzed using existentialism feminism from the Simone de Beauvoir. According to the findings of the study, the three primary characters play a dominant role at work and outperform men on challenging projects. Nevertheless, as objects, the three figures remain marginalized in the job hierarchy and confront threats in the workplace. Furthermore, the reader's response demonstrates that a work environment dominated by patriarchal values and masculinity is not a secure place for intelligent women, but rather illustrates the utopia that women can have the same or even greater cognitive abilities than men in the workplace.

**Keywords:** female-domination, feminism eksistensialism, utopia, workplace discrimination.

## 1 Introduction

In the 1950s, the issue of women's rights emerged in Japan, influencing the depiction of women in Japanese cinema. Due to their increasing access to the world of work, women demanded recognition in the public sphere, and motherhood and family discourses rapidly emerged in opposition to the women's labor movement. Japanese women's films belong to the traditions of *shoshimin eiga* (a genre in Japanese cinema that concentrates on the family lives of the lower middle class or working class people) and *gendai geki* (modern drama), rather than *jidai geki* (period drama). Women's films, which are marketed to women and feature and amplify the performances of prominent female actors affiliated with specific studios, are the studio system's commercial product [1].

Female characters are depicted as always being synonymous with 'home,' in accordance with the gender narrative that 'home' is an extension of the state ideology 'ryousai kenbo' (good wife, wise mother), where 'home' is a metaphor for the country and the husband is the president, so whatever the men say -man (husband) is the law. Women's disobedience to their spouses can be metaphorically compared to disobedience to the state, so that women (wives) are required to obey their husbands' every command. Male dominance over women and ryousai kenbo depictions frequently dominated Japanese cinema from the 1920s to the 2000s [2].

During the past decade, a number of Japanese films have depicted strong, masculine female protagonists with equal or even superior abilities to those of males. Ryoko Yonekura, a Japanese actress who has starred in more than 30 drama series and 13 films, frequently portrays this character [3]. In 2019, she became the first Asian-born protagonist of the same Broadway musical produced in New York City. In 2021, she also became the Japan Brand Ambassador for FENDI fashion products, proving that she is the most prominent actress in the country [4]. In numerous drama series, Yonekura is a dominant protagonist with above-average abilities who never quits his job. In addition, he frequently portrays antisocial characters, such as Hunt-Tax Investigation Officer (2010) as Matsudaira Matsuko, The Negotiator as Reiko Usagi (2010), Hunter-Women After Reward Money as Rei Isaka (2011), Doctor X: Surgeon Michiko Daimon as Michiko Daimon (2012-2022), Legal V: Ex. Lawyer Takanashi Shoko as Takanashi Shoko (2018), and The Journalist/*Shinbun Kisha* as Anna Matsuda (2022) [5]. Ryoko Yonekura's 'Ratings Queen' title is validated by the fact that the majority of these dramas are in the mystery and crime genres and feature outstanding acting performances [6].

This study will examine the dominance of the female protagonist in the films Doctor X: Surgeon Michiko Daimon, Legal V: Ex-Attorney Takanashi Shoko, and The Journalist/*Shinbun Kisha* as female employees who oppose the workplace system. Doctor X: Surgeon Michiko Daimon narrates the story of a freelance surgeon who works at Totei university hospital and is portrayed as challenging a failing medical system. She despises authorities and groups, and her motto is "I never fail" (*watashi wa shippai shinai node*). She challenges herself to perform high-risk surgeries that other surgeons will not, referring patients elsewhere when they are declared non-operable. His success in treating high-risk patients is a result of placing patients first, prioritizing their health over first aid measures and innovative techniques, and adapting surgical techniques as necessary. This frequently led him into conflict with other physicians [7]. In Japan, this film has an average rating of approximately 20.95% in six season, indicating its popularity [8].

Doctor X: Surgeon Each season of Michiko Daimon consists of approximately 9 to 10 episodes. In select countries, the series is disseminated internationally via Netflix and Amazon Prime with English subtitles. On the occasion of International Women's Day in 2018, the series was translated into Hindi in India. In 2017, the Japan Foundation also distributed its first season in several Latin American nations (Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Bolivia) with foreign-language dubs. Spanish [9]. From the first to the eighth season, this series was broadcast on Waku-Waku Japan TV in Southeast Asia.

Takanashi Shoko, the protagonist of the 2018 drama series Legal V: Ex-Lawyer Takanashi Shoko, is a former attorney who was dismissed from the legal profession due to an incident. Then, he persuaded a university professor who was a licensed attorney to establish the Kyogoku Law Firm. He employs attorneys and paralegals in his law office to assist vulnerable

clients in winning court cases. Throughout his tenure, Soichiro Tenma's rival law firm, Felix and Temma, has presented him with numerous challenges. Takanashi Shoko's character is characterized as a stylish, upbeat, outspoken *densha otaku* who does not hesitate to criticize others when they make mistakes. This series comprises of one season with nine episodes and has a 15.6% television rating in Japan [10].

In the series *The Journalist/Shinbun Kisha*, a Toto newspaper reporter named Anna Matsuda is depicted. She is known as *Shinbun Gyokai no Itanji* (nonconformist in the newspaper industry) for her efforts to disclose corruption in state government agencies and expose the truth. Matsuda believes that justice should be upheld without discrimination [11]. Matsuda is characterized as a journalist who does not speak much, is composed, and never gives up searching for the truth in a case, despite being impeded by his adversary. Even though he is stuck in the case, he continues to look for a path out. This six-episode series shares the same title as the 2019 film *The Journalist/Shinbun Kaisha*, directed by Michihito Fujii, but features distinct characters and plots. In the series *The Journalist/Shinbun Kisha*, a Toto newspaper reporter named Anna Matsuda is featured. She is known as *Shinbun Gyokai no Itanji* (nonconformist in the newspaper industry) for her efforts to disclose corruption in state government agencies and expose the truth. Matsuda believes that justice should be upheld without discrimination [12].

This research will focus on the three primary protagonists who describe the figure of an independent woman attempting to survive and fight against the system that dominates them. Consequently, the formulation of the problem in this study is how dominance shapes the three protagonists of the three series.

## **2 Research Method and Theory**

This study employs qualitative methods to obtain an in-depth understanding of women's employment barriers and efforts to challenge the system [13]. The primary data includes of three films starring Ryoko Yonekura: *Doctor X: Surgeon Michiko Daimon*, *Legal V: Ex-Lawyer Takanashi Shoko*, and *The Journalist/Shinbun Kisha*. Secondary data was collected from reputable national and international journals, websites, and other credible sources. These secondary data was needed to found research gap, also support objectivity for analysis process. The research is limited to the years 2012 to 2022, when the film will be broadcast in multiple seasons, and to the behavior of female-dominance and dominant woman that appears in the text, subtitles, and gestures.

Method for analyzing data using Creswell's five-step coding to acquire findings, which are then interpreted using theory and data. (Creswell, 2013). This investigation was analyzed using the subsequent procedures: (1) reading the text of primary and secondary data, (2) dividing the text into several informational segments, (3) classifying the findings, (4) eliminating redundancy and overlapping of finding data about female-domination, and (5) transforming the classification code into a theme, resulting in research findings [14].

To react to the formulation of the problem, the existentialist feminism theory of Simone de Beauvoir is applied. According to feminism, women's oppression is the consequence of a strong patriarchal system that has existed for a long time, resulting in women's oppression in all sectors, including education, social, economic, political, and others. In her book, she explains the characteristics of existentialist feminism that distinguish it from other

philosophies, namely: (1) The Others, the existence of women's awareness is 'The Other' in relation to men, i.e. men as subjects and women as objects; (2) Subjectivity and Objectivity, men as subjects and women as objects. (3) Transcendence, a strategy to escape patriarchal culture, which suppresses women's freedom [15]. Beauvoir argues that males are referred to as "Self" and women as "The Other." If "The Other" is a threat to 'Self', then women are a threat to males. Therefore, if a male wishes to retain his liberty, he must have the ability to subdue women [16].

In order to end women's oppression, women must have the ability to exert control over their surroundings, including the courage to argue like males. According to Beauvoir, women can implement three strategies. In order for women to reclaim themselves, they must first labor in public spaces to increase opportunities and the possibility of obtaining the same rights as men. Second, being an intellectual woman because women are able to analyze and redefine the term "woman." Thirdly, women can work to accomplish social transformation of society as the key to women's emancipation, i.e., financial independence. If women can achieve economic independence, they can obtain what they desire and create the environment they desire [17].

### 3 Finding and Discussion

This study examines the form of female dominance, which is a form of existential feminism, in the television series Doctor X: Surgeon Michiko Daimon, Legal V: Ex-Lawyer Takanashi Shoko, and The Journalist/Shinbun Kisha. Due to the limited number of words and pages, the author selects one piece of information from each film.

#### *Representation of the three protagonist characters as female-dominant*

Each episode of the Doctor X series begins with the narration 'This is the story of a lone wolf's female veterinarian. Her only weapons against the herd mentality, authority, and institutional restraints are her license and her acquired skills. She is the surgeon Michiko Daimon, also known as Doctor X. This section describes that Daimon Michiko is a freelance surgeon who works at Totei Hospital. He works under the supervision of Kanbara Akira, an agent who is known to frequently request exorbitant surgeon's fees from the director of Totei Hospital. Despite this, Akira always explains that the wages charged are commensurate with Michiko's capacity to work and the outstanding post-surgery outcomes.



**Fig. 1.** Character's Description of Daimon Michiko in Opening Doctor X, Eps. 5, Season 5 (00.04-00.10)

The character of Daimon Michiko has cold hands, is stubborn, direct with others, criticizes other physicians when they perform poorly at work, is arrogant, but has an attractive figure, is beautiful, fashionable, and loves money. The entire medical staff at Totei Hospital despises this character because he or she embodies the phrase "the whole nine yards." Daimon's name is frequently parodied as 'Demon' (Evil) due to an attitude that is deemed unattractive in

males. Daimon Michiko is often referred to as the 'Healer-Angel' of surgery because, when a crisis occurs during an operation, he suddenly appears to assist the team of doctors, allowing the critical situation to be handled correctly and ensuring the successful completion of the operation.



**Fig. 2.** Character Description of Takanashi Shoko in Opening Legal V: Ex. Lawyer Takanashi Shoko (04.40-04.43)

In each episode of the television series Legal V: Ex. Lawyer Takanashi Shoko, a distinct legal case is presented, and Takanashi Shoko conducts investigations behind the scenes. Whenever he is enthusiastic about conducting an investigation, he will ask his colleagues to take action on the ground under the excuse, "I don't have a law license." In spite of this, he works behind the scenes, providing solutions and instructions when other paralegals become trapped during investigations or trials, and he is able to motivate paralegals and other office members to follow him in investigations.

Takanashi Shoko is portrayed as a figure who is arrogant, likes to be truthful, acts carefully, is not frightened of being wrong, is critical, acts spontaneously, and never gives up searching for the truth. She is a figure of high confidence, with a firm and boisterous manner of speech, coupled with a fashionable dress sense and a beautiful stature, demonstrating that she possesses excellent 'brain and beauty' skills. Minako Shiratori, a female attorney at the law firm Felix & Tenma, and all of the paralegals at a rival firm become in danger by his presence. Takanashi Shoko's license to practice law was revoked by Soichiro Tenma of the law firm Felix & Tenma, who also serves as chairman of the bar association. Takanashi Shoko attempts to sue Soichiro Tenma for revealing the truth about why he was dismissed as a lawyer at the conclusion of the episode. He ultimately prevailed in the litigation and is now eligible to renew his attorney's license.

Anna Matsuda, originally a cheerful individual, is the last character discussed. Since his older brother fell into a vegetative state as a result of being dropped by his co-workers at the Government Office, he became reticent, changed careers to become a journalist at the Toto newspaper, and attempted to uncover a major scandal in the government that caused his older brother to fall into a coma. Anna Matsuda's transformation into a lone-wolf journalist, whose efforts to uncover the truth are thwarted by both her own superiors and the Government's bumbling efforts to stop her, occurred in glaring contrast to her previous personality. Matsuda is not a political journalist, but he continues to independently uncover scandalous government news without the assistance of his superiors. Nevertheless, the outcomes of the news that Matsuda delivered were well-liked by readers and frequently made the front page of the Toto Newspaper. The characterization of Matsuda's character is not optimal due to the slow

development of the story and the film's six-episode length, but there is no narrative twist that would alter the characterization of Matsuda's character.

Even though they are informal workers, the three female protagonists of the three drama series have occupations in strategic sectors, namely health (Doctor X), law (Legal V), and media (The Journalist). There are similarities between the characters of Daimon Michiko and Takanashi Shoko, including arrogance in the workplace, manner of speech, mannerless treatment of others, narcissism, and dominance over other characters. In Beauvoir's view, women's employment is an endeavor to avoid both male and female oppression. These protagonists are able to purchase the freedom they desire with the hefty salaries they receive from these antagonists, as well as delegate domestic duties to third parties [17] [18].

*Existentialist Feminism in Japan's Films through Doctor X, Legal V: Ex. Lawyer Shoko Takanashi, and The Journalist*

According to Beauvoir, the three film series symbolize existentialist feminism, as the characters Daimon, Takanashi, and Matsuda pose a threat to men. According to the conventional view of relationships in the workplace, the office is an extension of patriarchal culture, signifying that the 'self' suppresses women as 'The Other'. The character 'The Other' must be eliminated because it threatens the positions and prejudices of male employees and the institutions for which they work; therefore, 'The Other' must be suppressed or eliminated to preserve the traditional hierarchy.

The three protagonists also demonstrate their independence in the workplace. Regardless of negative opinions or warnings from superiors, choose clients based on their own initiative and desire, unaffected by superior coercion. In Daimon's case, performing the best possible surgery without regard for administration is a form of resistance to the hospital's highly bureaucratic and efficiency-focused management hierarchy. Even if they support a feeble opponent, Takanashi can refuse or accept clients based on materialistic considerations that benefit work performance and the economy. Even though he must compete with other male journalists in his professional environment, Matsuda has the freedom to write about politics on his own volition despite a very high risk to his job.

The predicament of the three professional protagonists is a form of transcendence; they are attempting to escape the stigma of a female *ryousai kenbo* who must submit to the company or office superiors. Women are able to 'break the line' against being labeled as *shokuba no hana* because of their efforts to demonstrate professional work skills on par with those of males, especially in terms of work output. Women are not only expected to demonstrate their physical attributes, but also their cognitive and emotional skills, so that the ability gap between men and women can be eliminated. The outdated preconception that "women cannot work" etc. has given rise to the belief that "women can be as professional as men" in the workplace. Thus, transcendence efforts in the form of escaping 'unprofitable' material and prestige-based daily routines can transform into activities that are profitable in terms of prestige and material value and can also enhance the value of women.

Takanashi Shoko's accomplishment when he won a lawsuit against the Felix and Tenma office against two great male lawyers and judges, Daimon Michiko's success when she completed an operation on a patient and was paid many times more than a doctor equivalent to a professor at Totei Hospital, and Anna Matsuda's persistence in obtaining the primary evidence to expose the government's scandal in order to mobilize the masses to demonstrate against the government all constitute a transcendence. This endeavor is evidence of women's ability to

break out of the confines of patriarchal society's expectations for women's capabilities (traditional values). As a form of threat to men, self-actualization, and symbols of women's resistance in the workforce, they nevertheless managed to become significant actors in the workforce.

#### *Feminist-Woman in Workplace at Japan's Films: Utopia or Dystopia?*

Prior to the turn of the millennium, Japanese women in film were portrayed as submissive to their spouses, fathers, and sons. This is consistent with the teachings of Confucianism, which originated in East Asia and developed the notions of limiting women's roles in daily life, not respecting women's roles, and limiting employment opportunities for women [19]. After the year 2000, there has been a gradual shift. In these three series, the strength of Japanese women is evident in the description of the plot, the choice of language in the text, and the portrayal of the three primary characters. If you examine the dynamics of Japanese television series, you will find that many of them objectify women by exhibiting male gaze, thereby making women a visual pleasure and a rating magnet. This series, however, is not the case. The three characters illustrate the concept of *ganbaru*, which is dedication to labor [20]. The single status in the three figures also signifies independence, as it is not viewed as a burden or a negative connotation, such as the term "leftover Christmas cake," but is said to prioritize work professionalism and integrity.

Nonetheless, this film posits the utopia that the representation of working women must be flawless, i.e., stunning or physically attractive, and must have the same or greater abilities than men. This series subtly encourages women to live independently, upgrade their skills so that they have qualified abilities, and then earn a great deal of money from their jobs, so that only males fear them in the workplace. This becomes a significant burden for women, as it is extremely difficult for women who are already married or who lack other privileges to reach this point. Coupled with the strong patriarchal culture, women like this will undoubtedly become communal adversaries and have the potential to face workplace discrimination. In fact, the position of women will become more challenging, thereby increasing their burden.

## **4 Conclusion**

Through the films *Ryoko Yonekura in Doctor X*, *Legal V: Ex-Lawyer Shoko Takanashi*, and *The Journalist*, it is evident that female dominance in the workplace consists of demonstrating equal or greater skills than males. By working, women have the same bargaining power as men, gain freedom in all sectors, and to be able to do many things better, Japanese cinema must present female protagonists with different characteristics, so as to enrich women's perceptions of dominant and successful female workers. Thus, Japanese women can be encouraged to embrace feminism through the medium of film.

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