Anger Management in the Japanese Workplace
─From the Perspective of an Industrial Physician─

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There are a few academic researches on anger management in Japanese workplace. There have also been no studies that take into account the unique characteristics of the Japanese workplace, such as gender gap and the declining birthrate and ageing population. Therefore, from the perspective of an industrial physician, this study was conducted about anger management in the Japanese workplaces, which have different culture from that of the West. Japanese industry has been shifting towards a workplace where workers' safety and security are guaranteed for the past decade. The work system reform and the stress check system are such examples. However, Japan has entered a super-aged society and is still moving forward with problems such as generational and gender disparities in the workplace. The characteristics of anger were mentioned. In reception work, it is necessary not to deal with angry visitors alone, while maintaining mutual dignity as much as possible. It is also recommended that a manual should be prepared that can be used by any staff member. Above all, it is necessary to make a working environment that does not isolate staff who are touched by anger in their work. Preparation for counselling is also recommended.

Ⅰ. Background and Purpose of the Study

In recent years, anger management has been getting common in Japan. Anger management, which started in the U.S., has been incorporated into workplace education in the U.S. since around 1970 as a form of self-control for the expression of strong negative emotions[1][2]. This is because frequent expression of strong negative emotions in the workplace could damage an individual's reputation. It is also becoming increasingly recognised that an angry supervisor in the workplace can lead to harassment, and that executives in particular need to learn how to manage it.

Anger management has been structured in Japan based on behavioural therapy and cognitive-behavioural therapy theories and has been incorporated in the judiciary. Not a few anger management studies in Japan have focused on children's treatment and education[3][4]. On the other hand, as for those targeting the workplace, many books on how to suppress anger have been published[5], but academic research is limited to only a few, such as those on banking practice[6]. However, there has been no research that takes into account the "gender role consciousness" and "low birthrate and aging society" that Japanese workplaces are currently facing. In this report, we would like to discuss how to address anger management in the Japanese workplace, which is a different culture from that of the West, from the perspective of an industrial physician, including a literature review.

1. The Japanese Workplace Environment

First, I would like to discuss issues and recent trends in the Japanese workplace.

In Japan, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) is leading a reform of work

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styles starting in 2019. A major issue that Japan is currently facing and will continue to face in the future is the "decline in the working-age population due to the low birthrate and aging society". In order to put a brake on the situation, the reform aims to create a more comfortable working environment, including "diversification of working styles to meet the needs of workers, such as balancing work with childcare and nursing care". The reform of the way of working is aimed at improving productivity and creating a work environment and social environment in which workers can fully demonstrate their motivation and abilities. The aim is to shift from the post-Showa era Japanese form of lifetime employment to a society in which workers can choose a variety of working styles according to their individual circumstances, and to enable each worker to have a better outlook for the future. The intention is to promote a good, safe and secure working environment, with the government waving the flag and showing concrete ways to achieve this. Many words promoting work style reform are therefore geared towards a brighter future that is more approachable for workers. For example, it also cuts into the issue of long working hours, which has been a problem for quite some time. Specifically, it obliges employers to ensure all employees take five days off a year with guaranteed pay.

2.　Japan with a High Suicide Rate

Let us now go back a little and discuss the situation in Japan around the beginning of the 21st century, post the collapse of bubble economies in Japan. At the time, the number of suicides in Japan was on the increase. In 2003, there were more than 34,000 suicides, and the suicide rate, which is among the highest in the world, had remained high for almost a decade. Many of the suicides included working people in their 50s, and the significant social losses due to this fact were discussed. Another social problem during the same period was the increase in the number of patients with mood disorders, including depression, compared to previous years[7].

The high suicide rate was thought to be partly due to the decline of the Japanese economy in the 1990s, but the increase in the number of patients with mood disorders was also treated as a problem, and the need for a safe working environment was discussed.

At the same time, workplace sexual harassment lawsuits were taking place in the USA. News of the lawsuits reached Japan and the concept of harassment in the workplace gradually spread.

3.　Stress Check System

The Occupational Health and Safety Law was amended by the MHLW in June 2014, amidst public concern about the high number of suicides. As a result of this revision, a stress check system became mandatory from 1 December 2015 in workplaces with 50 or more employees. The system has been introduced from the perspective of whether it is possible to notice the onset of depression in workers at an early stage and whether there are any preventive actions that can be taken. Therefore, the stress check system is to be carried out once a year, and one of its aims is to promote awareness of stress among workers themselves. Furthermore, depending on the results of the stress check, a meeting with an occupational physician can be arranged if desired. The aim is for workers to become aware of increased stress themselves and to understand how it affects them. The issue of isolation in the workplace has long been considered problematic as a cause of stress, but workers are supposed to be able to consult an occupational physician whose expertise and independence are guaranteed.

This allows workers to consult with an industrial physician when they are under stress without being isolated. The purpose of this system is to prevent stress-induced mood disorders, and to intervene early if necessary.

On the other hand, one of the benefits of the introduction of the stress check for employers is that through interviews with workers, industrial physicians can provide advice on whether the workplace environment is causing stress and, if so, what specific improvements can be made.

4.　Gender Role Consciousness in Japan

While these various strategies are being taken, one issue that has been raised for a long time in the Japanese workplace is the gender gap. Goal 5

of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations states "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". It is widely known that Japan is facing tough challenges in this gender gap index. The results of a 2021 survey by the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office on unconscious assumptions (unconscious bias) based on gender address this point[8].

The survey on gender role attitudes found that both men and women "not only make assumptions about the opposite sex, but men and women themselves unconsciously make stronger assumptions than the opposite sex[8]. This "strongly assumed" unconscious gender role consciousness is based on the question of role consciousness regarding domestic work, parenting, and elderly care in the home, and also includes impressions of the abilities and personalities of both men and women. Gender role attitudes are considered to be related to role attitudes in the workplace as well as at home, so we would like to enumerate them in detail.

In the survey of items by scene, both men and women affirmed that "women should have this role with regard to housework and childcare in the family and community scene", as well as the results, and that "men should work to support the family income", and that "men should place work before family, even if they are both working". Both men and women affirmed these items. In the workplace scene, not only is it affirmed that "men are better suited to be leaders in the workplace", but also that "big business meetings and important negotiations are better conducted by men". It can be understood that this affirms that men, regardless of their personal qualities, are better suited to take on the role of leader and to be entrusted with making major decisions, and inevitably take on the responsibility for these decisions.

On the other hand, the survey also examines what can be seen as customs that have continued since the Showa period. For example, both men and women agreed that it is better for "women to serve tea to their bosses and colleagues at work", indicating that women are expected to fulfil the role of domestic work at work that is expected of them at home.

Also noteworthy in this survey of sexual roles is the high score of both men and women affirming the item "women are more emotional" with regard to gender personalities. On the other hand, men affirmed that "men should not cry in public", indicating that there are deep-rooted differences in gender roles and strong assumptions about gender differences with regard to emotional expression.

It can be inferred that regardless of the qualities and characteristics of individuals, they are likely to be forced into these expected roles in the workplace. Performing a role that is not in line with one's personal qualities is always associated with a high level of stress. Intense stress may elicit strong negative emotions.

5. Ageing and Disparities

One of the workplace issues that has been felt in our daily lives for the past several years is the aging of the workforce. First, the aging of workers in the workplace is largely concerned with the problems of illnesses associated with physical aging of workers who have reached advanced age and their considerations. Many people feel easily fatigued in all aspects of their lives due to physical changes, as typified by age-related the loss of muscle mass and brain atrophy. This tiredness tends to elicit feelings of irritability and anger not only in the workplace but also in a variety of other situations.

Along with these physical changes, which vary greatly from person to person, the cognition of aging workers can also be problematic. In Japanese, the term "cognition" of the elderly often refers to the ability of the power of memory, but focus here is mainly on the cognition of understanding others.

People often hold on to ideas that have been developed and familiar in the culture in which they have lived for many years without changing them significantly. For example, it has been reported that differences in gender role awareness are larger among the elderly than among the young. When such disparities exist, problems arise if the differences are not well understood[5]. As reported by Cabinet Office in Japan, a high percentage of older workers agreed with the statement "It is

better for women to serve tea to superiors and colleagues at work", but younger workers did not agree with this. In such cases, a young female employee may be asked by an older employee to 'serve tea', which may be perceived as harassment and could lead to problems. Without a clear understanding of the difference in perception, both the elderly and younger staff members may express negative and sometimes angry feelings.

In addition, the rapid development of information technologies such as AI, which has become familiar in recent years, has made it clear that new responses and changes are needed to traditional social conventions, moral values, and common sense at an extremely rapid pace. This rapid pace of change is causing intergenerational differences. Moreover, the change is said to be accelerating. People who have spent many years in a system that has not changed much over the years, mainly represented by the lifetime employment system as in Japan, are more likely to have problems in recognizing and understanding the changes, which will lead to more problematic situations in their lives[9]. They may feel isolated, as if they have been left behind by the changes, and are more likely to express negative and sometimes angry feelings.

Thus, generational differences can lead to conflicts in various situations. However, this too is highly individualized, and as with the issue of gender differences, assumptions about each other's age, as represented by stereotypes, for example, the concept of ageism, may be a trigger for problems[10] [11]. Assumptions due to lack of understanding are also likely to trigger negative feelings.

Ⅱ. Anger: A Developmental Psychological Perspective

Having considered the challenges facing the modern Japanese workplace, next point is described the issues involving individual characteristics.

1. Anger as an Emotion

Anger is an expression of emotion, but what is the deeper emotion associated with anger? It is clear that it is a negative emotion. The main emotions discussed in clinical practice are anxiety and sadness. Sadness is said to underlie anger, especially in men. Depression as a mood disorder also presents with anger. Depressed mood, which causes self-injurious behavior, is also very similar to anger. Anger as an emotion may be expressed toward the environment or others, or it may be expressed toward oneself without being directed toward others. It can result in self-harm or suicide. There are also situations that trigger anger: situations of fear, annoyance, and embarrassment.

2. Transition of Anger over the Life Cycle

Depending on the age of the human being, the causes and situations in which anger is expressed differ slightly.

In the case of newborn infants, who are unable to use language and can only express their needs through crying, the action of crying as a form declaring their intentions is directed towards close relatives who are the object of attachment. Later, during the terrible twos period around 2 to 3 years of age, the infant is groping desperately to recognize the distinction between self and others, but due to the underdevelopment of emotional perception and language, this is often accompanied by confusing and furious angry (crying) behavior. This is a form of unchecked emotional expression, which means that surrounding adults and parents are often driven by the child's situation, while understanding it. When children reach school age, their social circle expands and the number of people involved increases, including friends and teachers. With the increase in the number of people involved, there is an even greater interplay of emotions. However, at this school age, it is difficult to correctly recognize and verbalize the emotions that arise in the mind. Learning about emotions requires more experience and learning to know what they are, as well as the development of the intellect. As part of the learning process, it is important to have an adult who can correctly name the emotion, explain what it is, and give advice on what role the emotion plays in society.

Even as they grow in experience and learning, anger is a strong emotion that requires much experience and growth to be expressed in a balanced manner. When adolescents reach the

period, they sometimes give up on this expression and behave as if it had never happened, due to the difficulty in expressing their emotions. By the time a child reaches junior high school, he/she enters a period of secondary sexual development. This is a very difficult period of emotional balance as the child moves toward independence as an individual human being.

The secretion of sex hormones also becomes more active, and they frequently encounter situations in which they are bewildered by the changes in themselves. This uncomfortable and bewildering situation can lead to an expression of anger. It is crucial for children in their late teens to encounter adults outside the family who have acquired a general social awareness.

By the time they are over 20 years of age and have managed to adjust to the imbalance between self and reality, they have generally learned about anger and are able to adjust to society, despite fluctuations in generational and gender disparities. Individuals' adaptation to the emotion of anger varies greatly from early adulthood to middle age. Physical problems, such as maladjustment to aging, fatigue, and illness, may make people more likely to express anger. It is well known that the physical problems in early old age include an imbalance of sex hormones, which can cause emotional swings. This is the so-called menopausal period. Although it is still not widely recognized in Japan, many men as well as women suffer from menopausal symptoms. As with women, symptoms vary from person to person. Men's menopause, like women's, not only causes physical symptoms such as dizziness and fatigue, but also symptom of depression and strong feelings of anger, which some men direct at others. Sex hormones have a wide range of physical and emotional effects on both men and women, not only during their teenage years but also throughout their lives. The aforementioned environmental factors, such as generational differences and gender role divisions, are also likely to lead themselves in the form of harassment in the workplace.

Later, as people enter old age, age-related depression and anger due to dementia may surface. However, this also varies greatly from person to person.

3. Anger Due to Individual Characteristics

In recent years, various studies have been conducted on developmental disabilities. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which are classified as neurodevelopmental disorders, often have difficulties in controlling emotional expression and behavior[12] [13].

Many people with ASD characteristics experience maladjustment in their relationships with others in kindergartens, nurseries and schools due to their communication characteristics. The same applies to relationships with parents. People with ASD have features such as hypersensitivity or hypesthesia.

This maladaptive experience is not obviously anyone's fault, but rather a combination of communication and sensory issues that cause people to not fit in well. The inability of others to move, speak, or react as one expects can also cause maladjustment, but it is difficult for others to fit these expectations, and many others do not need them. One of the characteristics of ASD is that it is addictive or obsessive, but they also have difficulty with change. For example, they may be confused by a change in environment, such as moving to a new house, and this may manifest itself in the form of panic. They are not good at changing or switching emotions, and often hold onto the same feelings for quite some time. The same is true for anger.

For example, many memories are selected and discarded in our lives without being aware of it. Both pleasant and unpleasant events gradually fade with the passage of time, and are recalled by talking with friends and family, or by being exposed to photographs. Emotions recalled with memories are said to change. It is unlikely that we will recall the same emotion with exactly the same intensity as when the event occurred.

For example, even frustrating losses are recalled as good memories of teammates. However, people with ASD recall and express emotions as if the same thing is just about to get happened in front of them. Strong emotions, such as anger, do not fade over time in their memories. Therefore, when they express anger, the people around them seem to be drawn back to the previous scene. Even as an adult who is with ASD, his/her memory of a

fight in kindergarten may require the expression of emotion as a child. And people are required to show the feeling of empathy, and asked "You remember that, too, don't you?

People with ADHD are hyperactive and have difficulty staying in the same place. They have trouble staying at their desks for long periods of time at school or work, and may stand and walk away from their desks. As a result, they are often regarded as frivolous. Because his thoughts and interests spread rapidly in various ways with the slightest stimulus. And they are often perceived as if they are not listening to what others say to them. Inattentive symptoms are also often evaluated as insincere. In Japanese society, being evaluated as inattentive over a long period of time can lower one's self-esteem. On the other hand, they also have a strong sense of justice and cannot leave those in need alone, which are characteristics that are socially valued. However, persistent lack of understanding by surrounding people leads to isolation, and as adults, they often suffer from depressive symptoms. As divided by the line, those characteristics of adults are not evaluated into ASD or ADHD clearly, but many people are able to adapt to society despite their various characteristics. In addition, compared to men, many women who have features of ASD or ADHD are diagnosed in adulthood. Also, individual differences are mentioned[14].

However, it is important to understand that people with developmental characteristics may often have problems expressing anger[15] [16]. Also, if a person is maladjusted academically, he/she may also have problems expressing anger. To better understand this, for example, let us have an image being surrounded by people who speak a language other than your own. If the language people speak, that you have learned a little of but do not speak or understand fluently, such as English or Chinese. Many people speak to you, but you could understand only about half or 30% of what they say. If this were to continue every day, anyone would certainly have problems adjusting to their surroundings. If there is maladjustment in terms of learning, it is also easy to isolate yourself in a situation where your self-esteem continues to decline. This situation does not occur because of

anyone in particular, but because of maladjustment to the environment, but if a person has depressive symptoms for a long time, he/she may feel isolated because of the environment or people surrounded. When this happens, they may express strong feelings of anger over simple matters out of a desire to correct the imbalance they feel.

4. *Shura* and Anger

In the Tendai Buddhism's philosophy, there is a theory of the ten realms, and Shura is one of these realms. Shura was originally the name of the god of conflict, Asura. Shura is characterized by a strong desire to win over others. Because he is a god of strife, he is frequently used as an expression of anger to try to win over others. It is noteworthy that Shura's body size is described as changing depending on the opponent. When he sees that his opponent is weaker than himself, he becomes larger and more arrogant; when he sees that his opponent is stronger, he becomes so small that he can fit inside a lotus flower in a pond (Mohe Zhiguan, (Jp Tendai, Buddhist text by Guanding, 594 CE)). The idea is that the strength and manner of expression of the relationship will change depending on the other party. The idea of building equal relationships is not acceptable here. This is one aspect of the nature of anger as an emotion that can be understood.

Next section comes the anger management in consideration of these issues in the Japanese workplace.

Ⅲ．Anger Management

In this section, here is brief summarized the content for workers who need emotional labor, such as receptionists and other over-the-counter services, as well as those who deal with people with anger in the workplace. The following five points that are basic intervewing techniqes, will be explained: (1) Keep distance, (2) Consider how to respond to the person, (3) Consider the content of the person's complaint, and (4) Show empathy, and (5) Mental care for yourself[17] [18] [19] [20] [21].

(1) Keep distance － equal relationship

In our social life, there is a psychological distance. Compared to the close psychological

distance between family and friends, most of us, as members of society, keep a little more distance between ourselves and others in the workplace than we do between family members. In Japan, in particular, this shortening of distance is described as the other party "stepping on your toes".

As I have often written, anger is a strong emotion, so when we are angry, we get the impression that the other person is entering our psychology, making it difficult to maintain psychological distance. If we do not keep our distance, we become involved and our emotions are violently moved. Some professionals try to solve problems by getting involved in the other person's emotions, but in general, it is not advisable to get so close that you become involved.

In Japan, it is also required to use correct honorifics and to use the visitor's name correctly. One widely known method in recent years is the I-message. This is a way of communicating in Japanese, a language that tends to omit the subject, while making clear who is speaking, as is the case in English.

In the sentence " I am ___, if you ." the subject is the single person, not the plural "we," which indicates affiliation. It is necessary in dealing with anger to convey that the relationship is one of equality while maintaining mutual dignity[22]. If it is the reception, it is clear that there is an organization with power beyond it.

When dealing with anger, which is caused by feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, shaky self-confidence, anxiety, and sadness, the first and foremost step is to tell the person that he/she is an equal position at that moment.

(2) Consider how to respond to the other party: How to create the equal relationship and team response that the other party desires.

No matter how much we think we are equal and not condescending, there are times when we feel that the owner of the anger is so. For example, as mentioned above, if the person you are dealing with affirms the gender role consciousness that "men should be in charge of big business meetings and important negotiations," you may feel that you have been slighted and your anger may increase as long as the woman continues to deal with you, even if she is a woman with a higher position.

Even when dealing with the counter, it often leads to a smooth response if a team is formed and a manual is prepared in advance[23]. For example, if a person has the aforementioned gender-role consciousness, a male person will first respond to the customer, and then the male person will make a recommendation that the woman is superior to him and can be trusted to handle the situation, and then proceed to solve the problem. In the case of complaints, the same is true, although sometimes a person is nominated for a position title. Japan is a country with strong assumption bias based on gender, age, and other factors. It is necessary to know that it is sometimes difficult to solve a problem by one person's effort[24].

(3) Consider the content of the other party's complaint: Use diagrams and clarify words.

When the other party is angry, it may be difficult to accurately grasp the content of his/her complaint. However, the more confused you are, the angrier the other side gets, asking "Why don't you understand?" If the person uses a hearing aid or the other person has developmental disability characteristics, it may be difficult to understand, especially in a conversation that relies on hearing. It is necessary to obtain the other person's understanding, for example, "I don't want to make a mistake in the content," or "I think it is better to clarify my complaint". It is especially effective to write when you have strong feelings of distress. This may take some time. However, it is effective to write down the problem on a piece of paper and visually check it while dissecting the problem and finding the foci of the problem. If possible, prepare a large sheet of paper and write in large letters. It is important to express your appreciation for their behavior by saying, "Thank you for your time," and sometimes using red or blue letters as well.

(4) Show empathy

Apologizing is a double-edged blade. If you are not clear about "what" you are apologizing for, it will spur the other party on to anger. The same is true when the other party's complaint is an apology. It is necessary to be clear about what you are apologizing for. Sometimes an apology is not required. In such cases, it is effective to show empathy.

For example, "I understand that you are

troubled," or "I understand that you are offended". Unlike an apology, there is no problem in using many words of sympathy. If the tone of voice and facial expressions can also be used in a way that is appropriate for the other person, the feelings of empathy can be conveyed even more.

(5) Mental care for yourself

Facing the other's anger stirs up our own negative emotions. Human emotions are designed to respond to each other. The other person's body and brain may be tired from anxiety and sadness, and if we are tired, the situation will go from bad to worse. Tiredness, not only in the workplace but also in many other areas, can easily trigger feelings of frustration and anger. You may even have so much as an "accident" as an actual feeling.

However, to avoid having your mood being dragged down by the other person to the point of deep hurt, it is also a good idea to have something in place that can switch off the mood.

A favorite scent, favorite food, or music can be effective. Looking at pretty pictures can also help. Rest is also necessary, as strong anger can remain damaging for a while. Afterwards, if necessary, it can be effective to share the experience of anger at work. It is also helpful to be prepared for counseling.

It is a courageous act to share the damage caused by the anger in the workplace, rather than keeping it to oneself.

Ⅳ．Conclusion and Future Anger Management

Since the government has been promoting reforms in the way people work, we have been seeing more and more words such as "a safe workplace" and "a safe place to work". This paper has dealt with the Japanese workplace.

However, there have been research reports that the ever-increasing air pollution around the world is exacerbating the sense of frustration, etc.[25) 26)].

On the other hand, methods to improve social adaptation skills, such as assertion skills, are being introduced into compulsory education in Japan. Assertion skills are a method of accurately verbalizing one's own opinions while respecting each other's values. The explanation of this method

uses the concept of profit and loss throughout. Conventional moral values are of little use in situations where strong emotions are being expressed. It is important to consider which is more important: playing the percentages. This is an indication that the concept of a single ethnic group with the same moral values, as in Japan, is no longer valid[27]. We are living in an era of diverse values, drastic changes in the global environment, and a lot of gloomy news. However, it is hopeful to be able to protect the security of one's own workplace by oneself, preferably through teamwork.

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日本の職場におけるアンガーマネジメント
―産業医の視点より―

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要旨

　職場での「アンガーマネジメント」について日本における学術的な研究は少ない。また日本の職場が抱える「性別役割意識」や「少子高齢化」といった日本の特性を踏まえた研究はこれまでなかった。そこで産業医の視点から、欧米と違う文化である日本の職場でのアンガーマネジメントの取り組み方について一考察を行った。日本の産業界は労働者の安心・安全が保障される職場へとここ 10 年舵を切ってきた。働き方改革やストレスチェック制度もその一つである。しかしながら超高齢化社会に入り、依然として職場での世代間格差や男女格差などの問題を抱えながら進んでいる。怒りについてはその特性について触れた。窓口業務などにおいては、お互いの尊厳を最大限に保ちながら、怒りをうったえる訪問者に一人だけで対応しない事が必要である。どの職員も使用可能なマニュアル作成も勧められる。何よりも業務で怒りに触れた職員を孤立させず、傷として癒せる職場環境づくりも必要である。

キーワード
アンガーマネジメント　職場　産業医　少子高齢化