

# Academic Loss in Japanese Society: Suicide and Harassment

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**Abstract**—Among many occupations in the country, the highest suicide rate is caused by graduate students. One of the reasons of high rate of suicide, is caused academic harassment. This paper is significant as researchers have investigated and many cases caused “jisatsu” have noticed in the country. Accordingly, this paper uses statistic of governmental organization, and focuses on graduate students’ mental stress, and graduate students’ suicides and leaves of absence.

**Keywords**—Academic Harassment, Academic Loss, Escape, Jisatsu

## I. INTRODUCTION

AFTER the economic depression in 1996 in Japan, the number of suicides committed or “jisatsu” increased, which the high number of graduate students occupy. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, the number is stable since 1996, but they still number 30,000 [1]. Accordingly, Japanese suicide was discussed as a part of cultural and social characteristics along with economic characteristics. In our cultural background, suicide has been regarded as one taking responsibility when he or she cannot work well in the company or in society, or keep one’s honor and name for ethical reasons. It has been long accepted as a social phenomenon and people have tendency to commit “jisatsu.” Although the Japanese government is working for a twenty percent decrease of the “jisatsu” rate within nine years, so far, the number has not been changed.

The total mortality numbers in Japan exceeded over 1 million in 2003. The mortality numbers in Japan are shown in Table I.

TABLE I  
NUMBER OF DEATHS AND BIRTHS [1]

Year	Number of Deaths	Number of Births
2005	1,084,000	1,063,000
2008	1,142,467	
2011	1,253,463	
2040	1,663,000	
2055	1,556,000	

In 2005, the number of deaths exceeds over one million. Moreover, it is estimated that the number of deaths will increase until 2040, and decreases 2055. Thus, Japanese society is high aging society.

Among the mortality rate, the number of suicide decreases in

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the following.

TABLE II  
NUMBER OF SUICIDE [2]

Year	Total Number	Male	Female
2005	32,552	23,540	9,012
2008	32,249	22,831	9,418
2012	27,858	19,273	8,585

The average total number of suicide has been over 30,000 In Japan. The number of male suicide doubles the number of the female suicide. For example, in the case of 2008, 24 out of 100,000 people ended their lives in Japan [1]. The percentage of suicide can be seen as in Table III.

TABLE III  
PERCENTAGE OF SUICIDE [1]

Year	Total Percentage	Male (%)	Female (%)
2005	25.5	37.8	13.8
2008	25.3	36.7	14.4
2011	24.0	33.7	14.8

Along with the total number of suicide rate, the male rate has been decreased, which is opposite to the female rate. As a whole, the suicide rate has been decreased.

The number of graduates of students, the number of those who expect to be employed, and the number of those who are employed can be seen as in Table IV.

TABLE IV  
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN 2009 [3]

Schools	Number of Graduates	Number of Students Who Wish to be Employed	Number of Students who are Employed
University	544,000	382,000	368,000
College	78,000	51,000	57,000
National Technical School	11,000	55,000	55,000
Special Technical School	244,000	223,000	204,000

The statistic tells that there has been less workers compared to the number of graduates. However, there are less employed students than those who wish to be employed.

TABLE V  
NUMBER OF STUDENTS' SUICIDES IN 2004 [1]

Year	Number of Student' Suicide
2005	861
2008	972
2011	1,029

Table V explains the number of students’ suicide. It tells gradual increase of the students’ suicide rate. The number of

death of students in 1991, it was 482, while the number has been increased after that. In 2005, it was 861, and 972 in 2008. Then in 2011, the number of death of students is over 1,029, and 8,000 out of 100,000 graduate students kill themselves. Although the number is quite large, not many people know about some graduate students' deaths [1]. People can know it when media takes up the incident, because media report the incident when the case is investigated in the court.

When the number of graduate students has been considered, if there are one hundred graduate students, eleven become governmental officials, eight work at companies, sixteen are unemployed, eight are missing or dead, others become part-time instructors. Now, looking at the overall unemployment rate in October 2010, the total unemployment rate was 5.1% and the number of unemployed individuals was 300,000 in the country. The number of Ph. D. holders in 2012 was 16,260 by Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Among them, 10,937 students had their jobs, 855 have temporary jobs, unemployed 3,003, and missing and dead are 1,145 [3]. By using a perspective of academic harassment which causes students' mental stress, graduate students' suicides and leaves of absence will be focused.

## II. CASES OF DEATH, ACADEMIC FRAUD, AND MENTAL STRESS CAUSED BY ACADEMIC HARASSMENT

According to University of Tokyo, academic harassment means "a form of power harassment taking place in an academic setting." To be more specific, it refers to "a violation of personal rights by a University member abusing his or her authority in an educational and research setting and speaking or acting improperly and unfairly to another member of the University [4]". Therefore, it is an academic violation to prevent one person from his or her study or academic skill in education. Although this includes any kind of harassment taking place in academic environments, focusing on academic harassment except for sexual harassment in academic environments, there is so much sexual harassment all over the world, but the following types of academic harassment are mainly unique in Japan.

### A. Types of Academic Harassment

Based on the research of the Academic Harassment Prevention Committee, NAHH (Network for the Action against Academic Harassment) [4], and other people's comments on academic harassment, the types of academic harassment are categorized as follows:

- 1) persistent shouting and profane outbursts
- 2) personal abuse by telling that students are not normal and have strict attitude toward particular students
- 3) personal abuse by telling that particular students have no ability and have no aptitude for works
- 4) personal abuse during the class such as accusations of incompetence and other insults
- 5) order of leaving a professor's room by telling
- 6) claim of students' personal life
- 7) imposition of too much works by letting students unslept
- 8) imposition of students' research themes
- 9) usage of students' works as a professor's own works
- 10) changes of the classroom without notice
- 11) changes of class hours without notifying particular students
- 12) mistreatment of students: dividing favorite students, and
- 13) least favorite students
- 14) not teaching to particular students
- 15) not answering questions asked by particular students
- 16) overwork to force students to work for a long time period
- 17) no provision of facilities and equipment for research
- 18) refusal to meet particular students with appointments
- 19) refusal to answer to students' emails and set refusal mails
- 20) from certain students
- 21) no provision of recommendations of academic researches or academic employments
- 22) disregard of reading students' papers although it would be checked
- 23) elimination of student' names in published papers
- 24) no grading
- 25) interference with one's career and work in the future
- 26) ignorance and gossip of certain students by classmates
- 27) ignorance and gossip of certain students by underclass students
- 28) pressures by older senior students such as alleging of certain students' leave of school, and going to other schools

There are several cases of harassment. In the case of Kyushu University in 2010, a female graduate student accused her professor of repeatedly telling her that "women cannot research. Be a housewife and forget studying in a Ph.D. course." Although she asked for help in the university, only four claims out of fifteen were accepted. Her husband was an assistant professor in the university, and she was also told by her professor that she asked her husband to write papers [5].

There was another case in Chiba University in 2008. One assistant professor lectured and played a prank on students over three hours repeatedly from 2007 to 2008, and told other students that a particular student could not study anymore. The assistant professor repeatedly took them to Karaoke, and to play billiards from night to the early morning. At least two students could not go to university because of mental stress [6].

As a whole, these above cases make students give up their studies, and some academic places intentionally do the above to get rid of them. They cause fear and distress, and sometimes they cause physical and mental disease. Then, students feel they cannot continue their studies, they abandon studying, career, and work. They begin to hate themselves, lose confidence, and lose enthusiasm for study and work. It is natural that they lose hope in life, because they are mistreated, and criticized in academic fields. But why do these cases occur for particular students who became self-hatred. They are a kind of crime who hurt students and end up their social and personal life. They are induced by a personal hatred and accuse, which is called a hate crime. Hate crime is crime of hatred and prejudice which is motivated by hostility to a certain person. It is to discriminate race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. Usually unlawful crimes occur once and people can visible and see what incidents have been taken place. However, hate crime is difficult to distinguish

than other crimes such as violent crimes, drug trade, burglary, illegal gambling, drug abuse, forgery, weapon law violation, stolen property, prostitution, weapons smuggling, hacking, money laundering, arson, forgery fraud, etc., because it is psychological discrimination with criminals' repeated hatred action toward the victim. In the above harassment, students are powerless, and they leave schools or kill themselves. With hate crimes, universities create these students who are unmotivated withdrawals from society. In this way, mental illness brings hard situations to them. If they cannot get over it and gets worse, they commit "suicide." Indeed, these academic environments violate students' careers and academic skills. Facing these cases, many students leave school and never come back. Because there are not enough positions for them to fit in and work as temporary lecturers, some unwelcomed students are permitted to leave universities.

### III. CASES OF DEATH, ACADEMIC FRAUD, AND SCHOLARS' ESCAPE

Now, we focus on the side effects on:

- A) examples of graduate students' suicides
- i. A graduate student committed suicide from the window of a laboratory in 2007. The court sentenced the university to compensate ¥10,000,000 for the dead student's family [7].
  - ii. Another case was a suicide of a 29-year-old graduate student who had academic harassment in 2009 [7].
- B) some scholars' leave of academic pursuits in the country and work overseas

There are not only cases of students but also scholars who leave their country. Even though they are brilliant, they leave their country and continue their research overseas. It is clear in the case of Nobel Prize Winners. Here are the Nobel Prize Winners in the past in Japan.

Among the Nobel-prize winners, Nanbu Yoishiro (2008, Physics) and Nakamura Shuji (2014, Physics) became US citizens.

Taking up the cases of the world-known scientists who leave the country are: 1) Nakamura Shuji, 2) Negishi Eiichi, 3) Shimomura Osamu, and 4) Nanbu Yoichiro, who left the country and became US citizens or Japanese-Americans.

Nakamura is a Japanese-American inventor and university faculty member who gained the Noble Prize in Physics, the Winner for Light-emitting diode in 2014. He left Japan saying that he cannot work in the country, and he was desperate to accept \$180 for his invention of light-emitting diode from his company, Nichia, in 2005. In 2004, the Tokyo District Court sentence Nichia to pay 2,000,000,000 yens [9]. Yamanaka Shinya, a researcher of iPS Cell of the 2012 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, interviewed Nakamura saying that "Dr. Nakamura was courageous to stand up for his legitimate rights. Now he's teaching in the U.S. That strikes me as a pity [10]."

The history and fields of Noble Prize from 1949 to 2014 can be found in the following.

TABLE VI  
JAPANESE NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS [8]

Year	Name	Noble Prize	Field
1949	Yukawa Hideki	Physics	theoretical work on nuclear forces
1965	Tomonaga Shinichiro	Physics	deep-ploughing consequences for the physics of elementary particles
1968	Kawabata Yasunari	Literature	narrative mastery
1973	Esaki Reoki	Physics	experimental discoveries of semiconductors and superconductors
1974	Sato Eisaku	Peace	representation of people's will of peace
1981	Fukui Kenichi	Chemistry	development of the theories of chemical reactions
1987	Tonegawa Susumu	Physiology/ Medicine	the genetic principle for generation of antibody diversity
1994	Oe Kenzaburo	Literature	Usage of Poetic Force
2000	Shirakawa Hideki	Chemistry	conductive polymers
2001	Noyori Ryoji	Chemistry	chirally catalyzed hydrogenation reactions"
2002	Koshiba Masatoshi	Chemistry	astrophysics
2002	Tanaka Kouichi	Chemistry	ideological macromolecules and oft desorption ionisation methods
2008	Shimomura Osamu	Physics	green fluorescent protein
2008	Kobayashi Makoto	Physics	the discovery of the broken symmetry
2008	Masukawa Toshihide	Physics	the discovery of the broken symmetry
2008	Nanbu Yoichiro	Physics	the mechanism of spontaneous broken symmetry
2010	Negishi Eiichi	Chemistry	palladium catalyzed cross couplings
2010	Suzuki Akira	Chemistry	palladium catalyzed cross couplings
2012	Yamanaka Shinya	Physiology/ Medicine	mature cells to become pluripotent
2014	Nakamura Shuji	Physics	blue light-emitting diodes
2014	Amano Hiroshi	Physics	blue light-emitting diodes
2014	Akasaka Isamu	Physics	blue light-emitting diodes

Negishi Eiichi discovered Negishi Coupling: carbon-carbon bond forming reactions, and was awarded 2010 Nobel Prize in Chemistry along with Richard Heck and Akira Suzuki [11].

Shimomura Osamu discovered and developed green fluorescent protein, and was awarded 2008 Nobel Prize in Chemistry [11].

Nanbu Yoichiro discovered the mechanism of spontaneous broken symmetry in subatomic physics, and was awarded 2008 Nobel Prize in Physics [12].

By examining four scholars, we can see the scholars' escape no matter what causes and effects are considered. There might be different reasons for leaving the country. Most of them left because of their job opportunities and research expenses, but it is an enormous loss of human resources in the country.

### IV. CONCLUSION

Viewing the graduate students' cases, their lives can be saved if they can ask for help, but in fact, there are not many students who know counseling is available and go for assistance. Being aware of graduate students' disappearance, not only private graduate schools but also NPO provide assistance such as productive advice and counseling. In the case

of Tohoku University, there were other assistant teachers and faculty who died in Tohoku University, so they established counseling in 2013. In fact, there are more universities which are aware of similar situations, and they establish academic harassment prevention committees.

Reviewing the above cases, some students who have these kinds of experiences lose their lives, others leave universities. Among many who experience academic harassment, mental and physical stress and disease are common, which influence their academic skills in the future.

Even more, many brilliant scholars leave their country because of insufficient conditions in the work place, or poor economic conditions. However, there is a Nobel Prize in Physics winner, V, who answers in the interview that he would not leave the home country although they did not have enough budgets for research, established Kamiokande Observatory, tried to save and manage his works, and now he enjoys experiments with his own budget.

Focused in this paper, it is difficult to foresee how much the numbers of loss or escapes to overseas and affect society, but at least, the prevention method of harassment should be considered and more discussed in society as hate crime so that we can save more researchers in the future, and prevent “jisatsu” in society.

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