

# **A Comparative Study of American and Japanese University Students Job Hunting Experience**

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## **Abstract**

Most university students will start thinking about their future careers and how they want to obtain them during their last few years of college. Everyone has different motivating factors for why they chose their desired careers. The steps that students choose to take when job hunting can differ between cultures and what support services are available to them. While in Japan we noticed substantial differences that students would experience with job hunting compared to America. Through our research we would like to find out in what way the job-hunting experience between Japanese and American students vary, as well as to compare and contrast how these choices, desires, and experiences of job hunting differ between female and male students. We focused on the steps taken during the job-hunting process as well as what motivates people to pursue their desired career. In order to answer our research questions, a survey of 59 Japanese and American students was conducted. We found that the job hunting process differs significantly in Japan compared to America. In Japanese universities students generally begin job hunting during their junior year and will complete most of their required units to graduate by the end of the year in order to focus on job hunting. On the other hand, American students usually begin job hunting their senior year or after graduating. The Japanese society also has a more organized system for job hunting and job recruitment where students usually start and complete the steps at the same time. Though the process can vary, both Japanese and American universities have similar resources for students to support them during their job hunting. We also noticed that American students concern themselves with financial security in order to finance their private life, while Japanese students concern themselves with how they can better serve their company and coworkers.

## **Introduction:**

Through this study, we wanted to learn more about job hunting for male and female college students in Japan and the United States. We then conducted a survey focusing on the process of job hunting and what motivates students to pursue their desired career. As a result, it was found that the process of job hunting differs greatly between Japan and the United States, and that job hunting is conducted earlier in Japan than in the United States. We also noticed that American students concern themselves with financial security in order to finance their private life, while Japanese students concern themselves with how they can better serve their company and coworkers.

## **1. Significance of the Study**

While in Japan we discovered the experience of job hunting in Japan is very different to what is experienced within America. We noticed a lot of Japanese students would all start job

hunting at the same time. Through many conversations with Japanese friends we learned that during the last year of college for Japanese students, the course work is low so that they can focus more on job hunting. It seemed like they had an entire system for job hunting, while in the United States we tend to do job hunting by ourselves after our four years in university. Universities in both America and Japan offer services to help students, such as resume writing, however we would like to know if these services differ between the countries.

## **2. Research Questions:**

1. What kind of careers do American and Japanese college students desire and why?
2. What resources do American and Japanese college students use when job hunting?

## **3. Research Background**

### 3.1 Top Careers in America and Japan

According to a 2017 US Department of Labor survey, the most popular careers for women who need at least a bachelor's degree are "nurse," "administrative assistant," and "elementary and junior high school teacher." While the most popular careers for men were "managers", "software developers", etc. According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2017, the most popular careers for women who need at least a bachelor's degree are "office worker" and "engineering", while the more popular careers for men are "engineering" and "office work".

### 3.2 Top Majors in America and Japan

According to the 2016 National Center for Educational Statistics of the United States, the majors popular with women in college are "business", medical / health professionals and related fields, and "psychology", while the majors popular with men are "business", "Engineering", "Social Science and History". According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2017, the majors popular with women at universities are "social

science”, “humanities”, and “health”, and the majors popular with men are “social science” and “engineering”, and "Health" .

### 3.3 University Career Services America and Japan

University career services in the United States have changed to incorporate technological advancements and connections between students and recruiters since their establishment in the 1970s. More recently, there has been a demand for "customized connections" that provide professional career development, employment, internship opportunities, and experiential learning. Examples of university career services in the United States include “career advice”, “Resume / cover letter writing class”, “major and career matching”, “supporting career research”, and “Job fairs”. (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Cal State Monterey Bay Career Center, 2020). University career services in Japan are based on US vocational guidance services in the early 1900s. Senzaki believes that career education in Japan should focus more on the quality of career education than on the number of students employed. Examples of university career services in Japan are "Career Advice," "Career Education Course," "Internship Program / Student Guidance," "Job Hunting Guidance," "Alumni Networking," etc. (Senzaki, 1993; Okayama University, 2020) .

### 3.4 Typical Job hunting America and Japan

In the United States, most students start their job search in the fourth year, but it is known that less than 20% of college students seek career services. In addition, many students use relationships with family and friends, and use specialized networks to carry out job hunting. Recently, companies have turned to workforce development programs to provide training to prospective employees (Fadulu, 2018). Also, according to the Pew Research Center, 79% of Americans looking for a job mainly use online resources as a way to find a job. On the other hand Japanese university students usually start their job hunting in their third year. During the job hunting process, students participate in job fairs, fill out entry sheets, prepare for group interviews and written exams. Also a lot of time and money is spent on job hunting, and students may need to be absent from classes because most briefings are on weekdays (Molin, 2015).

### 3.5 Concerns When Job Hunting

In 2018, 29% of American graduates were worried about their work-life balance and found that they wanted more flexible work hours. Also, 33% of graduates seem to be worried that they cannot find a fulfilling job (Kataria, 2018). On the other hand, 67% of Japanese students were worried about whether or not they had the necessary skills for the job, and 64% were worried about having good relationships with their co-workers and their contribution to the company. (Employment Advance Research Center, 2018).

### 3.6 Rate of job occupation after college America and Japan

According to the 2018 National Center for Education Statistics in the United States, 86% of those with a bachelor's degree got a job in 2018. According to a 2019 survey, the employment rate of new graduates in Japan was 78% (Kyodo, 2018, National Center for Education Statistics 2018, New Graduate Employment Rate Rises Again, 2019).

## 4. The Study

### 4.1 Demographics

In this study, we surveyed 59 university students. This includes 29 Japanese students (14 male, 15 female, and 30 American students (13 male, 17 female).

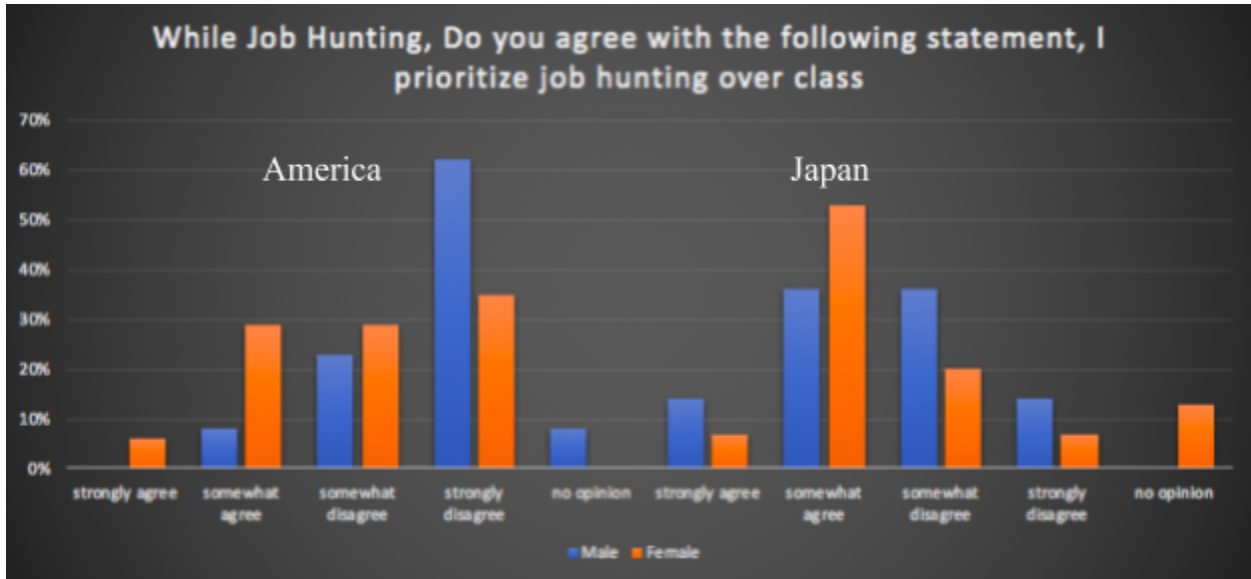
### 4.2 Research Method

Data was collected online through English and Japanese Google forms.

## 5. Research Findings

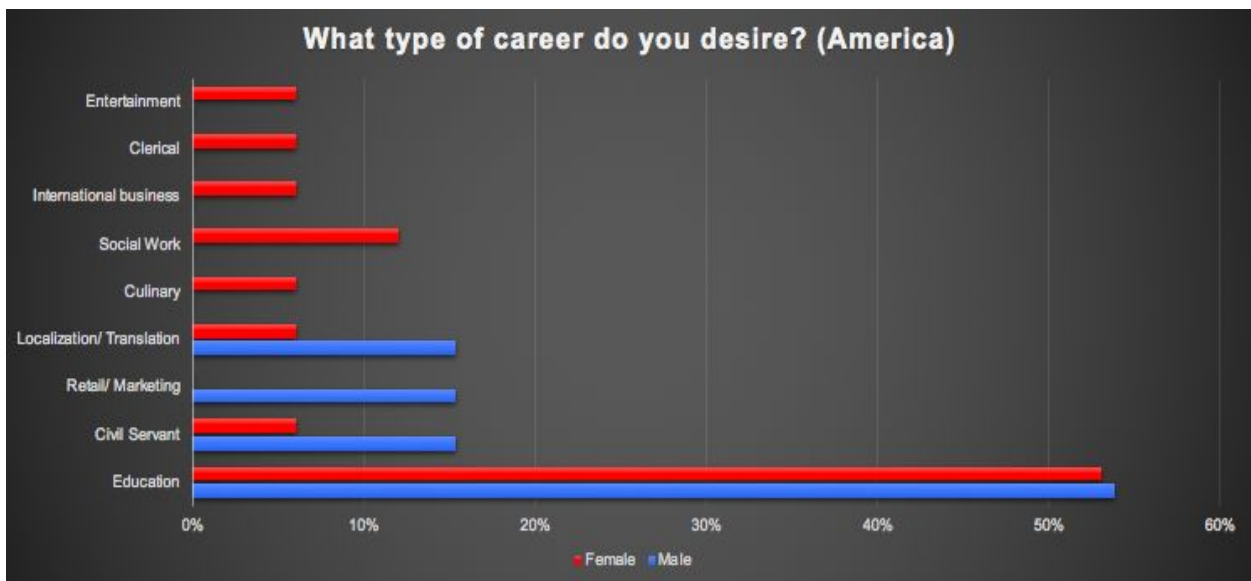
5.1 Research Question 1: What kind of careers do American and Japanese college students desire and why?

### Figure 1



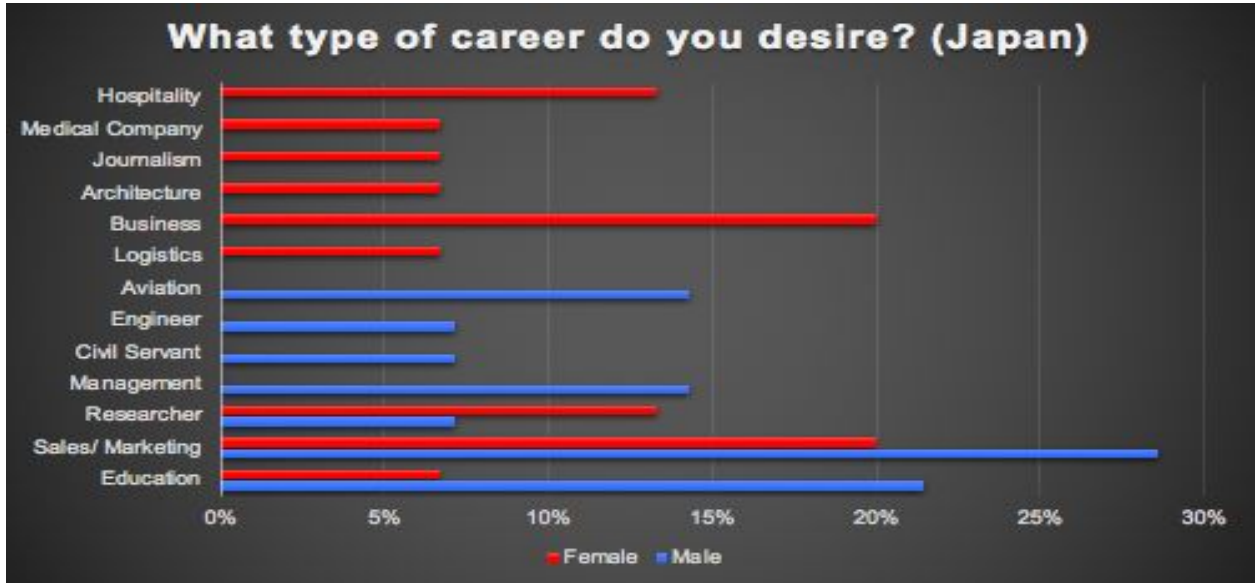
50% of Japanese male and 60% of Japanese females tend to agree that they prioritize job hunting over classes, while 8% of American males and 35% females agree.

**Figure 2**



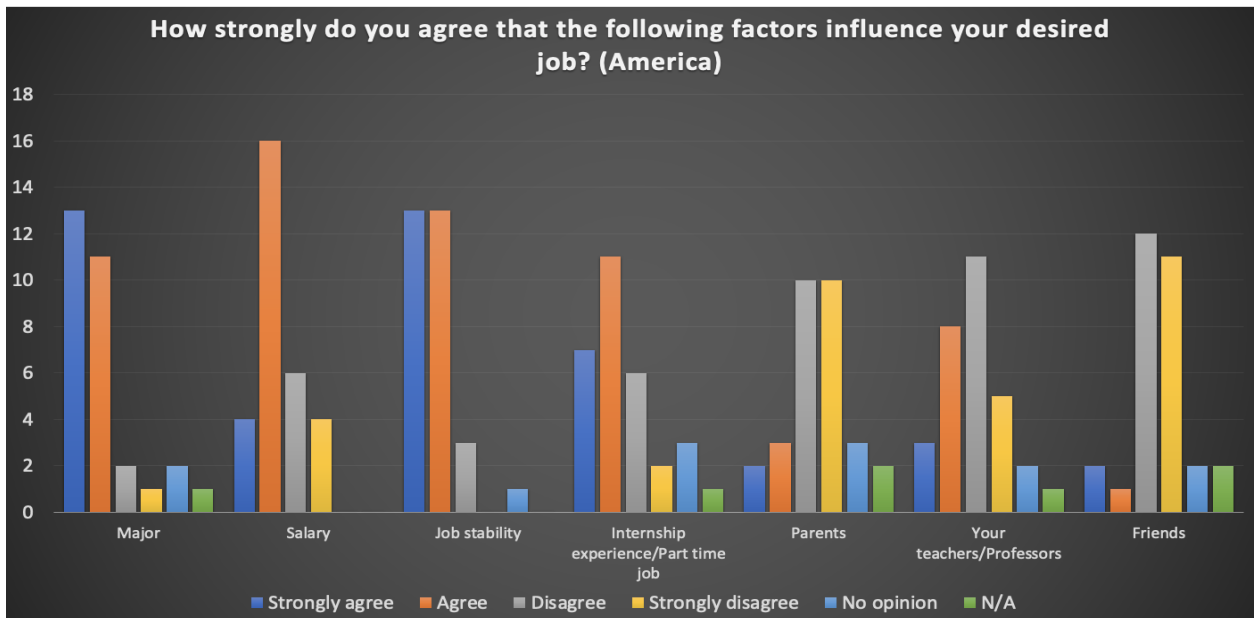
The majority of American students, 53% of females and 54% of males, wish to pursue a career in teaching while the other choices are varied.

**Figure 3**



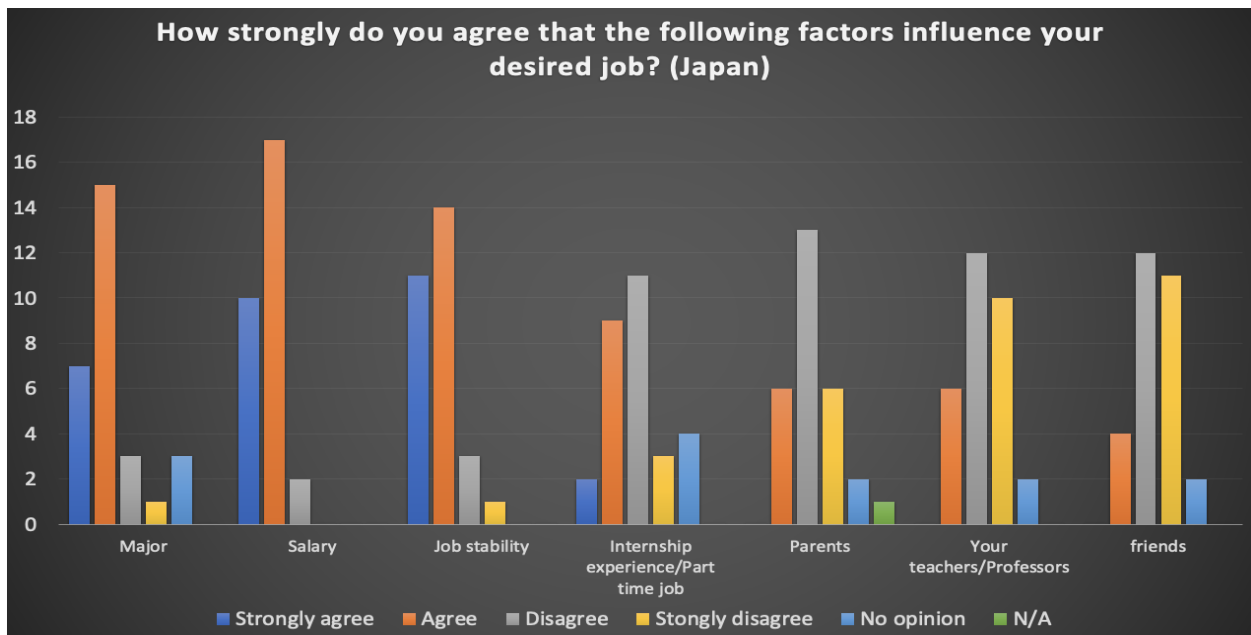
The Japanese female students' top choices are in Business and Sales/ Marketing while male students' choices are Sales/Marketing and Education.

**Figure 4**



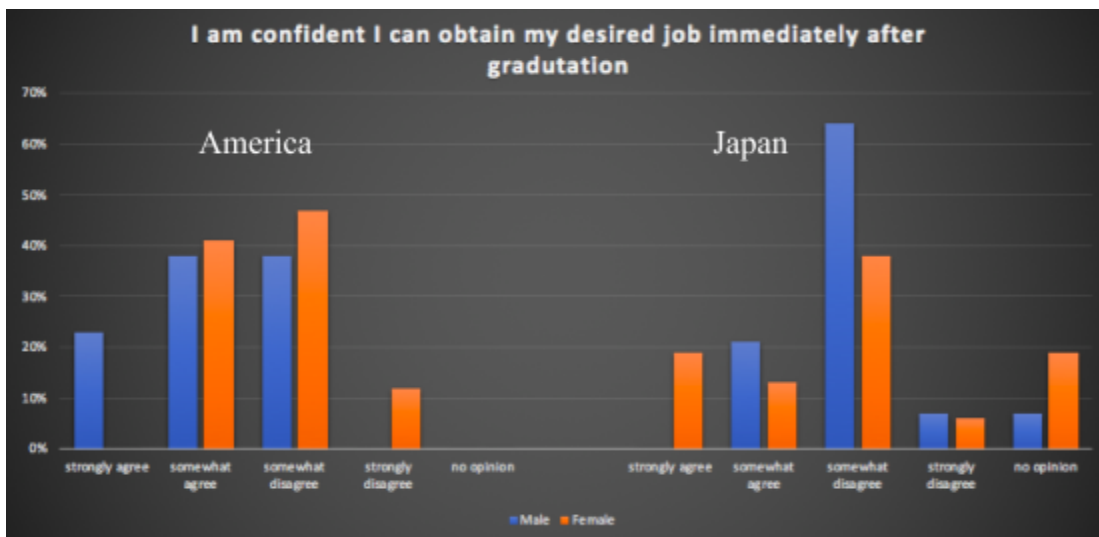
For American students, job stability, major, and salary influence their desired job, while parents, teachers, and friends have little to no influence.

Figure 5



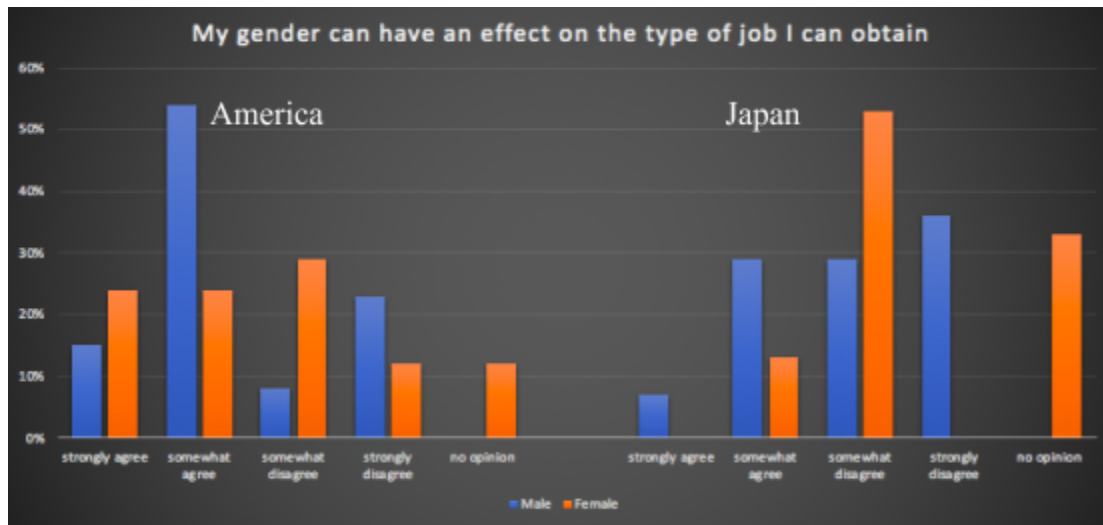
For Japanese students, salary, job stability and major influence their desired job, while parents, teachers, and friends have little to no influence.

Figure 6



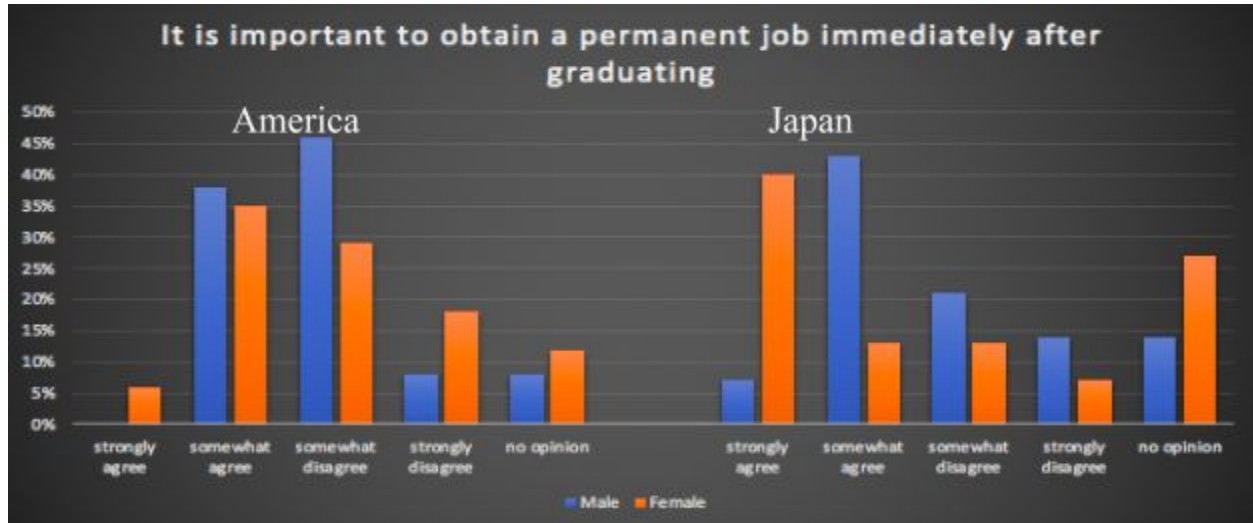
61% of American male students are more confident while over 71% of Japanese male said not confident. Both American and Japanese females are less confident compared to males.

Figure 7



57% of Americans tend to believe their gender can have an effect on them while only 24% of Japanese agree with the statement.

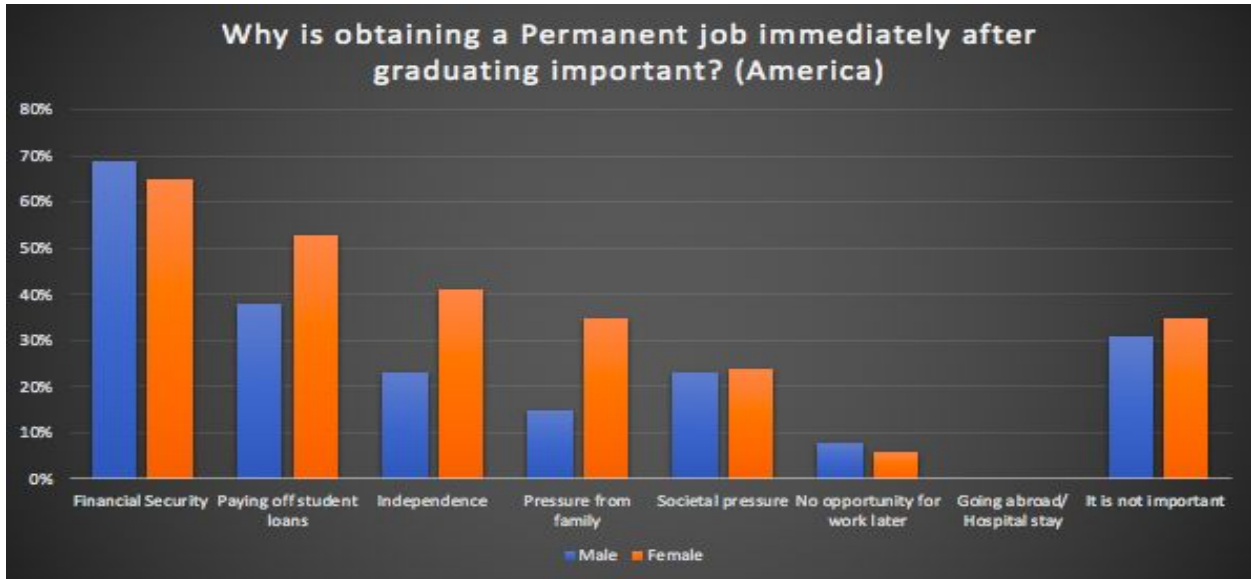
Figure 8



American students have a tendency to disagree, while majority of Japanese agree with getting a permanent job soon after graduating.

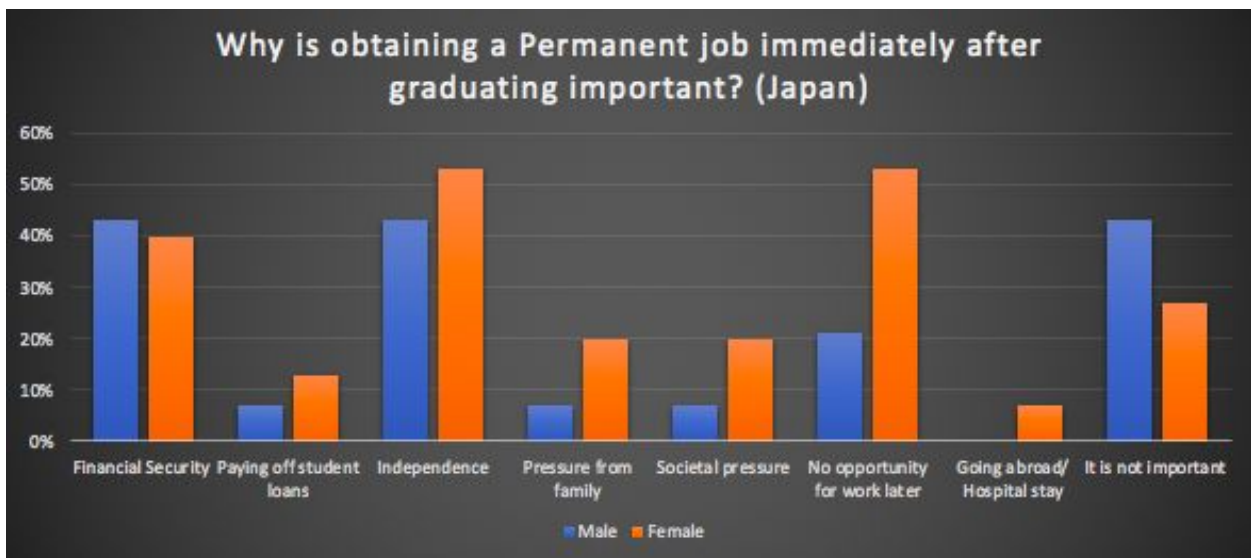
Figure 9





Financial security and paying off loans are an important factor for both male and female American students.

Figure 10



Japanese students think financial security and independence are important. 53% of females are worried about missing the opportunity to work after graduation.

## 5.2 Research Question 1 Summary

- Majority of American students want to pursue a teaching career, while Japanese students'

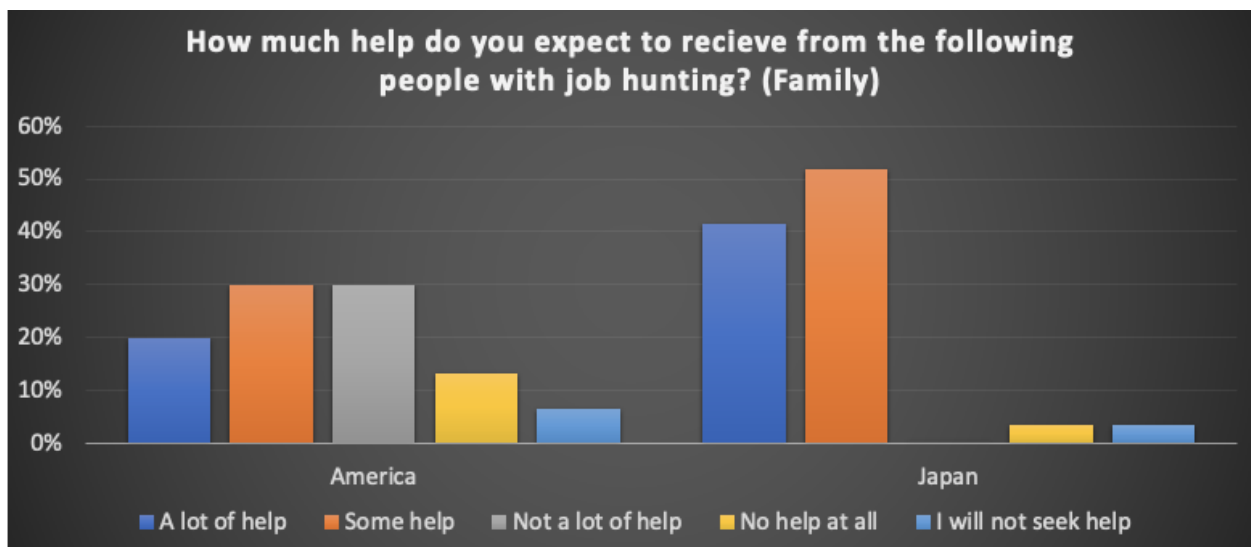
top choices were, Sales/Marketing and Business.

- American and Japanese students' main reasons for wanting to obtain their career after graduation are job stability, and salary.
- Japanese students are concerned about opportunity for work later and having independence while American students are concerned with financial security and student loans.
- Junior and senior Japanese students think finding a job immediately after graduating is more important than American students, therefore they prioritize job hunting over classes more.

### 5.3 Research Question 2: What resources do American and Japanese college students use when job hunting?

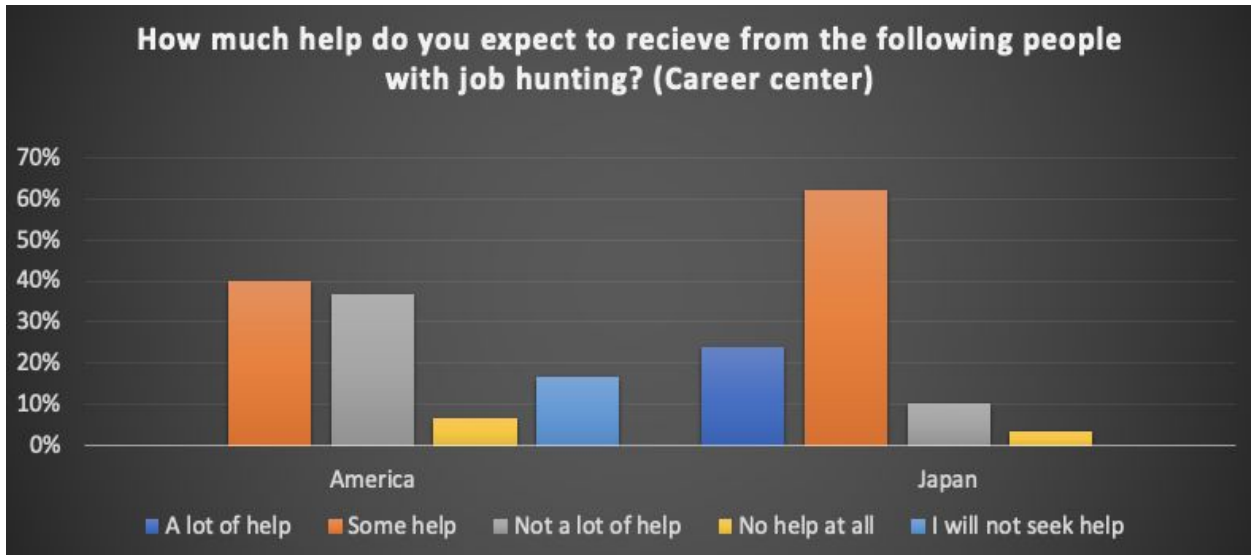
The next six questions and figures are the same with different elements.

**Figure 11**



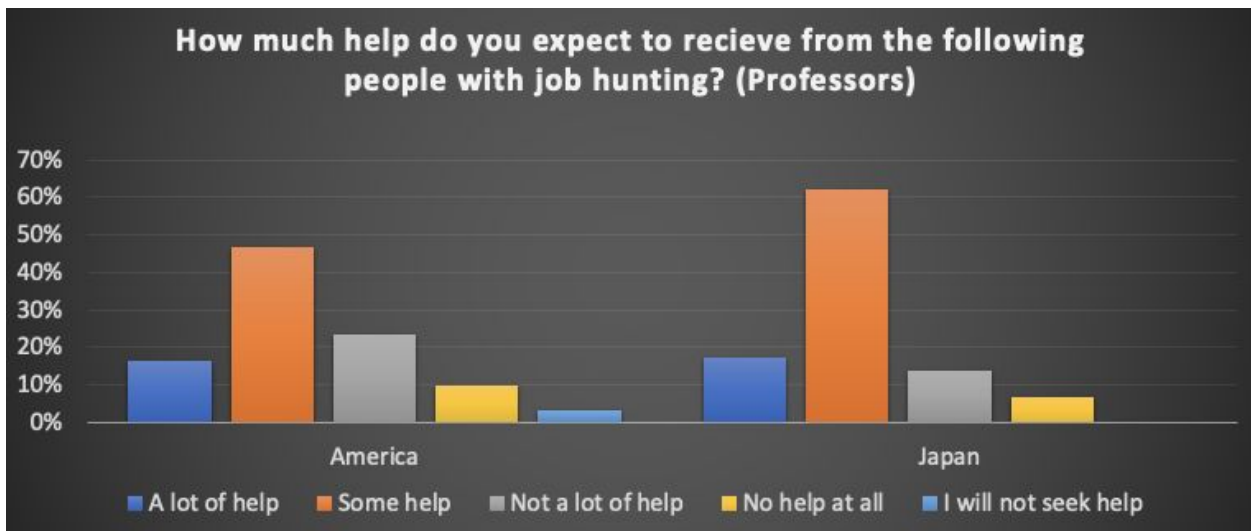
93% of Japanese and 50% of American students expect to receive a lot or some help from their family while 42% of American students said not a lot of help or not at all.

**Figure 12**



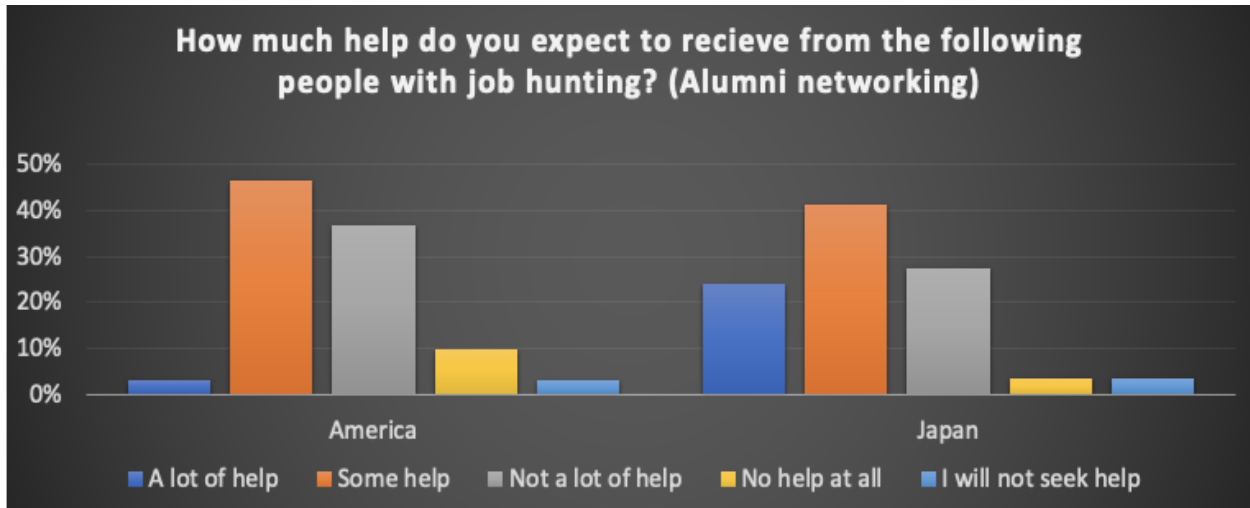
83% of Japanese students and 40% of American students say they expect to receive a lot of help or some help from the career center. Also 37% of American university students say not a lot of help.

**Figure 13**



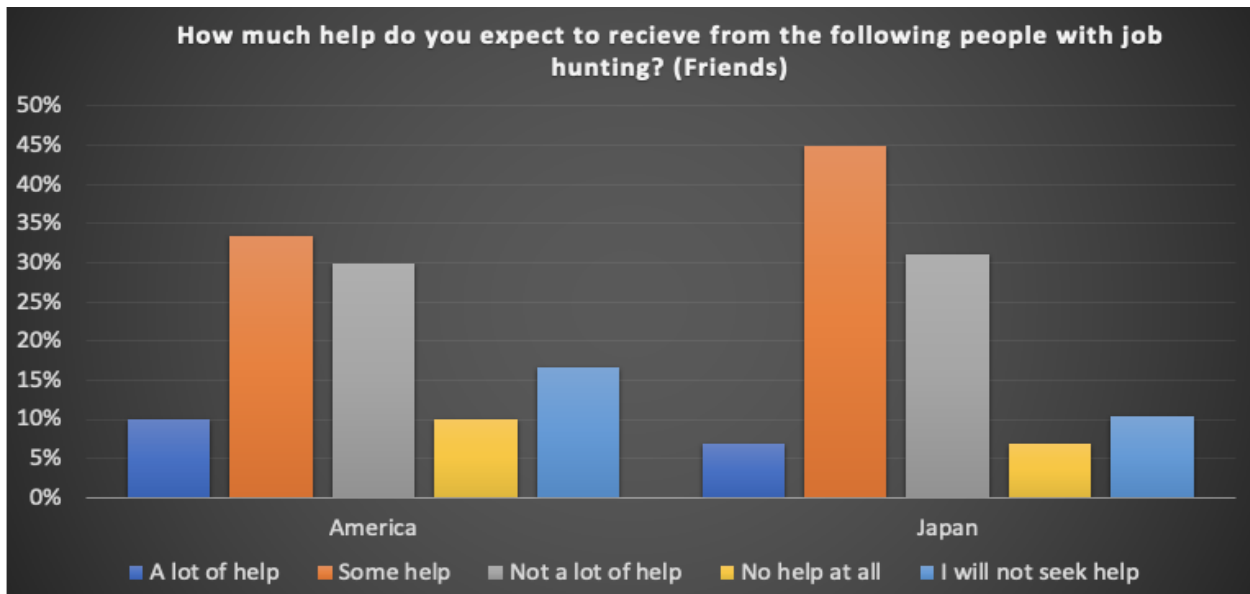
79% of Japanese university students and 64% of American university students say they expect to receive a lot of help or some help from their professors.

Figure 14



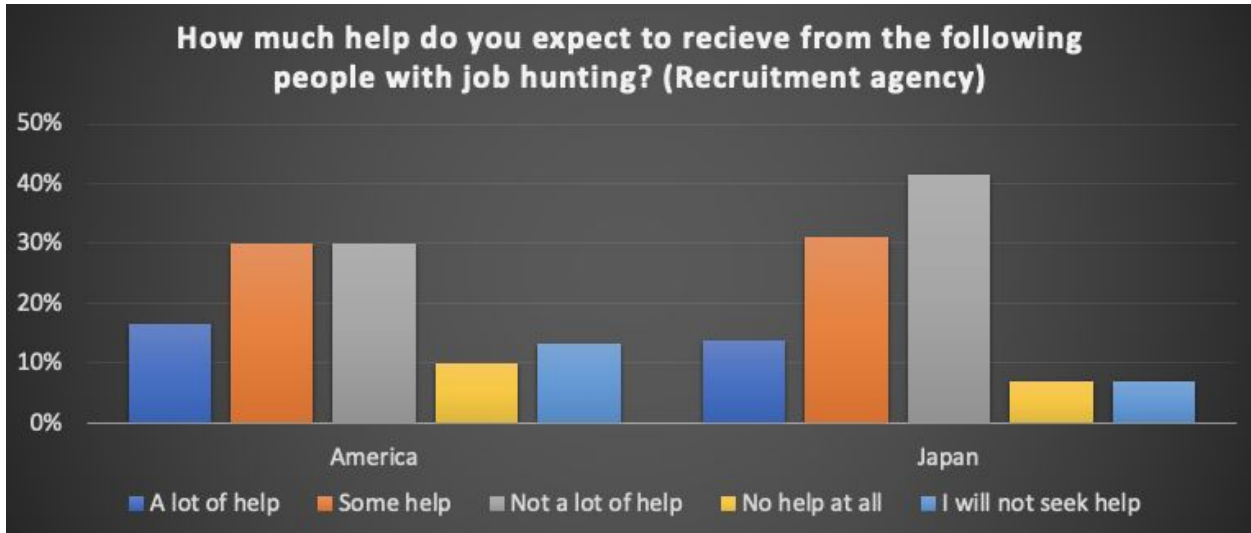
65% of Japanese and 50% of American university students expect to receive a lot of help or some help from alumni. 37% and 28% of American and Japanese university students said not a lot of help.

Figure 15



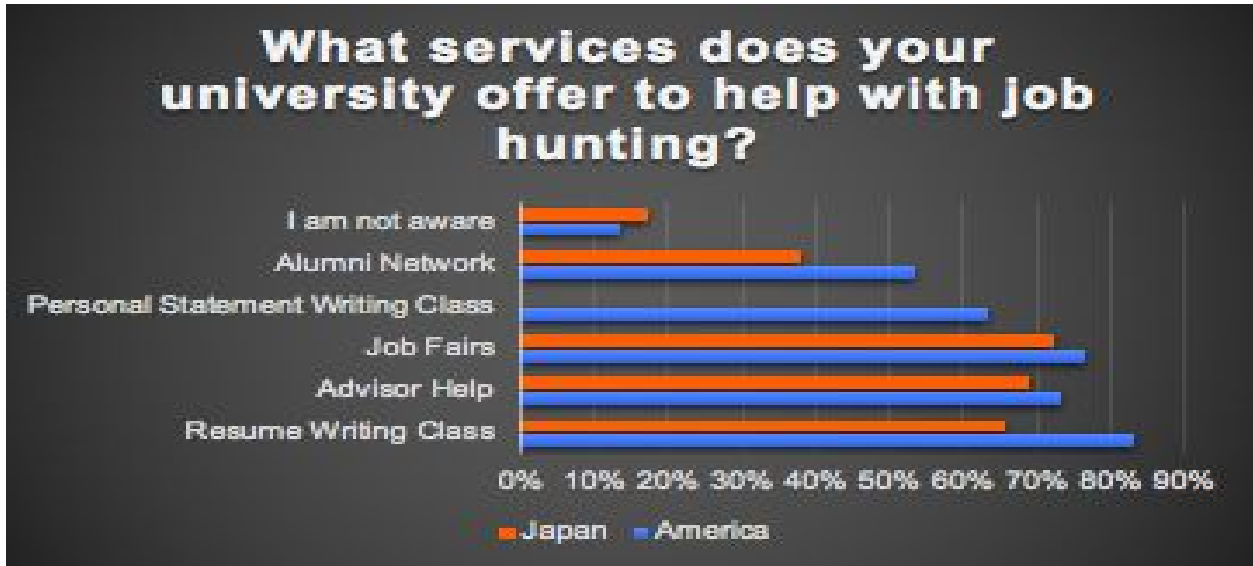
52% of Japanese university students and 43% of American university students expect to receive some or a lot of help from their friends with job hunting.

**Figure 16**



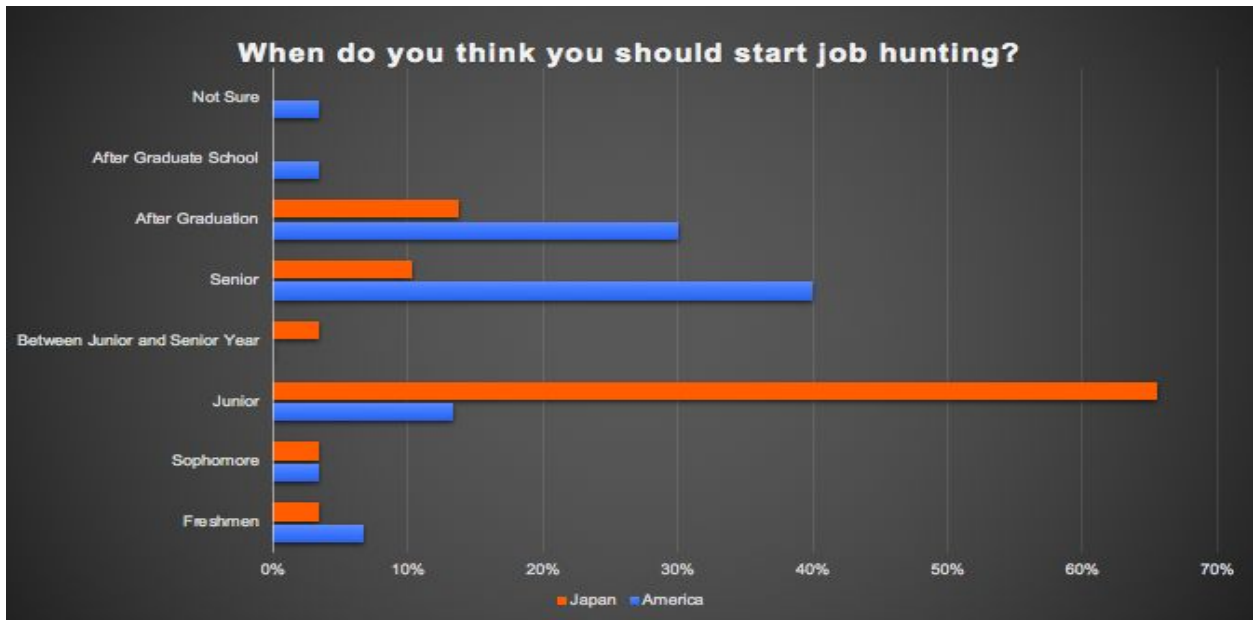
48% of Japanese university students expect to receive not a lot of help or no help from a job recruitment agency, while 30% of American university students responded with some help or not a lot of help.

**Figure 17**



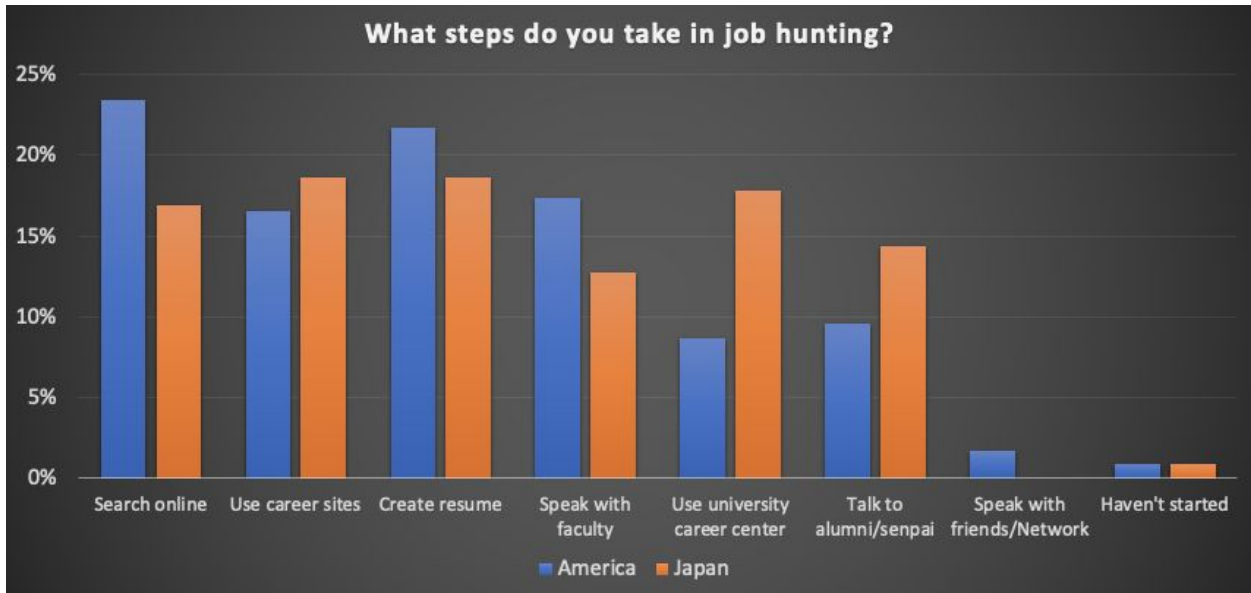
American and Japanese universities appear to have the same services for students, such as job fairs, advisor help, and resume writing classes.

**Figure 18**



American students believe job hunting should start senior year and after graduation, while Japanese students believe it should start junior year.

Figure 19



Most Japanese and American students will take all of these steps for job hunting except speaking with friends.

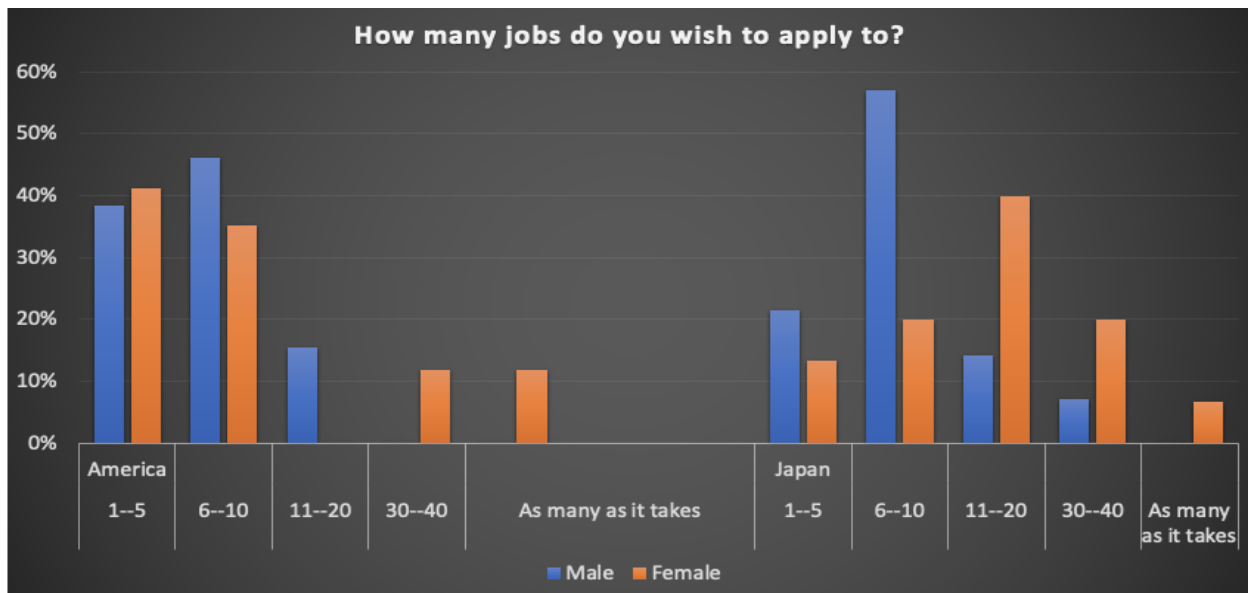
Figure 20



Salary, being underqualified, and not getting a job appear to be common worries between

American and Japanese University students. Over 70% American students chose work location and many chose power harassment and sexual harassment as another worry.

**Figure 21**



Most American students and male Japanese students will apply for no more than ten jobs while 67% of Japanese females said they will apply to 11 to 40 jobs or as many as it takes .

#### 5.4 Research Question 2 Summary

Most Japanese students utilize the University career services much more than American students. Japanese students also feel strongly that they should start job hunting their junior year, while Americans think that senior year or after graduation is appropriate. However, both American and Japanese students worry about potential salary, being underqualified, and not getting a job. Interestingly, American females tend to worry more about gender inequality in the workforce and the majority of Japanese females said they would apply to 11-40 jobs, which reflects their concern about not finding a job after graduation.

#### 6. Conclusion



Due to differences in job hunting systems between Japan and the United States, Japanese college students start their job hunting significantly faster than American college students. In Japan, job hunting is more emphasized, and employment destinations are secured while attending school. The types of jobs that both Japanese and American students want to get are related to financial independence and knowledge learned at university. One of the major concerns Americans faced in the process of job hunting was their individual financial independence, which may be related to the lifestyle of Americans who value work-life balance. On the other hand, Japanese students are concerned that their abilities required for work are not enough and that they are more concerned with having good relationships with their co-workers, and it is important how much they can contribute to the company as a member of the company. We also found that there are similar university job hunting services in Japan and the United States, but we found that there are differences in the frequency and method of use.

## 7. Limitations of the Study and Future Study

In this study, the proportion of female and male American participants was not equal. Also more respondents were needed for sufficient data collection and analysis. We found it very difficult to find information and literature on American job hunting. Next time we would like to increase the number of respondents and also investigate and compare people who are working. We would also like to investigate further on gender issues and other social issues.

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