

N432 Japanese Culture

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Japanese culture incorporates a large variety of unique traditions and beliefs. The early age of Japanese culture is influenced by Chinese traditions. Social harmony and hard work are highly valued in Japanese culture. Aspects of Japanese culture are widespread throughout the Asian continent and parts of the Pacific islands. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), Charleston, Illinois, has a prevalence of 1.9% Japanese in this community. The statistics in Charleston, Illinois, show a poor Japanese population in this community.

Japanese culture practices a polytheistic religion; they mainly focus on Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity. In the government of Japan, 69.0% of the population practices Shintō, 66.7% practices Buddhism, 1.5% practices Christianity 6.2% practices other religions as of 2018 (Scroope, 2021). The Japanese religion of Shinto has no god, but it has messengers that manifest in animal forms. One example is the fox, the great kami Inari messenger (Scroope, 2021). The central beliefs of the Shinto religion are constructed behind the idea of the importance of purity, harmony, and respect for nature. Healthcare-wise, women are allowed to see male providers. They believe that death, childbirth, and menstruation are impure. In addition to their beliefs, they utilize shrines to worship guardians and protect deities and messengers such as the great kami Inari.

Shintoism is the spirituality of the world and its life, whereas Buddhism is concerned with the soul and the afterlife. The religion of Buddhism believes in karma, rebirth, and impermanence (Scroope, 2021). Buddhism believes in achieving nirvana by meditating, suffering, and spiritual and physical labor, with good behavior playing a role in it. Japanese culture practices a polytheistic religion; they mainly focus on Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity. In the government of Japan, 69.0% of the population practices Shintō, 66.7% practices Buddhism, 1.5% practices Christianity 6.2% practices other religions as of 2018 (Scroope, 2021). The

Japanese religion of Shinto has no god, but it has messengers that manifest in animal forms. One example is the fox, the great kami Inari messenger (Scroope, 2021). The beliefs of the Shinto religion are constructed behind the idea of the importance of purity, harmony, and respect for nature. Healthcare-wise, women are allowed to see male providers. They believe that death, childbirth, and menstruation are impure. In addition to their beliefs, they utilize shrines to worship guardians and protect deities and messengers such as the great kami Inari. Shintoism is the spirituality of the world and its life, whereas Buddhism is concerned with the soul and the afterlife. The religion of Buddhism believes in karma, rebirth, and impermanence (Scroope, 2021). Buddhism believes in achieving nirvana by meditating, suffering, and spiritual and physical labor, with good behavior playing a role in it.

Furthermore, in Japanese culture, pain is perceived as a sign of weakness. During their experience of pain, they attempt to maintain stoic and neutral facial expressions (Givler et al., 2022). They tend to avoid communicating about their pain. Pain behaviors are much more acceptable in women than in men (Givler et al., 2022). They believe experiencing pain during childbirth creates a bond between mother and baby. According to Donna (2022), the pain a mother endures during labor is a testament to her preparedness as a new mother. After delivery on the seventh night, they participate in a unique practice called Oshichiya. According to Donna (2022), it is the time when they officially share the newborn's name with the rest of the family members, and the father will write out the baby's name and birthdate in calligraphy. Postpartum, the mother tends to stay in bed for twenty-one days. According to Donna (2022), during the first month of postpartum, the mother and newborn reside at the maternal grandparents' house. Visitors can enjoy a particular red bean and rice dish (osekihan).

Moreover, Japanese culture believes that members of households are deeply connected to their families in terms of obligations and responsibilities. In this culture, the family structure is upheld by a patriarchal head which usually happens to be the father or the oldest male in the household. According to Scroope (2021), the patriarch maintains authority and responsibility for all the family members and must be located near the husband's extended family. Due to high life expectancy and low fertility rates, elders are cared for by children (Scroope, 2021). In Japanese culture, family members are taught to respect their elders. Caring for family members is essential in Japanese culture; because of this, elders tend to live with and are cared for by family members. The elders in the family is often the one left with the responsibility of taking care of elders. Role-wise, both parents tend to work a full-time job and prioritize their children's education, although they will only have a little time to bond and build a connection with their children. The responsibility of tending to the children, domestic labor, managing the family budget, and maintaining social relations is a role taken on by the wife Scroope (2021). As for males, the majority of them are full-time employed in rural farm-based areas Scroope (2021). Overall, the household structure in the Japanese culture has strong beliefs about how gender roles are incorporated with responsibilities.

Communication in Japanese marriages can vary; Japanese are not taught to use their eyes and significant facial expressions as often as Americans for nonverbal communication. However, when a Japanese individual does use nonverbal expressions, such as smiling, it is considered to be a direct representation of their heart. The Japanese also commonly use indirect methods of speaking to others, as being too direct is considered clumsy. The communication between a husband and wife in Japan is direct, and it is common for individuals to be viewed as equals in the household. In most modern settings, the husband and wife are equal, and the wife may talk to

whomever they please. In the more traditional setting, or the formal setting, the husband may speak and introduce the wife in a formal setting then the wife will speak freely; however, this is uncommon related to modern standards (Culture comparison between the U.S. and Japan, 2023).

In Japanese culture, food is essential for nutrition but creates strong bonds and can also open ways of communication between individuals. In Japanese culture, food is prepared with fresh and healthy ingredients for children. Most mothers make baby food from scratch and rarely use premade or prepackaged foods for younger children. Regarding toddler-age children, the mother will usually make healthy foods and cover various food groups to ensure proper nutrition for the child. According to Donna (2022), after postpartum, a traditional dish is a unique red bean and rice dish (osekihan). The newborn is fed by both parents alternating after the child is 100 to 120 days old. It is tradition for the baby to “enjoy an extravagant meal containing traditional Japanese dishes” (Donna, 2022). Cultural-specific diet requirements can impact hospitalization because they can interact with how certain medications are metabolized and cause allergic reactions.

In Japanese culture, it is believed that delivery of the baby without an epidural helps the mother bond with the baby, as mentioned above. Childbirth without an epidural can have some implications. An increase in tearing around the genital area is one implication of having childbirth without an epidural because the mother can lose control if a complication arises. Some vital things to keep in mind when taking care of a patient within the Japanese culture is to understand that they may not verbalize their pain since, in their background, they are taught as it is a sign of weakness. Due to Japanese patients not verbalizing pain, they can experience depression, irritability, dysfunction, sleep disruptions, and eventually even lose some mobility. Healthcare workers should look for nonverbal indicators of pain. Healthcare workers should

remember that maintaining eye contact for an extended amount of time can come off as disrespectful. So, if they tend not to look the health care professional in the eyes, it is out of respect in their culture. Interventions that would be helpful are not being biased and putting oneself in their shoes; it is crucial to have empathy and compassion for the patients. Healthcare workers should educate themselves about Japanese culture and diverse groups in local areas.

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