Black Company as Social Problem in Japanese Film: A Socio-Literary and Reader Response Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the issue of black companies (buraku gaisha) in two Japanese films: Burakku Gaisha ni Tsutometerundaga, Mou Ore wa Genkai Kamoshirenai (2009), and Chotto Ima Kara Shigoto wo Yamete Kuru (2017). Black companies are a social problem in Japanese society, where many companies exploit their employees by forcing them to work excessive hours for low wages. This has become a serious issue, leading to the phenomenon of karoshi, or death because of overwork. The research analyzes how the two films portray the black company issue and the perspectives of the characters in these films towards it. This research also examines how Japanese society responds to the problem as depicted in the films. This qualitative research employs a combined approach of sociological literary and reader-response perspectives, focusing on the societal aspects of the film by examining the discourses related to social problems and the social itself. The result based on that analysis of the films and the application of the two perspectives shows that the characters' views provide a reflective portrayal of the social issues currently faced by Japanese society.

Keyword: Black Company, Burakku Gaisha, Literary Reception, Japanese Society

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of black companies has been present in Japanese society since 2000. The term "black company' or *burakku gaisha* (ブラック会社) (Suzuki, 2014; Yani, 2022) refers to the companies that exploit their workers by forcing them to work according to the company's demands without receiving fair compensation. In other words, black companies are those that treat their employees illegally, violating the Labor Contract Act No. 49 of 1947, which was later revised as an amendment to Act No. 42 of 2012. The term black company (Suzuki, 2014) was first stated by young IT workers in Japan in 2000 on an online forum. In the forum, the young IT workers complained about their companies' policies that violated existing labor laws. Since then, the term black company has been applied to various industries in Japan and has begun to attract the attention of some members of Japanese society.

Black companies are considered a serious social problem in Japanese society, with significant consequences. The government has identified approximately (Funakoshi, 2017), three hundred companies as black companies including major companies such as advertising agency Dentsu Inc. and electronics maker Panasonic Corp. These companies are considered to be violating labor laws by illegally imposing excessive overtime hours on their employees.

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This led to severe health problems and even death due to overwork, known as *karoshi* (過労死). A notable example (Fogarty, 2019) is the case of a 31-year-old reporter who died from *karoshi*.

The recent proliferation of black companies, as observed by Takahashi et al. (2018), indicates the growing power of these exploitative businesses. The case of Dentsu , a major advertising agency in Japan, which was found to be implementing illegal work regulations, serves as an obvious example. Factors such as violations of labor laws and their correlation with business performance ultimately shape public perception of companies that are suspected of being black companies. These perceptions can have a significant impact on a company's reputation and its ability to attract and retain employees (Kobayashi, 2016).

In reality, if it is related to the culture and work ethic of Japanese society, working to the extreme beyond working hours, according to Fogarty (2019), has become commonplace in Japan. The habit of Japanese people working long hours has been recorded since the 1960s in line with Japan's desire to rise from adversity due to defeat in World War II. However, with the emergence of a number of deaths due to *karoshi*, the Japanese people's habit of spending most of their time working is now in the spotlight. Moreover, after the suicide of a young employee due to depression and fatigue from working at Densu in 2015 (Lewis & Inagi, 2016; Funakoshi, 2017), the minister of manpower gave a strong warning to around 334 companies suspected of committing violence and forcing their employees to work beyond their stated working hours.

The emergence of a number of *karoshi* cases certainly cannot be separated from the various complex social problems that occur in Japanese society. The behavior of Japanese people who spend their time working is one of the causes of this and other social problems. Many Japanese people of productive age choose not to get married because they spend too much time working. This ultimately became one of the causes of the emergence of a new social problem, such as the *shoshika* phenomenon, the decline in child birth rates (Semuels, 2017). In addition, the fact that a person cannot recognize a company that is labeled as a black company until he or she works and experiences worker exploitation by that company makes this phenomenon even more worrying.

The growing number of black companies has drawn serious attention not only from the government, but also from writers and artists. The first literary work to address this issue was the Hayato Kuroi's novel *Burakku Gaisha ni Tsutometerundaga, Mou Ore wa Genkai Kamoserenai* hereinafter referred to as *Burakku Gaisha*, which published in 2008. The novel sparked discussion about harsh working conditions in Japan, referring to black companies, after it got a lot of attention from Japanese readers (Kuroi, 2008). Its widespread acceptance made it a best-seller in year of its publication (Sabah, 2009). In 2009, the novel was adapted into a film of the same title, directed by Sato Yuichi and produced by Yoko Ide and Hideki Inada. Films are a more effective communication medium (Nurfajriyah & Seruni, 2022) than novels for raising public awareness about the issue of black companies, or *burakku gaisha*.

The film tells the story of the struggle of an employee named Masao Oneda who works at an IT company that is black company. At the company, he experienced bullying and pressure, such as being reprimanded for no apparent reason, working overtime without compensation, and being required to do *desuma* (デスマ), namely work without rest until the job was finished. Because of this, the main character became on the verge of his abilities.

With the theme of the black company raised in the film *Burakku Gaisha*, it raised awareness among Japanese people regarding the social problems that emerged in Japan at that time, and this is continuing yet (Suzuki, 2014). The government is increasingly making an effort to reduce companies labeled as black companies. However, Japan experienced an extreme decline in economic level as a result of the economic recession in 2001-2009.

Therefore, in order to return the economy to normal, many companies have implemented policies for their employees to work harder than usual, even though they violate existing labor regulations (Bloomberg, 2014). Japanese people who are aware of the black company phenomenon are faced with a difficult situation, so they are forced to close their eyes to this problem. This causes black companies to become more widespread in society, giving rise to a new problem, namely the phenomenon of *karojisatsu* (過労自殺) which is a condition that shows many workers die by suicide due to depression at work (Asgari, Pecker & Garay, 2017).

Seeing the complex problems of Japanese society, several writers who were worried about this increasingly dangerous problem once again raised black companies as a theme in their works. The literary work that appeared was a novel with the title *Chotto Ima Kara Shigoto wo Yamete Kuru* in 2015, which was then abbreviated as *Chotto Ima Kara*. The appearance of this novel was the same as the previous novel, which featured a black company, succeeding in attracting the attention of the Japanese public and winning an award in the category "Media Works Bunko Prize" in the 21st Dengeki Novel Prize because it clearly shows the worst impacts of the black company phenomenon (Prayogi, 2018). The award-winning success of the novel *Chotto Ima Kara* also led to this novel being adapted into a film with the same title.

The film *Chotto Ima Kara,* released in 2017, was directed by Nurushima Izuru and produced by Morio Agami. This film tells the life of a young employee named Takashi Aoyama who experiences depression because he works at a company labeled a black company. He was always oppressed by his supervisor, given unreasonable work targets, and worked overtime without compensation. The depression he suffered pushed him to attempt suicide.

These two films not only depict the exploitation of workers but also the indifference of Japanese society towards the phenomenon of black companies. The indifference is due to the influence of views that have long been inherent in Japanese society, namely the existence of a family element in Japanese companies, which gives rise to high loyalty to the company so that they are willing to do anything for the company's progress (Widiandari, 2025). This view is the basis of Japanese culture and work ethic in Japanese companies. These two films have the same theme, which is raising the problem of black companies. It is just that the *Burakku Gaisha* was the first film to address the issue of black company when the phenomenon first appeared, while the *Chotto Ima Kara* was a film that appeared after black company had become a serious social problem in Japanese society.

Previous studies on the black company phenomenon, such as Kobayashi (2016) and Takahashi et al. (2018), have focused on social and economic factors. Kobayashi (2016) examined workplace characteristics and human resource practice to understand violations of labor laws and employee perceptions of black companies. Meanwhile, Takahashi et al. (2018) used discourse analysis to explore the black company phenomenon through the case of Densu Inc. However, no prior research has addressed the black company issue from a literary perspective, using films as research data. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the black company phenomenon through the lens of literature, especially by analyzing these films.

The choice of two films *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara*'s as a research data raises questions. How was the black company problem narrated and depicted by the characters in the two films? How does Japanese society interpret the black company issue, which was the theme in both films? Considering the question, this article consists of two discussions. The first is the exploration of the characters' views and responses towards the black company phenomenon in *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara*. The second is regarding the response of *Japanese society* to the problem of black companies as an issue raised in these films.

2.   Method

This article is qualitative research that uses literary reception as a sociological study to reveal the views and responses of characters to the phenomenon of black companies, which can provide a reflective picture of black companies as a social problem in Japanese society. I need a several-step process to analyze a film. First, I analyzed the narrative elements of films (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008; Sharman & Arkansas, 2020), which consist of plot, story, and characters. An analysis of these elements will show how the characters view and respond to the black company phenomenon in the films *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara*.

Next, I analyzed the film by looking at sociological aspects (Wiyatmi, 2013; Wellek & Warren, 2016), which focus on literary reception, to see how literary works such as novels and films are received and interpreted by the audience. The position of the viewer or reader in sociological studies is important in perceiving, responding to, and giving meaning to a literary work based on the knowledge they have. Therefore, the interpretation of literary works by a particular social group is not the same. As stated by Mambrol (2020), every reader will respond to a literary work based on a horizon of expectations formed through life experiences, customs, and understanding of the world, which influences the reader's social behavior. By using literary reception as a theoretical framework, this article reveals the audience's response to interpreting these two films in relation to the discourse of black company (*burakku geisha*) as a social problem in Japanese society.

3.   Result and Discussion
3.1   Characters' View Towards the Black Company Phenomenon in *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara*

The views and responses of the characters who appear in the two Japanese films *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara* are revealed through an analysis of narrative elements, and by observing the plot of the film by looking at the series scenes that make up the story. This series of events can reveal the condition of the characters who appear in the two films and their views toward responding to the black company phenomenon as a social problem in Japanese society.

The plot of the film *Burakku Gaisha* begins with an event depicting the condition of the male character, Masao Oneda, who fell on the road due to exhaustion from work (scene 1). Masao Oneda, usually called Maotoko, is an employee who works at Kuroi System, which is indicated as being one of the black companies. The event where Maotoko fell then brought up a previous event that occurred six months ago on his first day working at the company (scene 2).

In this film, the forms of exploitation experienced by Maotoko become events that mark the company where he works as being categorized as a black company. He was given many tasks by his supervisors without being given any explanation first. Aside from that, the office is also reluctant to reimburse remote official travel costs. What is burdensome for Maotoko is that there are regulations that prohibit employees from returning home on time, and he must do *desuma*, which is work without rest until the job is finished.

The story continues with Maotoko found a magazine that contained an article about the characteristics of a black company and he realized that all the characteristics pointed to the company where he works (scene 9). However, because he did not want to tell anything about his condition to his father, who was happy to see him able to work at the company, he pretended to be comfortable working at his current company. Maotoko tries to hide the working

conditions in his office, and as a result, he feels depressed, which is shown through conflict with his conscience. Maotoko's conscience is associated with the figure of little Maotoko, who is always present when Maotoko is sad and tired and continues to force him to stop working at his company (scene 12).

The event changed, depicting the increasing number of tasks given to Maotoko and his colleague, Uehara. The task was not actually the responsibility of either of them, but Abe, as his boss in the Kuroi System, asked him to do the work without rest, and he always bullies his employees. Abe also often acts arbitrarily towards his subordinates by delegating his duties to them without the slightest explanation. Even more Maotoko and Uehara have to complete their work for three days without rest. But, because of their achievement, Maotoko has been promoted by his supervisor who appointed him project leader (scene 22).

Next, the story turns to the event where Maotoko was ostracized by all employees because of his past, who was known as a former *NEET* (not employee, education, or training). He also acknowledged his identity as an *NEET* when he revealed his past, as seen in the quote below.

マ男 ：高校の時、いわえるいじめられっ子だった。引きこもりまくりんぐの
俺は親の期待はされて裏切り、高校中退。そして、ニート。だから、
死ぬまでに働くよ！それが、母ちゃんに言って最後の言葉になった。

Maotoko：When I was in high school, I was the kid who was bullied. I who was in the hikikomori circle, had betrayed my parents' expectations by dropping out of high school. Then, I became a *NEET*. I will work after mom is dead! Those were my last words to Mam. (*Burakku Gaisha*, scene 10).

The term *NEET* (O'Dell, 2024) refers to an unemployed person who does not have education or skills in any field. After Maotoko's fight with her mother, he decided to work, but as a former *NEET*, it certainly was not easy to get a job. In Japanese society, the stereotype of a *NEET* is that they are lazy and have no contribution to society. Luckily for Maotoko, when he was having difficulty finding work, he met the director of Kuroi System, who knew Maotoko as a young man who was active in sports, so he was able to work at the company. However, after Maotoko's past as a *NEET* was leaked by Abe, who felt jealous of his abilities, he was ostracized by all the employees, which made him want to stop working according to the wishes of his conscience. However, when he met the President Director, Fujita, to express his intention to stop working, he was asked to reflect on his decision to stop working. Fujita considers Maotoko to be an employee who works hard for his company.

This form of exploitation at the company where Maotoko works continues with the showing of the presence of a new employee named Kimura, who was transferred from a well-known company. The same thing happened to Kimura, who had to work with the *desuma* system (work without breaks) to complete a new project at the IT company Kuroi Systems, likewise with Maotoko, when he had to finish his work, his father was hospitalized. Under conditions like this, Maotoko thought about quitting her job, but in the end, Maotoko persisted and continued working at his company. It can be seen from Maotoko's statement below.

マ男 ：ブラック会社に勤めてるんだが、まだ俺は頑張れるかもし
れない。これが生きてくってなんだ。

Maotoko : I work for a company labeled Black Company, but it seems like I can still struggle. This is what comes to life. (*Burakku Gaisha*, scene 53).

In the quote above, we can see that even though Maotoko realized that he was working for a black company, he persisted in staying there because he remembered that he had worked diligently. He even said to himself that working is a sign that someone is still alive (scene 53). The quote above, which shows the views and attitude of Maotoko in responding to the black company phenomenon in their company, implies a view of life in Japanese society that has existed for a long time, such as the principle of *bushido* (武士道) and the *shuushin koyou system* (終身雇用), or the system of lifelong work in one company.

This *shuushin koyou* system makes the majority of Japanese people think that the company they work for is considered a family (Widiandari, 2015), which in its entirety teaches an attitude of loyalty and self-sacrifice to do anything for the progress of the company. This perspective causes the characters in the film *Burakku Gaisha* to take the attitude of ignoring the fact that they work for a black company and prioritizing their work. It can be seen from the characters who repeatedly return to work even though they receive bad treatment and workloads that require them to stay in the office for days.

Furthermore, not much different from *Burraku Gaisha*, the film *Chotto Ima Kara* shows the life of Takashi Aoyama, who experiences depression due to the pressure of work he faces at a black company. The story begins with a conversation between two people about the meaning of life and hope (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 1). Then events changed with the appearance of an apartment room that was messy and full of rotten food. In that event, a television broadcast was depicted showing a singer singing the song "Life is Not Bad." This made Aoyama, who was preparing to go to work, feel annoyed because the song seemed to be mocking his life, which felt heavy because of his workload (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 2).

Forms of exploitation of workers in the film *Ima Kara* are shown through the character Takeshi Aoyama, who works at a company that is suspected of violating labor regulations (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 3). The company often arbitrarily cuts Aoyama's salary to cover project losses. Apart from that, Aoyama also worked overtime for more than 150 hours for 3 months without any compensation (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 9). The conditions he experiences every day in his office make Aoyama feel depressed, even though at first, he was very happy when he was able to work at the company.

青山　：就活に失敗しまかった俺は、この会社の内定をもらった時とても嬉し
　　　かった。夢と希望、そして、やる気もあった。会社に貢献したい気
　　　　持ちはある。でも、最近は部長に怒鳴られると、頭が真っ白になる。

Aoyama : I had a hard time finding a job, so when this company accepted me, I was very happy. I have hopes and dreams, even ambitions. I want to contribute to the company. But lately, when the manager scolds me, my mind goes blank.
(*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 5).

A feeling of depression due to work in his office made Aoyama recklessly attempt suicide by throwing himself towards a fast-moving train (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 12).

Aoyama's suicide attempt was triggered by feelings of emptiness and depression, as seen in the quote below.

青山　：人は何のために働くんだろう？もし、生きるために働くんだとしたら、
　　　　俺は生きてるっているんだろうか？体が鉛のように重い。休みたい。
　　　　眠りたい。もう、疲れた。明日なんて、来なくていい。

Aoyama：What do humans work for? If we work just so we can live, can I really call this living ? My body felt as heavy as lead. I want to take a rest. I want to go to sleep. I am tired. Tomorrow does not come; it's ok. (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 11).

However, Aoyama's suicide attempt turned out to be a failure because he was stopped by Yamamoto, who claimed to be his childhood friend (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 13). Aoyama feels grateful because he was saved by Yamamoto.

Then the events turn to highlight Aoyama's change in becoming more cheerful and improving his performance since his suicide attempt a few days ago (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 21). Aoyama also has a project at a company called Kotani, and if this project is successful, then this will be the biggest project he has worked on (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 22). However, a few days later, the Kotani company protested because there was an error in ordering raw materials (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 25). Aoyama was severely reprimanded by Yamagami, and the project was handed over to Igarashi (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 27). This condition made Aoyama depressed again, and he blamed himself for the mistake (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 28). Often depressed, Aoyama often questioned the purpose of his life. This can be seen from Aoyama's narrative regarding his condition.

Yamamoto, as a friend, suggested that Aoyama stop working from that office. Yamamoto told Aoyama which was more important to stop working or commit suicide (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 31). Aoyama's suicide attempt was made again when he felt disappointed when he was rejected and scolded by his superior named Yamagami when he offered to help his colleague named Igarashi on the Kotani project (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 41). However, his suicide attempt from the top of this building failed because he was rescued again by Yamamoto.

After this incident, Aoyama asked his parents for their opinion regarding his wanting to stop working and got their approval (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 44). Aoyama finally decided to stop working and was determined to live a happy life no matter what he wanted (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 47). This incident made Igarashi admit his mistake in sabotaging Kotani's project and apologize to Aoyama (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 47).

The next event highlights Aoyama's leaving looking for Yamamoto, who had twice saved him from attempting suicide. Aoyama, who knew that Yamamoto was on Vanuatu, an island to the east of Australia, followed him and joined as a volunteer on the island, fallowing in the same footstep as Yamamoto (*Chotto Ima Kara*, scene 55).

From the series of events described above, it can be seen that there is a shift in attitude shown by the characters regarding the black company phenomenon that appears in the two films. In the 2009 film *Burraku Gaisha*, the characters' views on dealing with the problem of black companies are still full of the old views of Japanese society regarding work principles, which are influenced by the moral principles of *bushido* (samurai morals). One of the *bushido* morals implemented in Japanese companies is the *Shushin Koyou* (終身雇用) system. This system places the company as a family, so that an attitude of loyalty and a spirit of hard work

emerge from every individual in Japanese society towards their company. The strength of the *Sushin Koyou* system in the view of Japanese society in 2009 is shown by the characters in the film *Burraku Gaisha* who persist in continuing to work for the company, even though they had to experience various pressures due to their company implementing a black company system. However, in the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, which was produced in 2017, it can be seen that the *Shushin Koyou* system is experiencing degradation in Japanese society. This condition is shown through the views of the characters who appear in the film in response to the black company phenomenon. Aoyama's character, the main character who appears in the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, no longer maintains his job at his company, but he prefers to work as a *NEET* (not employment, education, or training), which initially in the film *Burraku Gaisha* had a negative stereotype, whereas in the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, becoming a *NEET* is an alternative of choice for the character to face the black company phenomenon.

3.2 Response of Japanese Society in Perception of the Black Company in *Burraku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara*

The two Japanese films, *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara*, which both raise the theme of the black company phenomenon, received various responses from the public. To see the responses from them regarding the social issues raised in these two films. I selected a total of respondents from two website movies (iega.com and filmarks), which consist of 15 respondents for *Burakku Gaisha* and 15 for *Chotto Ima Kara*. The respondents consisting of both men and women, were current company employee who have worked or are currently working in a company.

Regarding the film *Burakku Gaisha*, of the 15 audience responses, there were 7 responses from viewers of this film that stated that this film did not reflect Japanese social reality. This statement emerged because they did not know about the black company phenomenon. Below are two responses that represent the statement.

Response 1: こんな会社ほんとうにあるの！？っていうくらいのブラック会社。

"Does this kind of company really exist?"
(eiga.com/movie/54569/review/all)

Response 2: 実話という設定に無理がある。

"It is impossible for this story to be based on a true story".
(eiga.com/movie/4145?page=6)

However, from the 15 audience responses, there were 3 responses that stated that the black company problems shown in the film *Burraku Gaisha* were similar to their experiences. The conditions of those who have experienced working for black companies can be seen in the responses below.

Respon 1: 新しい業界にいたので、なんだか懐かしくなります。あれほどのステ
ムなかったけど、あーあるある。みたいなところはりました。

Respon 1: "I feel nostalgic because I was in a similar industry. There were not as many death marches, but there was something like that."
(eiga.com/movie/4145?page=6)

Respon 2:　私も IT 企業でシステムを開発を行っていて、全クマ男と同じ立場だ
ったから楽しめて観れた。

Respon 2: "I also developed a system at an IT company and was in the same position as all the bear men, so I enjoy watching it."
(eiga.com/movie/4145?page=64).

Black companies, as a phenomenon highlighted in the film *Burraku Gaisha*, provide awareness of the problems that arise in the Japanese work world and this is a concern for Japanese society. There are 4 viewers who recommend this film to be watched by young people who are looking for work. One of the viewers responded to this film by saying that 「就活前の人、企業の人にも見てもらいたい映画」 "*a film that needs to be seen by people who are unemployed or people in the working world*" (eiga.com/movie/54569/review).

Burraku Gaisha, a film with the theme of a black company, has attracted the attention of the public. They asked to look at the black company problem seriously. Indeed, there were seven audience responses that thought that the black company problem in this film did not reflect social problems. This happened because, in 2009, the black company phenomenon was not yet widely recognized by the majority of Japanese society. However, of the 15 audience responses, there were 3 people who stated that they had experiences similar to what was shown in this film, and 4 viewers even advised young people to watch this film before they enter the world of work.

Based on the audience's response, it can be seen that this film is a media suggestion for conveying information related to current phenomena as well as providing understanding regarding black companies as a social problem in Japan. *Burraku Gaisha*, with the theme of a black company, is a film that has attracted the attention of the public. They asked to look at the black company problem seriously. Indeed, there were seven audience responses that thought that the black company problem in this film did not reflect social problems. This happened because, in 2009, the black company phenomenon was not yet widely recognized by the majority of Japanese society. However, of the 15 audience responses, there were 3 people who stated that they had experiences similar to what was shown in this film, and 4 viewers even advised young people to watch this film before they enter the world of work. Based on the audience's response, this film is intended as a media suggestion for conveying information related to current phenomena as well as providing understanding regarding black companies as a social problem in Japan.

Furthermore, regarding the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, from the 15 audience responses, there were 5 that considered this film to be a reflection of the social situation of Japanese society, which is currently facing the problem of black companies. This can be seen from the responses below.

Respon 1: 前にニュースになった現代社会労働問題などが取り上げられブ
ラック会社裏側がリアルに伝わってきた。
(eiga.com/movie/4145?page=6)

Respon 1: "This film tells the true story of the black company, which is based on the problems in modern labor society that have previously been in the news."

Respon 2: この作品を観ると、昨年大きなニュース　なった大手広告の過

労自殺事件が思い出された。(filmarks.com/movies/69364?page=356)

Respon 2: "Watching this piece reminded me of a suicide by a major advertising company that made big news last year."

The two responses above show that this film is considered to show the social reality that is currently happening in Japan. The suicide incident shown in the film *Chotto Ima Kara* is thought to depict a suicide committed by an employee at a large company, which became big news last year. Based on this, many viewers said that this film depicts the social reality of Japanese society.

Furthermore, several viewers also stated that the story of this film was similar to the experiences they had when they were still working at the company. One response related to this is as follows:

Respon 1: 私自身ブラック企業に勤め経験があります。その経験があると、

前半は自分と重なって辛いけど、でもそれがリアル。

Respon 1: "I myself have worked for a black company. When I had that experience, the first part of the film was painful because I went through the same thing, so it was real. (eiga.com/movie/85392/review/all/12)

There were responses saying that people closest to them, even themselves, had experienced thing like those shown in this film. For some people who have experienced events similar to those in this film, it will certainly bring back memories of the sadness they felt when watching this film. Of the 15 responses discussing the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, there were 5 audience responses that stated that they had had the same experience as what was shown in this film.

Plenty of responses from viewers who thought this film was based on a true story experienced by several viewers led to responses from other viewers to make this film a recommendation for young people who are looking for work as well as an encouragement for people who are having difficult times. while watching this film. This statement can be seen from the audience's response to the film *Chotto Ima Kara* on the filmarks.com site.

Respon 1: 仕事辛い人、つらい人が周りにいる人に観てほしい。

Respon 1: "I want people who have hard work or who are around hard people to watch it ." (filmarks.com/movies/69364?page=357)

Respon 2: 若い人に見てほしい。仕事に就く前に。

Respon 2: "I want young people to watch it. Before looking for work." (filmarks.com/movies/69364?page=356)

The presence of the film *Chotto Ima Kara* in Japanese society indirectly increases awareness of the reality of the black company they are facing. This condition is certainly a very important thing to think about. So many viewers made statements regarding this film to pay great attention to the black company phenomenon. A response from the audience stated that 「私は、この作品を観て救われた。去年の自分を見ているようで涙が止まりません

でした。」*"I was saved by watching this film. My tears do not stop as if seeing me one year ego."* (eiga.com/movie/85391/review/all/7/). There was even an audience response that said that 「私はその後転職しましたが、」*"After watching the film, I decided to change the job"* (eiga.com/movie/85391/review/all/16/).

From several responses given by the audience regarding the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, I believe that this film presents the issue of black company as a social problem that is currently occurring in Japanese society. Thus, when this film was released to the public, several readers responded with views that were almost the same as the story of the film. The emergence of this film, can be said to be a medium to provide awareness to every individual regarding the problem of black company problems that occur in society, so that it becomes a common concern.

The audience reception of the two films, *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara*, reveals a significant difference in public awareness. Many viewers of *Burakku Gaisha* were surprise to learn about the existence of "black company" in Japan. Meanwhile, *Chotto Ima Kara* resonated with some viewers as a realistic portrayal of this social issue, reflecting the struggles of those affected by black company in Japanese society.

4.   Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the films *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara* by exploring the narrative element of film, it is revealed that the views of the characters in both films towards the black company are filled with feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction, which make them depressed. However, the attitude of the characters toward the issue of black company in both films shows different actions. In the film *Burakku Gaisha*, the character decides to continue working for a black company. On the other hand, in the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, the character decides to stop working for a black company. The difference in attitudes in the two films is because, over time, there has been a paradigm shift in Japanese society regarding work. The film *Burakku Gaisha*, which was released in 2009, reflects the social conditions of Japanese society, which still adheres to the principles of *bushido* in terms of loyalty and the *shushin koyou* system, so that companies are likened to families that give birth to attitudes of loyalty and hard work in Japanese society. This attitude makes Japanese people prioritize company interests over personal interests and are willing to do anything for the company's prosperity. Meanwhile, the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, which was released in 2017, reflects the social conditions of Japanese society, which already has a new perspective that happiness in life is more important than work.

Furthermore, based on an analysis of the Japanese public's response to the films *Burakku Gaisha* and *Chotto Ima Kara* regarding the black company phenomenon, two different views were found in society. The first view states that the film *Burakku Gaisha* does not reflect social conditions because most of the audience has no experience related to black company problems. The second is a response that states that black companies are starting to get public attention. On the other hand, in the film *Chotto Ima Kara*, the first glance states that this film reflects the social situation in Japan because most of the audience has had experience related to black company problems. The second is a response that states that the black company has received public attention and is able to inspire the audience to leave the black company. The difference in responses to these films is caused by the insight into expectations formed through understanding the world of the reader or audience, which is the basis for responding to a literary work.

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