

TOKYO — The paperwork never ends for Yoshiko Nishimasa.

There are the meticulous logs she must fill out every day, not to mention the pages of work she carefully checks and approves with a personalized stamp. She even keeps daily records of conversations, activities and meals.

But none of this bookkeeping is for her job as a marketing professional. It's all for her children's preschool — before she can even head to the office.

Like so many working mothers in Japan, Ms. Nishimasa, 38, is swamped by onerous, bureaucratic tasks that have nothing to do with her profession but constrain her participation in the work force at a time when the country says it desperately needs more from women like her...

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