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SEX INDUSTRY

Japan in demographic decline, porn is to blame

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Japan is a land of contradictions. Visitors taking a stroll along the streets of some Japanese cities may find themselves blushing at various sexually provocative themes depicted on many television commercial billboards.

Besides, this East Asian country is notoriously known for having one of the world's most prolific sex and pornographic industries, making it seem like Japanese people are obsessed with sex and by extension, procreation. Alas - such a conclusion is far removed from the actual situation on the ground.

Based on a poll of never-married people by the country's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, and **cited** by the Lexington Herald Leader, 27.6 percent of single men and 22.6 percent of single women expressed no interest in entering into a relationship with a member of the opposite sex.

Furthermore, a 2020 **press release** by the University of Tokyo indicated that "in 2015, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 3 men in their 30s were single, and half of the singles say they are

not interested in heterosexual relationships.” The same University of Tokyo press release also mentioned the **rise** in virginity and the drop in interests towards dating and sex as indicators of the “herbivore-ization” of younger generations. (In context, Japanese popular culture **labels** unmarried adults who appear nonchalant about finding romantic partners as “herbivores”, dubbing adults who have romantic partners or who are in pursuit of them as “carnivores.”)

To make matters more complicated, Japan is **suffering** from a **rapidly falling population**, with 2023 marking the **13th consecutive year of population decrease** for the country. **According to** the Independent, “Japan's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research predicts that the country's current population of 127 million will decline by nearly 40 million by 2065.” The same Independent article added: “The shrinking of the country's population – deaths have outpaced births for several years – has been called a ‘demographic time bomb’ and is already affecting the job and housing markets, consumer spending and long-term investment plans at businesses.”

Japanese society's decline in interest in sex and intimate relationships has been commonly alluded to as “sekkusu-banare” (wandering away from sex and intimacy) When asked by the Independent regarding the reasons why a considerable number of Japanese people are not in relationships, a woman (unnamed) replied that men “cannot be bothered” to ask women out on dates as it was easier to consume internet porn. Likewise, artist Megumi Igarashi, 45, **admitted** that dating can be challenging, stating the reasons why she thought many men were not interested in doing so, as “they can watch porn on the internet and get sexual satisfaction that way.”

True enough, with the accessibility and prevalence of adult content in Japanese society, it is no wonder why many Japanese adults are drifting away from “real-life” relationships and marriage into the fantasy-world of pornography. Additionally, pornography addiction is becoming more and more of a cause for concern, with 5.7% of university students in a 2021 report **admitting** that pornography gives rise to problems in their everyday lives.

In remarks **quoted** by *The Mainichi*, one such pornography addict, a man in his 20s, whose pornography consumed was undermining his daily life, acknowledged: “I keep watching internet porn. I want to stop, but I just can't.”

Hiroyuki Ide, director of a mental health clinic in Kamakura, told *The Mainichi* that the form pornography addiction “is the same as that of dependence on alcohol and drugs.” Elaborating, Ide stated: “It's necessary to treat the illness while focusing on the difficulty in living that patients have deep in their hearts, where the root of the

dependence lies.”

“The reality is that anyone can easily watch it. The characteristic feature of dependence is that with a single click, the desire for stronger stimulation escalates. It's a problem that doesn't surface easily, but potentially a lot of people are suffering from it,” Ide conceded.

Admitting the harmful ramifications of pornography use, such as the exploitation of women and children for sex, many anti-porn campaigners **cheered** the **move** by Japanese convenience stores 7-Eleven Japan and Lawson to stop selling pornographic material before the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the Tokyo Olympics. “This is certainly a welcome move,” Kanae Doi, Japan director of the non-profit Human Rights Watch, **declared**, in remarks cited by *The Straits Times*. “It has been very shameful... you can see pornography everywhere in Japan. Women are still seen as sex objects and not treated equally,” Doi continued.

Rampant pornography in Japan is coercing around 500 women into the sex industry annually, where they are treated in a “degrading and demeaning” way, researcher Caroline Norma from the RMIT University in Australia stated. “Any measure to suppress the products and activities of the sex industry in Japanese society will ease an environment of sexual objectification and exploitation that is mostly unregulated and culturally celebrated.”

The degradation of women as sex objects in Japan's highly pornified culture has even led to sexual predators groping women on public trains and **filming** these assaults for sale on pornographic websites online.

According to a bombshell report by the BBC: “Most videos follow the same pattern - a man secretly films a woman from behind and follows her on to a train. Seconds later, he sexually abuses her. The men act discreetly, and their victims can seem totally unaware. These graphic videos are then listed on the websites for sale.” The same *BBC* report even detailed a Telegram group with 4,000 members who exchange information on how to sexually abuse women.

Notably, this brief case study on Japan's obsession with pornography shows the depths to which a self-gratifying society devoid of God can stoop. To boot, ordinary Japanese people's reticence of ordinary Japanese to speak out remains an obstacle to first recognizing and addressing the deep-rooted problems of pornography in leading to the country's moral and demographic decline.