

More people in Japan resort to 'marriage-hunting' due to decreased birth rates

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The number of marriage matchmakers are rising in Japan in an effort to tackle the shrinking and ageing population, states Professor Erika Alpert from Nazarbayev University (https://nu.edu.kz/?utm_source=bluesky)'s School of Science and Humanities, as the country's birth rate drops at an alarming rate.

As many women choose between their career and starting a family, income and job security have been continuously falling since the 1990s, with many young Japanese people feeling that getting married and starting a family is too expensive. When people feel like they can't afford a family, they don't start one, Alpert states.

There is also a much greater stigma around having a child when you're not married in Japan, so for people who want children, marriage is a must. Therefore, by increasing marriage rates, Japan hopes to increase the birth rate.

The fact that more people need to be having children to increase the birth rate is a casual conversation in Japan. So much so, that a Japanese word has been coined to describe deliberately pursuing marriage the same way one might pursue employment: *konkatsu*.

In an attempt to increase marriage rates, some people in Japan employ matchmakers who provide advice on how to create effective online profiles, whom to apply to meet, and manage dates following a formal introduction. Matchmakers even handle awkward breakups on their clients' behalf and cheer them on to find someone new. Additionally, a number of online dating services are starting to become popular options, although their services are less personalised.

Professor Alpert says,

"Matchmaking in Japan dates back to the middle of the 19th century, but online practices have only really started to gain acceptance in the last eight years or so. In contrast, in the US and the UK, there is a long history of advertising for partners going back to the 18th century which has made online dating, through sites and apps such as Match.com and Tinder, seem much more natural and so was adopted sooner."

Professor Alpert's paper on the use of profile photos in Japanese online dating and the role of matchmakers was published on Semiotic Review, and her book on matchmaking and online dating in Japan is due to be released in 2021.

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If you are interested in more information or speaking with Professor Erika Alpert, then please contact Kyle Grizzell from BlueSky PR on 07904706136 or kyle@bluesky-pr.com