

М. Мезрина

ГОУ ВПО «Российский государственный профессионально-педагогический университет» Институт лингвистики

группа ИА - 314

г. Екатеринбург

ANOREXIA AND OTHER TEENAGE EATING DISORDERS IN JAPAN

A newly released government survey on the eating disorder Anorexia Nervosa shows that it now afflicts about 2% of female high school students with roughly another 10% at potential risk of developing it. (Anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder which people do not eat correctly due to a distorted body image and obsessive fear of weight gain). The first cases of eating disorders, which can be fatal, were documented in Japan during the late sixties and early seventies. Over the last decade various regional surveys have shown that the number of recorded cases has been steadily rising. Although Japanese rates are not as high as those in Europe and the United States, the new survey indicates that the problem is rapidly growing. The latest survey was conducted in fiscal 2002 for the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare by Hisako Watanabe, an expert in pediatric psychiatry at Keio University, School of Medicine. Watanabe has previously conducted earlier surveys on eating disorders in 1987, 1992, 1997 and 2002. According to the new survey, 5.5% of those interviewed were underweight when they were in their first year of high school, with the figure rising to 13.2% by the time the girls reached their final year. This situation could easily lead to the girls developing either Anorexia Nervosa or Bulimia Nervosa (Bulimia nervosa, commonly known as bulimia, is an eating disorder. It is a psychological condition in which the subject engages in recurrent binge eating followed by an intentional purging. This purging is done in order to compensate for the excessive intake of the food and to prevent weight gain.).

Of those in the study thought to have the disorder, only 0.6% had been diagnosed as anorexic by a physician. An additional 1.7% were believed to be suffering from anorexia because they exhibited various symptoms associated with the ailment such as drastic weight loss, abnormal eating habits, the ceasing of menstruation, etc.

According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the total number of people suffering from eating disorders in 1980 stood at just 3,200 people. By 1998 this had leapt to 23,200 and this figure has most certainly increased over the past years. Many Japanese medical institutions have found themselves unable to effectively treat patients suffering from eating disorders due to the increase in the number of cases.

It is estimated that somewhere in the region of 10% of anorexic and bulimic patients die from starvation-related problems such as heart failure, or from suicide, which arises from self-destructive tendencies caused by the eating disorder. Various kinds of eating disorders are also found in other Asian countries such as South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and China, but the most extensive research on the problem has been conducted in Japan. In comparison with many European Union countries, Anorexia and other eating disorders have not been given so much coverage in the Japanese media.

Research indicates that the average age at which Anorexia has been afflicting young Japanese girls has been steadily dropping over the past decade. Currently, there is no national data available on the number of elementary school students diagnosed with eating disorders, but regional studies clearly show that over the last ten years victims have been getting progressively younger.

The latest government survey results clearly show that Anorexia and Bulimia have now become quite common diseases in Japan. Many experts think that the increase is linked to the spread of Western eating habits, fashions, trends and the so called "slim is beautiful" concept. The state has established national networks to help better coordinate treatment and expertise, but there is still a long way to go before a satisfactory level of care can be attained.