

# Ethical Issues in Electronic Pornography: The Case of Rape Lay

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## ABSTRACT

This paper first analyzes the electronic moral problems in the interactive video game Rape Lay, including the disrespect for women and the sexualization of children. Next, this paper attempts to propose solutions to these two types of moral problems in pornographic games from three aspects: government regulation, development by game manufacturers, and moral quality and media literacy of game players. This paper aims to raise awareness of women's and children's rights issues through the analysis of moral problems in pornographic games.

**Keywords:** *Video game, Pornographic video game, Ethical issue, Children*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The popularity of electronic pornography games seems to be an increasingly noticeable trend in recent years. Atkinson and Rodgers (2016) outright state that it is a fascinating phenomenon for gamers to access much sexual material in pornographic games while participating in it covertly[1]. Electronic pornography games showcase sex in a computer or TV show, have pornographic scenes in the game, and pornographic pictures after the pass. Alternatively, video games that simulate the pursuit of the opposite sex and then with the opposite sex to simulate some pornographic clips fall under the category of electronic pornography games. The content of pornographic video games seems to be mirrored in real life. According to a news report by Xinhua News Agency, Shanghai rail police confirmed that at around 8:30 p.m. on September 3, 2012, a Japanese man used his cell phone to secretly photograph a female passenger under her skirt in the carriage of Shanghai Metro Line 2, and was caught red-handed by the surrounding passengers. The plot is similar to Rape Lay, a recently developed Japanese pornographic video game. This paper will use "Rape Lay" as a case study for the analysis related to video game pornography issues.

## 2. ETHICAL ISSUES IN RAPE LAY

### 2.1. Women are used as sexual targets and degradable objects

Guggisberg (2020) points out that online video games often objectify women and represent them in a highly sexualized way, which is insulting and disrespectful to female personhood. In Rape Lay, the player takes on the role of a Japanese commuter[2]. He harasses high school girls at subway stations, touching and stimulating the heroine's body in various ways and impregnating her. After harassing the heroine, two more subplots appear, and the game recommends that the player continue to harass the heroine's sister and mother. From a moral and ethical point of view, this kind of insult to women is not moral logic because it is against women's own sexual needs and desires and subtly will contribute to the social crime rate about sex. Elias and Dunning (1993) explain the behavior of playing pornographic games on online platforms by arguing that pornographic elements in books and sports help to release sexual desire and minimize the risk of interpersonal harm[3].

With the advent of the digital media age, intelligent digital media are becoming more and more popular. Video games can help people release their sexual desires more cost-effectively and at lower risk than books and sports. Once people's needs are released, they do not threaten other people and other things in society. Patridge (2013) also states that video pornography games are

moral because they are made without harming real-life women and children[4].

Such a theory seems somewhat plausible, but we need to think about why women? Is there no relationship between real life and the virtual world built by digital media? Many times women are used as sexual targets because they are women. Gestos et al. (2018) concluded from a study of two cohorts that players who play sexualized games and real-life sexual violence are positively correlated[5]. This means that playing sexualized games on online platforms can influence players' behavior in real life. The objectification of women presented by the game in Rape Lay affects the gamers' feelings of empathy and sexual behavior, and they become less empathetic towards women who suffer from such violence in real life.

At the same time, the heroine's lack of resistance to the assault in the subway in Rape Lay can lead gamers to believe that women are portrayed as willingly submitting to sexual violence, which can also affect certain expectations of real-life sexual behavior between men and women. The "crime denial" model is better to break down the defense of degrading female behavior in pornographic games. The player does not see behind the scenes of electronic pornography whether the female protagonist is genuinely willing to have sex with the male protagonist? Is she happy? Does this really satisfy the heroine's sexual needs? Is the sexual behavior of the heroine in having sex all following the heroine's wishes? The audience sees the content after editing, so they will think that this behavior is harmless. Thus, they will "deny" sexual violence, that is, the crime. This is a self-deceptive and deceptive way of thinking.

## ***2.2. Satisfies a unique fetish of pedophilia***

In addition to the disrespect for women, Rape Lay has a very prominent moral and ethical problem, which is sexual assault and disrespect for minors. The heroine is a student who is in high school, which means that the heroine is not yet an adult. In this video pornography game, all sexual assault begins with the heroine, and Patridge (2013) states outright that children are sexually targeted precisely because they are children[6]. This presence of children inside electronic pornography is to satisfy the mental needs of some people with specific fetishes. As Levy (2002) explains, underage pornography sexualizes the unequal relationship between children and adults[7]. Players are encouraged to assault underage children in the game, which is justified and legal sexually. Even in Rape Lay, if players don't assault the heroine, the progress in the game will remain stuck at the subway station at the beginning and will not move forward. This is an immoral acquiescence to minor aggression.

The spread of mobile internet for pornography and gaming has made them an open and shared cultural

phenomenon. Our exposure to sexual and violent images has also spilled over into our daily lives. At the same time, this can also have a bad influence on the establishment of values in the life of young people.

First, pornographic games can have a subtle effect on teenagers. They will think that what they see is the real world and that players should commit sexual violence against minors. Minors should be used as a sexual tool to achieve specific goals. This can lead them to think that they can do similar things to minors in real life. Secondly, minors in pornographic video games cannot resist. This means that gamers will think similarly about minors in real life, thinking it is reasonable to sexually assault a minor in the subway while having her period. This clearly does not respect minors' legal status and moral attributes. Some have dismissed online pedophile porn games like Rape Lay as a form of self-liberation for a niche sexual group. Nevertheless, this argument is also clearly untenable. Pornography, by its very nature, serves to arouse sexual desire, and in doing so, can also harm real children.

## **3. SOLUTIONS TO MORAL PROBLEMS IN PORNOGRAPHIC GAMES**

### ***3.1. Game manufacturers should not hunt for games when making them***

Game manufacturers are an essential part of game design, production, and distribution. Often game manufacturers are more inclined to go for games that are sensually stimulating and fully functional when making games. In Rape Lay, when the player chooses which way to harass or assault the heroine sexually, the heroine's body on the screen will change as the player does. If the player chooses the wind blowing open the heroine's skirt, the heroine will be left with only panties. If the player chooses to keep sexually assaulting the heroine, the heroine will make a sound unlike in real sex life.

The game manufacturers in the production of a game are indeed the first thing to consider: the game's sales and the player's experience of playing the game. However, manufacturers need to consider more when making these games: Is it ethical if people make this game? Will there be any social impact if people release this game? In other words, the game manufacturers need to think when making this game. What consequences would arise if the manufacturer's eight-year-old son played the game? Ruberg (2021) comments on video games, saying that they are a tool for leisure and entertainment and a reflection of many social issues[8].

### ***3.2. Supervision of government departments: improve the game grading system***

Many game manufacturers may think that their responsibility is only to produce and distribute their

games, but rating the games comes to the government. Rape Lay, a game released in Japan, follows the same Japanese rating system: Z. Z rating refers to games for 18-year-olds and older, with keywords such as love, sex, and violence underneath the game. Although the game was released in Japan, the digital media age has made video game messages and data more widely distributed. In China, where there is no game rating system, Rape Lay can only be used as a private exchange of game data among netizens.

This also reveals the shortcomings of the game rating system in mainland China to some extent. Under the foreign classification system, the primary audience of pornographic video games becomes adults. Nevertheless, because there is no transparent game classification system in mainland China, many games that are considered "niche sexual liberation" are directly banned from sale in China across the board. This leads to some sexual minorities not being able to self-identify, and some teenagers will be curious about the sexual content of the games and make some actions that are not in line with their age. Therefore, the government should not only make requirements for game manufacturers when controlling pornographic video games but also make a sound grading system for the games themselves and explain the labels of the games.

### ***3.3. Game players need to improve their moral quality***

In addition, gamers need to improve their moral quality and media awareness. Of course, there seems to be no relationship between gamers' improvement of moral quality and game manufacturers' production of ethically minded games. However, there is no market without buying and selling, and if gamers can find that some descriptions in the game introduction are against moral and social ethics and general public knowledge, gamers can choose not to buy the game. Moreover, when gamers consider themselves whether a game has violated the moral code, the game has often already violated the moral code. Improving one's media literacy often helps gamers identify ethically questionable games. [9] This may also be a solution for some pornographic video games that violate human morality.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

There are two types of moral problems in the video pornography games represented by Rape Lay: the disrespect and contempt for women and the other is the sexualization of children. Neither can be glorified as a release of sexual desire to reduce violence. This is because pornographic video games are made for the very reason of arousing sexual desire, which can be expressed in real life through human body organs[10]. The consequences of arousal are not necessarily the release of

sexual desire through pornographic video games but may also affect real-life women and children. Information is more easily disseminated in the age of digital media, and in order to minimize and avoid the emergence of such moral problems on electronic devices, the government should take the responsibility of regulation. Game players themselves need to improve their moral qualities, and game makers should try to avoid hunting and eye-catching electronic pornographic games against morality and ethics when producing games because they want to attract more viewers. In addition, the establishment of a game rating system in China and the establishment of a government regulatory system for pornographic video games are still issues that need to be considered in the future.

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