



Commentary

Pornography and it's correlation with sexual health

Saira Hakkim¹, Russell Kabir²

¹MSc Public Health Student, ²Senior Lecturer, School of Allied Health, Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford, Essex, U.K.

Date of Submission : 10 August 2021

Date of Acceptance : 25 November 2021

Keywords: Pornography, Health, Sexual health

In the 21st century, there was a tremendous increase in the usage of the internet, social media & smart-phones, which led to profound variations in sexual habits. Consequently, significant changes were seen among adults under 49 years of age (Bulot et al., 2015). These days, the internet is the primary source of consuming pornography. A recent review reported that most adult men had accessed pornography at some point in their lives, and younger people below 25 years of age are weekly consumers of pornography (Miller et al., 2020).

Generally, the increased consumption of pornography is associated with sexual activity and sexual experimentation often portrayed in pornography (Træen and Daneback, 2013). The escalated utilization of images related to sexual nature developed the permanent online presence of the pornography industry. Due to cultural

constraints and stigma attached to moral status, it is difficult for researchers to define pornography (Lindgren, 1993). They use euphemistic terms to mention pornography, such as uncensored media or materials, aphrodisiacal or online sexual activity (Carroll et al., 2008; Lindgren, 1993; Manning, 2006; Short et al., 2012).

There is the availability of pornographic material on the web with free access, making it easy for those under 18 years of age to visit. Sometimes, internet users are unintentionally exposed to such materials (Ybarra et al., 2009). The average age of pornography consumers has declined in current years, which enlightens that people at an early age are being exposed to such media or materials and which may influence the understanding of sexuality in young adults. However, they get confused to find expected, acceptable, and rewarding sexual attitudes (Wright et al., 2015). Reports showed that in Australia, 73-93% of adolescent boys and 11-62% of adolescent girls are exposed to pornography (McKee, 2010; Fleming et al., 2006). They even believe that using pornography among their peers is common (Walker et al., 2015), although laws have restricted people under 18 from watching pornography (Mason, 1992).

Corresponding author: Saira Hakkim

Email: sairahakeem27@gmail.com

How to cite the article: Hakkim, S., Kabir, R., (2021). Pornography and it's correlation with sexual health. Indian Journal of Health Sexuality and Culture 7 (2), 53–56.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6062934>

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 License which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

There are different opinions regarding the impact of pornography use. Some claim that it is having adverse effects (Hilton, 2013), some claim to be having positive results (Ley et al., 2014), whereas some people think that it is likely to possess mixed effects (Hald & Malamuth, 2008). There are significant harmful impacts of pornography on young people's sexual and emotional development, but there is a lack of scientific evidence to explore the effect (Bulot et al., 2015).

Online pornography use increases and can cause addiction considering the "Triple A" influence, including accessibility, affordability, and anonymity (de Alarcón et al., 2019). The improper use of pornography has adverse effects among the young population in their sexual development and functioning (Grubbs et al., 2019). International longitudinal research revealed the impact of early and continuous viewing of pornography on adolescents, i.e., initiating sexual activities at their younger age (Brown and L'Engle, 2009; Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2013).

High numbers of students were being exposed to sexually explicit electronic materials for the sake of searching about sexual and related information (Shallo and Mengesha, 2019). The higher the degree of pornographic addiction, the higher the risky sexual behavior (Yunengsih and Setiawan, 2021); resulting in subsequent sexual aggression, permissive sexual norms and gender role attitudes, earlier sexual behavior, lower levels of sexual satisfaction, higher preferences for specific body types, negative attitudes towards monogamy, participation in group sex, and higher numbers of sexual partners (Rothman and Adhia, 2016).

Based on the results from a ten-week-long diary study conducted by Bóthe et al. (2021) with treatment-seeking males, it is evident that there is a link between Problematic Pornography Use (PPU) and sexual functioning problems. Males who come

under PPU may be more likely to be in a refractory period when trying to engage in sexual activities with their partner, potentially leading to sexual functioning problems. Furthermore, the severity of PPU was associated positively with sexual anxiety and negatively with sexual satisfaction. In contrast, frequent pornography users had a weak negative association with sexual functioning problems in the community (Bóthe et al., 2021).

There is a correlation between masturbation and the use of online pornography, and a recent study has shown that 87% of students who watched online pornography masturbated regularly (Chowdhury et al., 2019).

COVID-19 associated stress and loneliness has also driven the sexual and relationship issues, resulting in increased disagreement and decreased attachment due to frequent pornography use, causing lower sexual satisfaction for men and intimacy issues often for women, leading to unfaithfulness to the partner (Bridges et al., 2003; Daneback et al., 2009; Traeen and Mansson, 2009; Chowdhury et al., 2018; Doran and Price, 2014; Manning, 2006; Perry, 2016a; Poulsen et al., 2013; Stack et al., 2004; Yucel and Gassanov, 2010).

In addition, several pieces of literature express its impact on mental health, such as the pressure experienced by women to engage in anal intercourse, which is shown in 15-32% of pornographic scenes (Lim et al., 2017). Like the clinical expression of anxiety (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), feelings of restlessness/frustration/irritation when unable to access pornography websites significantly predicted both anxiety and stress (Camilleri et al., 2020). A scoping review revealed that pornography consumption is associated with a surge in rape cases in India (Vinnakota et al., 2021).

In contrast, pornography can be scrutinized

positively, as if it offers an approach to explore one's sexuality (Arrington-Sanders et al., 2015; Paul and Shim, 2008). Young adults were most likely to report that pornography was the most valuable source of information about how to have sex (Rothman, 2021).

A study (2008) conducted by two Danish researchers disclosed that porn is not causing any adverse mental or health problems. But, in fact, it improved the sexual satisfaction between the subjects. In many circumstances, marital problems promote the consumption of pornography. Certain studies have proven that pornography usage can be beneficial. Even before the marriage, the couples are exposed to watching pornography during their counseling. Sometimes psychologists recommend watching pornography together for the teams who have problems in their marital life (Peter and Valkenburg, 2016).

The topic of pornography use is controversial (Grubbs et al., 2019). Philosophical interest can be seen much in pornography centers on whether pornography should be controlled. Significant debates arise as to whether pornography is best understood as speech, an action, or a speech act (Harrison, and Ollis, 2015). Watching pornography may be a healthy phenomenon if it is occasional, not impairing the personal and social life. However, it can become pathological if watched excessively and degrades the individual's functioning.

Acknowledgements : None

Conflict of interest : None

References

- Arrington-Sanders, R., Harper, G.W., Morgan, A., Ogunbajo, A., Trent, M. and Fortenberry, J.D., (2015). The role of sexually explicit material in the sexual development of same-sex-attracted Black adolescent males. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 44(3), 597-608.
- Bóthe, B., Tóth-Király, I., Griffiths, M.D., Potenza, M.N., Orosz, G. and Demetrovics, Z., (2021). Are sexual functioning problems associated with frequent pornography use and/or problematic pornography use? Results from a large community survey including males and females. *Addictive Behaviors*, 112, p.106603.
- Brown, J.D. and L'Engle, K.L., (2009). X-rated: Sexual attitudes and behaviors associated with U.S. early adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit media. *Communication research*, 36(1), 129-151.
- Bulot, C., Leurent, B. and Collier, F., (2015). Pornography sexual behaviour and risk behaviour at university. *Sexologies*, 24(4), pp.e78-e83.
- Camilleri, C., Perry, J.T. and Sammut, S., (2020). Compulsive Internet Pornography Use and Mental Health: A Cross-Sectional Study in a Sample of University Students in the United States. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11.
- Chowdhury, M.R.H.K., Chowdhury, M.R.K., Kabir, R., Perera, N.K. and Kader, M., (2018). Does the addiction in online pornography affect the behavioral pattern of undergrad private university students in Bangladesh?. *International journal of health sciences*, 12(3), p.67.
- Chowdhury, M., Khan, R.H., Chowdhury, M.R.K., Nipa, N.S., Kabir, R., Moni, M.A. and Kordowicz, M., (2019). Masturbation experience: A case study of undergraduate students in Bangladesh. *Journal of Population and Social Studies*, 27(4), 359-372.
- de Alarcón, R., de la Iglesia, J.I., Casado, N.M. and Montejo, A.L., (2019). Online porn addiction: What we know and what we don't - A systematic review. *Journal of clinical medicine*, 8(1), p.91.
- Grubbs, J.B., Kraus, S.W. and Perry, S.L., (2019). Self-reported addiction to pornography in a nationally representative sample: The roles of use habits, religiousness, and moral incongruence. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 8(1), 88-93.
- Hald, G.M. and Malamuth, N.M., (2008). Self-

- perceived effects of pornography consumption. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 37(4), 614-625.
- Harrison, L. and Ollis, D., (2015). Young People, Pleasure, and the Normalization of Pornography: Sexual Health and Well being in a time of proliferation. *Handbook of children and youth studies*, pp.155-167.
- Ley, D., Prause, N. and Finn, P., (2014). The emperor has no clothes: A review of the 'pornography addiction' model. *Current sexual health reports*, 6(2), 94-105.
- Lim, M.S., Agius, P.A., Carrotte, E.R., Vella, A.M. and Hellard, M.E., (2017). Young Australians' use of pornography and associations with sexual risk behaviours. *Australian and New Zealand journal of public health*, 41(4), 438-443.
- Mason, M., (1992). *Legislation Relating to Pornography in Australia*. Department of the Parliamentary Library.
- McKee, A., (2010). Does pornography harm young people?. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 37(1), 17-36.
- Miller, D.J., Raggatt, P.T. and McBain, K., (2020). A literature review of studies into the prevalence and frequency of men's pornography use. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 15(4), 502-529.
- Perry, S.L., (2017). Spousal religiosity, religious bonding, and pornography consumption. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 46(2), 561-574.
- Peter, J. and Valkenburg, P.M., (2016). Adolescents and pornography: A review of 20 years of research. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4-5), 509-531.
- Rothman, E.F., Beckmeyer, J.J., Herbenick, D., Fu, T.C., Dodge, B. and Fortenberry, J.D., (2021). The prevalence of using pornography for information about how to have sex: Findings from a nationally representative survey of U.S. adolescents and young adults. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 50(2), 629-646
- Shallo, S.A. and Mengesha, W.W., (2019). Exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials and Its Association with Sexual Behaviors of Ambo University Undergraduate Students. *Ethiopian journal of health sciences*, 29(4).
- Træen, B. and Daneback, K., (2013). The use of pornography and sexual behaviour among Norwegian men and women of differing sexual orientation. *Sexologies*, 22(2), pp.e41-e48.
- Vinnakota, D., Arafat, S.Y., Kar, S.K., Sivasubramanian, M., Hossain, S.R., Parsa, A.D. and Kabir, R., (2021). Pornography and Sexual Violence Against Women in India: A Scoping Review. *Journal of Psychosexual Health*, 3(3), 216-221.
- Walker, S., Temple-Smith, M., Higgs, P. and Sanci, L., (2015). 'It's always just there in your face': young people's views on porn. *Sexual health*, 12(3), 200-206.
- Wright, P.J., Sun, C., Steffen, N.J. and Tokunaga, R.S., (2015). Pornography, alcohol, and male sexual dominance. *Communication Monographs*, 82(2), 252-270.