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# The Effects of Pornography on Adult Males' Relationships

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**\*Corresponding author:** G Anne Vanderlaan, Saybrook University, Meridian, USA.**Received Date:** June 03, 2019**Published Date:** June 24, 2019**Abstract**

The object of this research is to look at the effects of pornography on any subsequent addiction and the resulting influence on adult male relationships. It is important to note that in the surveyed literature, there are few sources available on the topic of the influence that pornography addictions have on personal relationships with males, or the effects on the relationships. The topic of pornography and specifically addiction to pornography appears taboo.

There is an underlying problem that pornography and the addiction to it seems to have religious undertones [1] without it being problematic, merely a way of life. That problem has a name, sexual addiction. The sexual addiction is not a compulsion or just a way of life. This addictive behavior of watching porn while masturbating has the slang term of Faping. Faping is a term for males only. The term used for females doing similar behavior is Schlick. This form of sexuality is a solo activity, not usually include other people or partners. Watching pornography brings about most of this form of sexual activity. Males tend to be more susceptible to developing addiction to pornography. Some scholars have discovered that pornography usage has a damaging link with sexual satisfaction in a relationship [2].

Within the last few years the Internet has become a morass of easily available sexual content pornography, including the ease of access to pornographic films, and prolific observations of practices taboo to most of our society. Mulac, Jansma and Linz [3] research showed that men and women using pornography experience divorce more often than men and women who are stimulated by other elements, and do not use pornography for personal arousal. The primary effects of pornographic consumption while in on-going relationships negatively affected relationships with a link to infidelity, provoked by lack of commitment in the relationship. [3] When a man views pornography he is not as satisfied with his partners sexual expression or the way their partner looks. Men who indulge in pornography appeared to act out the dominance he witnessed in the pornographic scene and tended to not be concerned about his partners feeling or needs in the sexual pleasure or the relationship. There may be reason to believe that using pornography might impair the committed relationship [4]. The research shows the effects of pornography worsens relationships decreasing levels of sexual intimacy [5].

**Introduction**

Pornography is not new; it has been a part of every civilization on the planet. The biggest difference in today's pornography is that it is available for viewing anywhere. In the safety of one's own home, one can fulfill any kind of desire without another person involved. In a few clicks on the phone or on the computer one can dive into a virtual world of any sexual fantasy, including bestiality (including sex with animals of every kind), bondage, sex with children, and rape of a women by several men. Cybersexual activities include Softcore pictures, Softcore videos, Hardcore pictures, Hardcore videos, Sex chats, Sex via Webcam Live, or sex Shows [6].

The studios producing pornography films are set up in Hollywood fashion, complete with fake relationships. Actors with bodies transformed for more titillating appearances, like women

with large breasts, or men with enormous penises, perform for the camera, feats of sexual activity that a typical person could never replicate, or could never actually copy. Most often a woman with a man is portrayed as weak and vulnerable. There is no personal relationship developed, or romantic relationship implied, it is all about the performance. During 2016 alone, people viewed 4,599,000,000 hours of pornography on one of the biggest pornography sites on the internet [7].

Results suggested that greater discrepancies between partners in pornography use were related to less relationship satisfaction, less stability, less positive communication, and more relational aggression. Mediation analyses suggested that greater pornography use discrepancies were primarily associated with elevated levels

of male relational aggression, lower female sexual desire, and less positive communication for both partners, which then predicted lower relational satisfaction and stability for both partners. Results suggest that discrepancies in pornography use at the couple level are related to negative couple outcomes. Pornography differences may alter specific couple interaction processes which, in turn, may influence relationship satisfaction and stability [8].

Men are living a lie by watching pornography and masturbating to what is on their screens for many hours daily. They no longer need to court a partner or even give of themselves in any way. Sun, Bridges, Johnson, and Ezzell [9] explained, the commercial part of pornography has blended together this consistent theme of violence and abuse of women. Being put off by their partners or being ignored provides a justification to the male to find other sources for their sexual release. They can relieve themselves and not have to communicate with their partner. Their partner becomes the pornography. "Men look at women in a degrading fashion more often after viewing pornography. Behaviors toward women and the problems associated with non-sexual and sexual behaviors and then comparing them" [3]. The sexual stimulation must become more exciting to obtain their release. They can try and copy what they see but are rebuffed by their female partner. Even if they are successful in receiving consent to experiment from their female counterparts, sexual acts they desire to complete are impossible for typical humans. Men often cannot arouse themselves and feel compelled to go back into the world of fantasy found in the porn world. Yucel and Gassanov [10] use the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction that suggest that sexual satisfaction is contingent on the incentives and satisfactions found in the sexual relationship. It shows how the amount of satisfaction is in how it is contingent on satisfaction. The authors explained, "that sexual satisfaction will be lower when either partner uses pornography since the actual level of sexual rewards in marriage may not compare favorably to the expected level of sexual rewards obtained through pornographic images" (p. 137). This creates the need for exotic sexual acts from partners sabotaging normal sex because of those images viewed.

Pornography can be harmful in a marriage and can lead to men viewing their partner as less sexually attractive because pornography actors chosen specifically for their sexual appearance. Men tend to judge partners by comparing them to those he sees on the pornographic websites, and their sexual performance might give the man the idea that his partner cannot perform as she should. Maddox, et al. [2] explained, that pornography is a good example of this judgment in that they described the various problems through which pornography can be harmful to a marriage. In a marriage relationship when the other person is unhappy, the relationship can suffer. Couples influence each other and in a good relationship many people want to make sure they meet expectations. In marriages where those expectations remain unmet, the relationship may suffer. In a relationship many women feel bad if they cannot match up to the actors on the screen. Stewart & Szymanski [11], explained that that research in this area shows that there tends to be a reverse cause with marital unhappiness showing that it may

increase pornography use then reducing the use of pornography. They gave self-reports to those men who used pornography and wondered if the respondents told the truth about the pornography because they have found many men did not want to be honest about their pornography uses. They also did not know if these men used pornography solo or with their spouse because those couples who use pornography together have fewer problems than those who use pornography without their spouse.

Divorce and unhappy relationships do not always have wonderful endings. Not all people who view pornography are addicted and it is unknown to what extent that pornography use contributes to these problems. Access to pornography is allowed in various public places including are many libraries. How an individual addicted gets the help they need is unclear. Ariely and Loewenstein [12], proposed that pornography use or addiction with individuals may not be in the right state of mind, or not considered to be in a normal state. Policy makers or APA might step in and show the public the dangers linking pornography addiction to unhappiness and causing problems in relationships, even problems in committed relationships. They also suggest if a person is serious and wants to have a good relationship, they should seek out those people who would go along with their pornography viewing together in the marriage rather than keep it a secret. Ariely and Loewenstein [12]. The next section discusses the connection between porn addiction and its influence on the individual's brain.

### How is the Brain Influenced?

This section will discuss the various research conducted on pornography addiction on the brain using relative past research. Kühn & Gallinat [13] found that viewing pornography becomes an addiction, and it affects the male's gray matter, which makes it harder to be able to maintain relationships with sexual partners.

Since pornography appeared on the Internet, the accessibility, affordability, and anonymity of consuming visual sexual stimuli have increased and attracted millions of users. Based on the assumption that pornography consumption bears resemblance with reward-seeking behavior, novelty-seeking behavior, and addictive behavior, we hypothesized alterations of the frontal striatal network in frequent users [13].

These researchers also reported the reasons for this kind of addiction to pornography as: The negative association of self-reported pornography consumption with the right striatum (caudate) volume, left striatum (putamen) activation during cue reactivity, and lower functional connectivity of the right caudate to the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex could reflect change in neural plasticity as a consequence of an intense stimulation of the reward system, together with a lower top-down modulation of prefrontal cortical areas. Alternatively, it could be a precondition that makes pornography consumption more rewarding [13].

According to Brand, et al. [6] The results support a role for the ventral striatum in processing reward anticipation and gratification linked to subjectively preferred pornographic material. Ventral

striatal reactivity was sensitive to personal preferences and explained variation in symptom severity. Thus, mechanisms for reward anticipation in ventral striatum may contribute to a neural explanation of why individuals with certain preferences and sexual fantasies are at-risk for losing their control over Internet pornography consumption.

The newest research with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) shows that this problem of pornography addiction resembles gambling addictions and drug addiction [14].

The Internet has many areas where one could potentially become addicted to such as purchasing items on auctions site, gaming, social activities, and gambling. The one that has the highest addiction levels on the Internet for addiction currently is gaming. And it has been studied and researched more than any of the other possible addictive activities [15].

The next section involves the effect pornography could have on the individual's sense of self. Included in this discussion is the topic of self-perceptions, cognitive psychology.

### **How Men Measure Up to What They Watch on Pornography?**

Most people build who they are, or their identities from experiences, our back grounds, our beliefs, how we see the world and our internal self-perceptions. George Kelly (1905- 1967) was one of the earliest Cognitive psychologists. According to Kelly's Personal Construct Theory, everyone interprets the world differently and uses these constructs to predict how they will affect us as individuals (Allpsych, 2018). This theory is applicable to pornographic used. Pornography can influence a person's view of their own relationships and influence their identity. Certain amounts of shame might come with the addictive use of pornography, which could make it more difficult in forming relationships. Watching the actors in these videos could negatively effect on how men perceive their genitals or their bodies after viewing Internet pornography [16]. Body image while watching pornography could teach men that they are not big enough or good enough to be in a relationship. Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center reported on a 2014 study of 367 military personnel ages 21 to 40 found erectile dysfunction in 33.2 percent of the men [17]. The author goes on to state that the Increase in erectile dysfunction has coincided with easy access to internet pornography. In fact, many studies have found a correlation between an increase in pornography use and a decline in sexual desire, sexual arousal, enjoyment of sexual intimacy and sexual satisfaction as well as more sexual problems, such as erectile dysfunction. Addiction to pornography seems to affect the brain reward pathways, leading to a reward mechanism that can only be fulfilled with cues found in pornography and dulling the brain's responsiveness to normal sexual stimuli. In a way, increasing pornography desensitizes the individual to sexual stimuli [17].

If people have violent tendencies, they might be more affected using pornography. Those who already have violent tendencies are more affected by pornography. Serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer

explained how he used pornography in killing the seventeen people he abducted. Ted Bundy, was a convicted rapist and mass murderer, stated in an interview recorded only four hours prior to his execution, that hard-core pornography influenced his violent tendencies and his acting out during the 1970s. Many other sexual offenders and serial killers have said that having a pornography addiction was a motivator to their dastardly deeds. The question is not that every person who engages in porn will go out and act on what they see yet there is a pattern where pornography has played a part in their actions. The key to this is that pornography use might have enabled these people who have acted out a way of fantasizing and making in the norm of life for them, in a way of desensitizing them [18-20].

According to Elizabeth Smart [21] in speaking of her abduction by Brian Mitchell in 2002, her kidnapper raped her repeatedly. Once he decided to use pornography to incite himself further against her and that her experience became a living hell. She explained that her captor would make her watch pornography and reenact what she saw.

### **Did Pornography Play a Part in Her Abductor's Fantasy?**

Customer pleas for availability of pornography demonstrates there will be no slow down because of the addictive nature it has on the brain. Amplified ease of access to pornography shows that it is like an unstoppable train, will continuing to flourish to the detriment of human interaction. Research indicated that there is a relationship price to pay associated with pornography intake, precisely with respect to commitment in relationships [22]. Pornography is the ultimate high, much higher than sexual excitement from a partner. Pornography is always available, never talks back, never has a headache, and is never too tired. It never makes small talk or asks one to have foreplay or does not depend on being close to another human being. Pornography is always there for a person waiting with anything imagined needed or wanted. It is exciting, and one does not have to share the feelings. And one can go as many times per day without even buying flowers. Men using pornography for entertainment watching, then faping may not understand that they are making pathways in their brain connections from the arousal and then meeting that sexual satisfaction. They must watch pornography that is new and changing with more extreme results and might even dip into the no return zone that changes again to reach that sexual high. Pornography and sex trafficking come into play because the connection is real. Because of this buy-it-now idea of instant gratification, pornography has become an addiction as damming as slavery. It is sexual slavery bought and paid for by pornographic use. Most of those vulnerable people used and abused by these films do not realize the extent of their addiction, or even that they are addicted. Thus, the cycle continues and escalates as demand increases for more pornography. It is big business. There is an obvious need for more research as an effort to protect those who are most vulnerable to this trap and be aware of how pornography hurts relationships, and worse, and it has key ties in harming the brain [23-28].

## Summary

The topic of pornography addiction is obscure field of research. Most of the research deals with the religious side of its usage. The psychological aspects of it are lacking. There is a need for more study into pornography use since it is readily available on the internet [28-34].

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## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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