INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY GRATIFICATION AMONG YOUTHS: A STUDY OF NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, KEFFI

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of internet-enabled communication technologies has significantly changed the way people encounter adult-contents. These days, it is not uncommon to find internet sites and users push pornographic contents while youths – the dominant users of these platforms – consume these contents and there are obvious benefits that they derive from the experience. It is against this backdrop that this paper interrogates the consumption of internet pornography among undergraduates of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Using the survey method with questionnaire as the instrument, six of the seven faculties of the institution were sampled. Findings revealed that contrary to views held by some scholars that pornography is negative and capable of destroying family lives, it rather has positive aspects like helping consumers relieve stress, strengthen family lives, particularly if viewed with one’s partner. The study concludes that pornography in itself is not bad, but the use to which it is put. The paper recommends that though beneficial, it should be regulated so that only adults can have access to the sites and content.

Keywords: Internet, Pornography, Sex, Social Media, Student

INTRODUCTION

The internet is global system that primarily enables the connection of computers or computer-enabled devices to conveniently share information – in the form of texts, images, sounds – all over the word. However, beyond this function, it considered to be a highly sexualized environment (Peter and Valkenberg, 2006) as it has propelled pornography to the fore, compared to old times when pornography existed in the background. Today, pornography has gone social as sexually-oriented content is now presented in the same format as other contents we see on the social media (Arora, 2014). Now, it is not just about watching, one can like, follow, share and download pornographic materials on the internet conveniently. Pornography is now accessible on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp. Arora (2014) states that there are now full-time pornographic social media sites like Pornostagram (also called Uplust), Pinsex, Vine and Pingay. In Nigeria, we have NaijaUncut which is a full blown porn site. Given these
circumstance, one can conveniently say that access to pornography via the internet is unmatched by any other medium.

Peter & Valkenburg (2012) define pornography as professionally produced or user-generated pictures or videos (clips) intended to sexually arouse the viewer. According to Peter and Valkenburg, these videos and pictures typically depict sexual activities, such as masturbation and oral sex, as well as vaginal and anal penetration, in an unconcealed way, often with a close-up on genital. Li (2000) also sees pornography as the presentation of sexual contents with the intention of arousal. These two definitions above are all hinged on one common objective which is to arouse or excite the recipient of such pornographic content.

The vast majority of pornography material posted online is by a small core of internet site owners and social media users. However, this content reaches a much wider audience on the internet, spreading through social ties (Colleto, Aiello, Lucchese, and Silvestry, 2017). As noted by Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickur (2010), internet is present and prioritised in the lives of many youths, this means that Youths are the core users of the internet an owing to the ubiquity of the internet, one will not be wrong to say that youths encounter or are encountered by pornographic contents as they surf the internet. As a matter of fact, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor (2007) attest that there is an increase in the number of youths who are intentionally or accidentally encountering pornographic material on the online.

Many academic works have examined this issue of internet at different interjections. These angles cover demerits of pornography, influence of pornography on academic performance, cybersex and adolescents, sensitivity of the Africa culture to pornography, pornography consumption in the social media, dangers of pornography to teenagers, amongst others. This study will differ from these perspectives as it shall find out the gratification that youths derive from internet pornography.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Internet pornography is generally seen as addictive and it among other things has the potential to influence or teach new sexual behaviours, including destructive and violent ones (Edom, 2016; Bryant and Oliver, 2009). There are also school of thoughts that sees pornography as an idea that negates the societal values, especially in this part of the world. To this effect, many studies have dwelled on and exposed the negative side of the concept.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The thrust of this study are in two-fold, they are

1. To find out the sexual gratifications that youths derive from internet pornography.

2. To identify other reasons why youths expose themselves to internet pornography.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do youths derive sexual gratification from exposure to internet pornography?

2. What other benefits do youths derive from internet pornography apart from sexual gratification?
LITERATURE REVIEW

PORNOGRAPHY

Across different academic literature, various scholars have made attempts to describe the term pornography. Peter & Valkenburg (2012) define pornography as professionally produced or user-generated pictures or videos (clips) intended to sexually arouse the viewer. This definition explains pornography as the depiction of sexual related activities in a manner that is not hidden, often with close visual recording of the human genitals and oral, anal or virginal penetration. Reid, Gilliland, Stein and Fong (2011) equally define pornography as materials that performs two things:

a. Creates or excites sexual feelings
b. Contains explicit images or description of sexual acts involving the human genitals

The idea of Reid et al show that pornography are materials (that obviously are recorded) and made available for people’s viewership, for the purpose of prompting sexual sensations and thoughts. This recording also contains uncut images of sexual activities involving the genitals. Finally on pornography, the United States Attorney General Commission on pornography in 1986 (Cited in Owens, Belium, Maning and Reid, 2012) defined pornography as any material that is predominantly sexually explicit and intended for the purpose sexual arousal.

Coopper, Boies, Maheu and Greenfied (2007) have identified the following formats of internet pornography.

1. Image, text and audio files
2. Video files and streaming video
3. Webcams

Image, Text and Audio Files: these are pornographic images which may be scanned into the computer from photographs or magazines, produced with a digital camera, or a frame from video before being uploaded onto a pornographic website. The JPEG format is one of the most common formats for images, pornographic and erotic stories can be distributed as text files on pornographic sites. Audio files include recordings of peoples having sex or reading erotic stories.

Video Files and Streaming Video: This refers to internet pornography video clips which can be distributed in a number of formats, including Moving Pictures Expert Group (MPEG) Windows Media Video (WMV) and QuickTime more recently, Video Compact Disc (VCD) and Digital Video Disc (DVD) files which have greatly aided distribution of pornography online. Many commercial pornographic sites have begun offering High definition video content in WMV HD format. Similarly, Cooper et al, (2007) further submit that since mid-2006, advertising supported pornography video hosting service websites based on the YouTube concept have appeared. These sites generally use flash technology to distribute videos that were uploaded by users; these include user-generated contents as well as scenes from commercial pornography movies and advertising clips from pornographic websites.

Webcams: The live webcam is another format through which adult contents emerge. Webcam content can be generally divided into categories like; group show
offered to members of an adult pay site and one on one private sessions sold on pay-per-view basis. Currently, most popular video format for streaming live webcams is flash video (Cooper et al, 2007). Giving the ease with which internet pornography content can be accessed, it is no wonder that youths spend much time viewing pornography.

INTERNET

Internet on the other hand, as defined by the Business Dictionary (2018) is the connection of a computer to any other computer anywhere in the world via dedicated routers and servers for the exchange of all kinds of information such as texts, graphics, video and programs. For the purpose of this paper, internet is defined as a global network which facilitates the exchange of information among people anywhere in the world and at anytime, using their personal computer, smartphones and other internet-enabled devices. Internet is the chief driver of communication in the world today and as at December 31, 2017, the penetration of internet in Nigeria is estimated at 98,381,456 (Internet World Stat, 2018). Internet is the force that drives all new media platforms of communication, e.g social media, e-mail, blog, websites and podcasts.

EFFECTS OF CONSUMING PORNOGRAPHIC CONTENT

Although many might wish it otherwise, sex, even very explicit sex, does sell. Sexually oriented print, video, broadcast, and internet materials are highly profitable commercially, a condition which in itself ensures their continued presence (Bryant and Oliver, 2009). Aside from these economic effects, three major classes of effects of exposure have been identified, namely; arousal, attitudinal changes and behavioural effect (Gunter, 2002). The straightforward effect of consuming sexual media content is arousal – the heightened physiological state that energises sexual behaviour (Bryant and Oliver (2009). Arousal is measured in either of the two ways. The most common measure is the self-ratings of how aroused one is on a point scale. It may also be measured more directly albeit more obtrusively, through various physiological measures such as electronic sensors measuring penile tumescence, vaginal lubrication, or temperature. By most measures, men are typically more aroused by sexual media than women are, especially in response to sexually materials (Harris and Scott, 2012).

The individuality of sexual arousal is the concern that sex therapists have with certain sexual media from the internet or adult video stores. It has been argued by Carnes (2001) that since the internet has an unlimited number of websites that feature sexual desires that the user wants, this leads to sexual arousal because the stimuli is “new.” For instance, because of internet sex websites, a viewer can see images of any desired fantasy, many of which typically do not occur in most people’s sexual lives. These images are then “burned” into the brain and are fantasised about during sexual intercourse (Carnes, 2001).

Similarly, Dickson, Lang and Hubby (2010) argue that pornography relieves stress. They submit that when you are stressed, your brain releases cortisol that blocks problem solving and the ability to think clearly. Also, watching pornography with one’s spouse can open both minds to new sexual possibilities. As long as both
partners set practical guidelines and boundaries, both parties are bound to be satisfied. When both partners are sexually confident in their relationship, they are probably more committed and less likely to stray (Bryant and Oliver, 2009).

There is also a school of thought that argues that consuming sexually explicit material facilitates the expression of sexual urges and this decreases arousal. This invokes the construct of catharsis, the emotional release that follows the expression of an impulse. This popular idea comes most directly from psycho-dynamic models of personality. Applied to sex, the catharsis argument predicts that consuming sexual media relieves sexual urges, with the magazine or video, perhaps in conjunction with masturbation, becoming a sort of imperfect substitute for the real behaviour. A catharsis argument has been used to support loosening restriction on pornography (Kutchinsky, 1973) in Bryant and Oliver (2009) and has been reported by sex offenders as strategy for reducing impulse for committing an offense (Carter, Phentky, Knight, Vanderveer and Boucher, 1987)

There is also the attitudinal effect of consuming pornography. Repeated exposure to media with consistent set of messages may lead to cultivating a world view that increasingly reflects the perspective of the media. Such effects are especially likely to happen if the characters with whom viewers identify. Sexual promiscuity by a prostitute is likely to influence the values of the viewer than is similar behaviour by a respected suburban mother (Bryant and Oliver, 2009).

One of the major criticism of pornography is that it is ideologically anti-women (Bryant and Oliver, 2009), a concern especially levelled at violent and non-violent dehumanising pornography. It is usually women, not men, who are the play things or victims of violence by the opposite sex. Another problem is that it negates societal values e.g. underage exposure to sexual activities. On the long run, exposure to pornography may lead teenagers to believe to accept that indulging in sex in fun and ideal, due to their repeated exposure to it. Bryant and Oliver (2009) also argues that exposure to pornography may break down natural inhibitions of previously learned behaviours. For example, watching a video with oral sex or bondage may disinhibit the viewer’s prior existing inhibitions against engaging in such behaviour. Watching a rape scene where a woman appears to enjoy being assaulted may disinhibit the constraint against some men’s secret urge to commit the crime of rape.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The uses and gratification theory would be adopted for this study. Wimmer and Dominick (2007) purpose that uses and gratifications began in the 1940’s when research became intense in why audiences engaged in various forms of media behaviour and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs. The theory perceives the recipient as actively influencing the effect process since he/she selectively chooses, attends to, perceives and retains the media messages on the basis of his or her needs, beliefs etc.

The emphasis of the theory is on who uses which content, from which media, under which conditions and for what reasons? The question of effect
according to Folarin (2010) was now rather tangential to the analysts concerned. The scenario is: An individual has some needs related to communication, he or she selects the media that appear likely to satisfy those needs, he selectively consumes the content, an effect may or may not occur (Kunczik, 1988). The major weakness of the theory is that needs are simply listed and not properly operationalized.

This theory aligns with the study because like the theory postulates, people have needs which are satisfied through the viewing of pornographic contents and they choose the media platform that best delivers the content to them.

**METHODOLOGY**

The design adopted for this research is the survey method. According to Wimmer and Dominic (2007), survey is useful for collecting information from audience that could be generalised to represent a large population being studied. The population of this study is the entire student population of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Uwaleke (2007) defined population as the totality of individuals, objects, events, or constructs about which one is concerned. The population of this study is therefore 15,503, based on information received from the academic registry as at the 2015/2016 session.

However, a sample of 50 students made up of males and females were chosen from six faculties of the university. The size was statistically determined using the formula provided by Araoye (2004) in Ugande (2008), this formula can be used provided the population size is greater than 10,000.

\[
\text{n} = \frac{z^2 \cdot P \cdot q}{d^2}
\]

When \( n \) = the desired sample size,

\( Z \) = the standard deviation usually set at 1.96 since a significance level of 95% is desired.

\( P \) = the proportion in the target population estimated to have a particular characteristic under study. If there is no reasonable estimate, then 50% (i.e; 0.50) is used.

\( q \) = 1.0 – P (i.e. proportion of the population that does not share the characteristics under study).

\( D \) = degree of accuracy desired.

\( Z \) = 1.96 level of significance is 50%

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{n} &= \frac{z^2 \cdot P \cdot q}{d^2} \\
&= \frac{1.96^2 \cdot 0.4 \cdot 0.6}{0.04} \\
&= 3.8416 \cdot 0.4 \cdot 0.4 \\
&= 0.9220 \cdot 0.0016 \\
&= 0.0016 \\
&= 0.9220 \cdot 0.0016 \\
&= 50
\end{align*}
\]
n= 50

The justification for the sample size is that six out of the seven faculties are represented in the sample. The Faculty of Agriculture is located in Lafia and since the study is domiciled in Keffi, it was not part of the sample. The time and cost involved in carrying out the research also helped to justify this sample size. A bigger sample size would have been costly. Moreover, six faculties out of seven appears to be representative enough to generalise the findings.

To administer the questionnaire instrument, two research assistants, male and female were employed to assist in administering the questionnaire. 50 questionnaires were administered to the 50 respondents selected for the study—personally. The personal administration ensured that the researcher and his assistants were handy to explain anything that the respondents found difficult to ensure accurate data. This personal administration also ensured that all 50 questionnaires were returned and usable.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Refer TABLE 1: Consumption of internet pornography

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 1 was designed to find out from respondents if they consumed internet pornography. The data showed that all the 50 respondents answered in the affirmative. This represented 100% of the sampled respondent.

Refer TABLE 2: Sexual gratification from pornography

Source: Field Survey 2017

The question in Table 2 was designed to find out from respondents if they derived any form of gratification from consuming internet pornography. The data show that majority of the respondents, with 40, representing 80% opined that they derive sexual gratification from consuming pornographic content.

Refer TABLE 3: Other benefit internet pornography

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 3 sought to find out if respondents derived other benefits from pornography apart from sexual gratification. Findings show that majority said they derived other benefits such as stress relieve, learning new sexual techniques and mere sexual arousal from consuming pornographic content on the internet.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The problem this study set out to unravel was to find out the gratification youths derived from consuming pornographic materials on the internet. Findings revealed that 100% of the sampled respondents said they consume internet pornography. This aligns with the position of Bryant and Oliver (2009) who said internet pornography is highly profitable because of large number of patronage. Findings from Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents said they derived sexual gratification from viewing internet pornography. This majority opinion is based on 80% of the respondents which is in tandem with the submissions of the catharsis construct as enunciated by Bryant and Oliver (2009), that consuming sexual media relieves sexual urges, with the magazine or video, perhaps in conjunction
with masturbation, becoming a sort of imperfect substitution for the real behaviour.

Furthermore, Table 3 sought to find out from respondents if there were other benefits they derived from pornography other than sexual gratification. 60% of the respondents opined that, indeed they derived other benefits from internet pornography. These benefits include; the relieving of stress, learning new things about sex and getting aroused. This submission is in agreement with the position of Carnes (2001) who argues that since the internet has unlimited number of websites that feature any sexual desire the user wants. This leads to sexual arousal because the stimulus is ‘new’. For instance, a viewer can see any image of desired fantasy, many of which do not exist in peoples’ sexual lives. These images are then burned into the brain and are fantasised about during sexual intercourse.

Also, giving credence to the above findings, Dickson, Lang and Hubby (2011) say pornography relieves stress, they submit that when one is stressed, the brain releases cortisol that blocks the problem-solving abilities and the capacity to think clearly. In a study they conducted, they found out that, men who watched images of naked women cut their cortisol in half and did a lot better at a maths test. Women who watched pornography also reported that it relieved stress, due to a reduction in cortisol. Bryant and Oliver (2009) submit that watching pornography with your partner can open both of your minds to new possibilities, as long as both partners set practical guidelines and boundaries.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Pornography from the findings appears to have useful benefits to the consumers. This is because majority of the respondents strongly feel that contrary to the notion held by others that pornography is negative, addictive and capable of destroying families and relationships. It has very many benefits that if properly harnessed would overcome whatever negatives that people may think or say about it. This position is strongly is supported by Dickson, Lang and Hubby (2011) who posit that it relieves stress. Furthermore, Bryant and Oliver (2009) argue that watching pornography can actually open your mind to new sexual possibilities. The study therefore concludes that pornography in itself is not bad or negative but the use to which it is put. If properly utilised, as stated above, it has benefits that can build and strengthen families and relationships rather than destroy them.

The study recommends that even though pornography appears to have benefits, it should be regulated so that only adults of 18 years and above should have access to such sites and contents. A situation where it is an all comers’ affair should be discouraged. Sex education should be taught early to children so that misconceptions and abuse of pornographic contents would be avoided. Most importantly, the seemingly dehumanising and violence meted out to women should be eliminated from all pornographic contents and the benefits that pornography offers should be emphasised in all pornographic materials. Such benefits as sexual arousal, sexual gratification and new sexual techniques should form the core of all pornographic contents.
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LIST OF TABLE

TABLE 1: Consumption of internet pornography

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<tr>
<th>OPTION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
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TABLE 2: Sexual gratification from pornography

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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TABLE 3: Other benefit internet pornography
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<th>OPTION</th>
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<td>Relieves Stress</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaches New things</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elicits arousal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
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