

Issues caused by pronography



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The Illusion of Pornography

It's no secret that pornography has become mainstream entertainment in our society, with porn-related material accounting for over 30% of all data transferred across the internet. In fact, porn sites receive more regular traffic than Netflix, Amazon, & Twitter combined *each month* (Kleinman). Despite its widespread production, usage, and distribution, few are aware of the problems that viewing pornography creates in the lives of those who use it. Pornography changes the way people think, act, and feel. It propagates sex myths, sex boredom, and sexual dysfunction and contributes to unhealthy romance, increased domestic violence, and unstable relationships. If people would stop using pornography, they would be happier, healthier, and more able to truly love those who matter most to them.

Most people would claim that pornography causes these problems because it is immoral and inherently wrong. I too have heard my fair share of the moral problems of pornography. As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, I was taught from a young age that pornography is wrong and that it should be avoided. Starting at age 12, members of the church are even periodically interviewed by their bishop (a religious leader) to ensure that they have not been viewing pornography. If it is found that they have, goals and plans are made to remove the use of it from their lives. For me, the use of pornography is wrong and morally unclean. However, another person might not see any moral problem with it. The debate of whether pornography is morally right or wrong is highly subjective to individuals' private beliefs and perspectives.

Regardless of the morality of pornography, countless millions of people use it every day. Many people start viewing it out of curiosity. Others find it an escape from the stresses and problems of the world. Others just enjoy the pleasure of doing so. Whatever the reason is, the dangers of pornography are not readily apparent in the beginning. It seems innocent enough. However, there exists a far larger problem than just whether pornography is moral or not.

Since the 1880s, sexually explicit materials have been deemed not just morally problematic in western culture, but dangerous due to the medical and social hazards its consumption allegedly entails (Štulhofer, et al.). A common problem that pornography consumption creates is the acceptance of sex myths. A myth is a widely held but false belief. For example, there is a common myth that at the end of a rainbow there lies a big pot of gold. Many people who believe this will try to find the end of rainbows with the hope of striking it rich. Similarly, a sex myth is a widely held but false belief or idea about relationships or sex. Just as myths about rainbows and pots of gold are not real, pornography focuses more on creating a fantasy of human sexuality, rather than a realistic depiction of it. As absurd as it may seem for people to believe in these fantastical hidden treasures, people who use pornography are often fooled into believing things that are just as unrealistic.

One of the main myths perpetuated by pornography is the myth of perfection. In pornography, everything is set up to be perfect. The more someone tries to mimic this perfection portrayed in porn, the more and more dissatisfied they become with their actual sex life and relationships because

their natural relationships and sex come nothing close to what is presented. According to one study, “ pornography consumption leads to greater agreement with common sexual myths” (Martyniuk, et al.). These fantastical depictions give people a false view of love and intimacy and create a simulation of reality. The more someone sees pictures of and reads books, articles, and stories about leprechauns and their hidden gold the more convinced they could be that they are actually real. Similarly, the more one watches pornography, the more one will believe and try to replicate the things that are shown in it, and the more one will fall short of expectations.

Falling short of expectations and short of the ‘ perfect ideals’ in pornography causes people to be unhappy and unsatisfied with their sex life. This is sometimes called “ sex boredom.” Porn often leads to less sex and less satisfying sex. For many porn users, porn eventually means no sex at all (Park, et al.). As one group of researchers stated, actual physical intimacy is “ more important for sexual satisfaction among young men than the range of sexual experience” gained through pornography (Štulhofer, et al.). People can actually become more attached to pornography than they do to their actual partner. In fact, one study suggests that “ Time spent viewing cyberpornography seems to be a robust predictor of lower sexual satisfaction” (Blais-Lecours, 653). The more someone uses pornography, the more unsatisfied they become with their current circumstances.

Another correlation between pornography and lower sexual satisfaction is illustrated by increased sexual compulsiveness and sexual dysfunction.

Multiple studies have shown that porn is directly related to problems with arousal, attraction, and sexual performance A strong connection between

porn use and low sex drive, erectile dysfunction, and trouble reaching orgasm has also been shown (Daneback, et al.). In one study of servicemen in the military, the researchers concluded that “ chronic internet pornography use resulted in erectile dysfunction and delayed ejaculation” in those who were studied (Park). Because of these problems with sexual disfunction, many people even avoid having sex or being in a relationship because they are so embarrassed. Another study reported that “ distress caused by cyberpornography... predicted higher sexual disfunction and sexual avoidance” (Blais-Lecours, 653).

Pornography doesn't affect our outward behaviors alone. Rather, its effects on behavior result from alterations that go much deeper— even to the level of the chemistry of the brain. Pornography actually physically changes the brain and neuropathways of someone who uses it. It is widely proven that drugs influence our brains. Scientists used to think that addictions could only be caused by physical substances such as drugs that were put into the body, creating a dependence for them. Recent studies, however, have shown that there are behaviors or actions such as pornography usage “ that can act like ‘ drugs’, lead to craving, compulsion-like behaviours and even to behavioural addictions because of their rewarding nature” (Christensen).

Both drug use and pornography use have the same effect on the brain. Extensive research and evidence indicate that current and recently abstinent cocaine abusers compared to drug-naïve controls have decreased grey matter in important regions of the brain. (Connolly et al.). Another study reported the same results for individuals using pornography- that there is a significant negative association between reported pornography hours per

week and gray matter volume in the brain (Gallinat, Kühn). Both the things we put into our bodies and the things we do, such as watching porn, are able to physically change our brains and the way they think.

Scientists used to think that the brain is fixed, static, or “hard wired;” once a person reaches a certain age the brain ceases to grow and develop. We are now beginning to understand, however, that our brains exhibit an amazing phenomenon called “neuroplasticity,” which basically means that the brain has the ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. The brain is not like a rock that never changes but is instead compared to plastic—able to be shaped and influenced by its environment. In other words, the brain is constantly changing or rewiring itself based on what we see and do. The more we see or do a particular thing, the stronger those neuro connections or “pathways” become. These neuropathways are like a trail in the woods. Every time someone uses a trail, the wider and more defined it becomes. Similarly, the more messages are sent down a neuropathway, the stronger and more defined it becomes.

Pornography is especially good at creating and strengthening these neuropathways in our brain. As Dr. Norman Doidge, a researcher at Columbia University, explains, porn creates the perfect conditions and triggers the release of the right chemicals to make lasting changes in the brain.

Essentially, pornography use is able to rewire the human brain. He continued to explain that “neurons that fire together wire together,” which means that the more someone views pornography, the stronger that neuropathway becomes and the more their brain becomes wired to pornography. He concluded that people who use pornography “develop new maps [or paths]

in their brains, based on the photos and videos they see. Because it is a use-it-or-lose-it brain, when we develop a new map area, we long to keep it activated.”

Eventually, a brain can become so wired to pornography that it becomes an addicted. In 2005, Dr. Eric Nestler wrote a paper describing all addiction as a dysfunction of the reward centers of the brain. Addiction occurs when the pleasure/reward neuropathways are hijacked by exogenous drugs such as cocaine, or by natural processes essential and inherent to survival such as food and sex (Nestler). When we use these substances or participate in these actions, a “feel good” chemical called dopamine is released in our brains.

Dopamine is called the reward transmitter, because when we accomplish something- run a race and win- our brain triggers its release... By hijacking our dopamine system, addictive substances [and behaviors] give us pleasure without our having to work for it... An important link with porn is that dopamine is also released in sexual excitement, increasing the sex drive in both sexes, facilitating orgasm, and activating the brain’s pleasure centers. Hence the addictive power of pornography. (Doidge)

Some claim that viewing pornography is a healthy habit beneficial for sexual and romantic relationships. They advocate watching pornography as a way to reboot and excite the sex life of romantic partners, helping them draw closer together. However, despite these claims, research shows that these social, physical, and neurological changes caused by pornography have very unfavorable effects in real-life romantic relationships. Rather than helping

couples strengthen their relationships, pornography users are even more likely to experience a romantic breakup.

Studies have often found that spouses can react negatively to their companion habitually using pornography, especially if it is without them. A partner's pornography use can contribute to feelings of insecurity or betrayal, especially if it has been connected to dishonesty or hiding. While many heterosexual couples view pornography together and find that it enhances the relationship, men still use pornography alone in such relationships far more often than women and this potentially sets up a dynamic where female partners feel inadequate and insecure, and consequently, less committed to the relationship or resentful, with either feeling contributing to greater likelihood of breakup. (Perry, et al.)

Far from uniting couples and creating strong relationships, pornography instead drives them apart. In the long run, things don't fare much better. Even if couples do use pornography to try and spice up their sex lives, there is a direct relationship between the frequency of pornography use and the likelihood of a breakup. "Earlier pornography use, both in general and corresponding to greater use frequency, predict a higher likelihood of experiencing a romantic breakup within the next 6 years" (Perry, Davis).

Even if couples using porn do stay together, the relationships aren't always healthy. A common problem among couples, married or otherwise is domestic violence. According to the World Health Organization, almost one third (30%) of women worldwide who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their

intimate partner in their lifetime.” This problem is further magnified by the use of pornography. In one study, “ adolescent dating abuse victims (ADA) watched pornography more frequently than non-victimized counterparts. ADA victims reported viewing pornography approximately twice as often per week, twice as often per month, and approximately 2.6 times more frequently per year” (Rothman, Adhia,).

However, the problem extends further than just looking at pornography, it also comes from what is depicted in it. A few years ago, a team of researchers looked at 50 of the most purchased and rented porn films. Of the 304 scenes in the movies, 88% contained physical violence and 49% contained verbal aggression. Shockingly, only one scene in 10 didn't contain any aggression, and each scene averaged 12 physical or verbal attacks. Producers even managed to fit in 128 of these attacks into just one scene (Bridges, et al.). These depictions shape the attitudes and actions of those who watch them. One group of researchers concluded “ little doubt that, on the average, individuals who consume pornography more frequently are more likely to hold attitudes conducive to sexual aggression and engage in actual acts of sexual aggression” (Wright, et al.). Even pornography that does not have depicted physical violence affects those who watch it. Other studies have found that exposure to both violent and non-violent porn increases aggressive behavior, including both having violent fantasies and actually committing violent acts and assaults (Allen, et al.).

Pornography use doesn't just hurt individuals and couples physically, but emotionally as well. Dr. Gary Brooks, a well-respected and experienced psychologist who has worked with pornography addicts for over 30 years, <https://assignbuster.com/issues-caused-by-pronography/>

explained how pornography makes people unhappy. “ Anytime [someone] spends much time with the usual pornography usage cycle, it can’t help but be a depressing, demeaning, self-loathing kind of experience” (Brooks). No one wants to be unhappy or depressed in life, but that is exactly what happens when they use pornography.

Pornography changes the way people think, act, and behave, not only on the psychological but on the physical level, and ultimately leads to unfavorable and unhappy results in relationships. When you think of pornography, think of the rainbow and pot of gold. Yes, rainbows are pretty and promise attractive rewards, but that’s all they really are after all— just an illusion. They promise success and happiness and satisfaction, but they are always just out of reach. It’s time to stop chasing after the rainbows and spend our time and energy with those that we love most— where the true treasure and happiness is found in life.

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