

Pornography a form of violence sociology essay



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Pornography is a form of violence against women because it could lead to battery, rape, sexual harassment, pain and even death. Pornography is frequently differentiated from other erotic material. Erotic material could have the aim of provoking sexual arousal without the expression of violence and abuse. On the other hand, pornography is a sexualised image of men and women. However, those images are violent and abusive. "..... pornography is the recorded physical and sexual abuse of women" (Itzin, 1992: 65). Pornography became a very big concern for women in the beginning of the second wave feminism. Anti-pornography feminists argued that the image women bear goes a long way in determining how men behave towards them. Pornography was " the targets of women concern in the beginning of the early days of second wave feminism. The crux of the argument was that these images affect men's behaviour towards women" (Pilcher &Whelehan, 2007: 97). Pornography and other sexualised images of women influence men's behaviour towards women.

" Anti-porn feminist were particularly exercised by hard-core porn which they claimed depended on violent imagery, and by rumours of the existence of the so-called ' snuff' movies (supposedly depicting the actual torture and death of a woman on-screen)" (Pilcher &Whelehan, 2007: 98).

In hard-core porn women are beaten with whips, some women are bound and chained. A lot of times, women are made to suck the male genital, and in most cases it goes deep down their throats.

" There are pictures and descriptions of men trying up women, gagging or blindfolding them, pretending to or actually torturing them and sometimes

stimulating or, in some cases, actually recording on films their rape or deaths” (Itzin, 1992: 134).

These sorts of images are violent because that is what violence is all about. Violence is an action or activity that hurts other people bodily or emotionally.

An analysis of hard-core porn movies shows that violence has become fatal and brutal since the 1970s (Allison & Wrightson, 1993). This shows that pornography is a form of violence against women.

Most of the women used in the production of some of the porn movies we have today were actually forced to participate in them. When we watch these porn movies, we always tend to overlook the violence involved in it. We tend to believe that the violence is not real but only staged. There are lots of times that some of the women who were used in the production of pornography confess that they were forced to participate in it. Some women even confessed that they were actually tortured and raped in the production of the porn movies they participated in. A very good example is the confessions of Linda Lovelace. In the book ‘Ordeal’, she admitted that she was actually violated, assaulted and abused in the production of the porn movie called ‘Deep throat’. “Much of the time, the violence is real in pornography. So are the women who have been bought and sold to appear in the pornography” (Cole, 1989: 20). In most hard-core porn, the violence involved in it is actually real. Linda’s case shows that most of the women used in pornography do not actually derive any pleasure in it though they appear to enjoy it.

In the same vein, pornography could lead to all sorts of sexual violence such as rape, battery and sexual harassments. Pornography increase men's desire for sex.

“..... pornography today is used to described sexualised depictions of women and men intended to provoke arousal in the spectator, often posed in scenes suggestive of sexual congress or anticipating a sexual act” (Pilcher & Whelehan).

When men watch videos of naked women or see pictures of naked women, they crystallize those images, and that automatically increase their urge for sex. At such times, they will be willing to do anything to satisfy their sexual desire. That is one of the reasons why some men sexually assault their wife or girl friend. When some men see the rape involved in pornography, they tend to see it as normal and something they can do and get away with. Pornography can thus influence a man to want to rape. A young man once confessed that he began to develop rape fantasies after watching a porn movie. In his words,

“ I went to a porno book store, put a quarter in the slot, and saw this porn movie. It was a guy coming up from behind a girl and attacking her and raping her. That's when I started having rape fantasies. When I seen that movie, it was like somebody lit a fuse from my childhood on up..... I just went for it, went out and raped” (Allison &Wrightsman, 1993: 37).

The account of this man indicates that pornography could lead to rape, battery and other forms of violence against women.

Pornography subordinates women to objects of sex – it makes men regard women's body as an object to satisfy their sexual desires. It also makes men believe that women derive pleasure in rape, battery and other forms of sexual violence because it always seem like women enjoy sexual violence in porn movies.

Pornography..... represents women merely as sexual commodity..... it tells men that women enjoy sex and are always available for it, even when they deny it. It tells men that women secretly enjoy rape” (Itzin, 1992: 140).

Pornography makes men see women as sexual objects, and as a result of that, they tend to believe that they can use women at their own will. In most cases, when women do not give in to men's sexual demand, men tend to use force and violence to exercise control over women's body and sexuality. They thus forget that women are human beings as themselves, and their bodies have to be respected. “ Pornography “ depicts women as dispensable objects, as things less than human” (Cole, 1989: 19).

As a result of the many violence, pain and harm that pornography constitutes for women, anti-porn feminists argued that pornography depicts violence against women. They thus advocated that pornography should be regulated. Anti-porn feminists argued that pornography is one of the tools of patriarchy and one the many ways in which women are exploited and oppressed.

” Sex for many feminists moved away from being question of pleasure and desire, to simply a means through which male power is enacted and this

again affected the perception of pornography” (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2007: 97-98).

Catherine Mackinnon an anti-porn feminist argued that pornography is an action against women. She argued that it is one of the ways in which men oppress and exploit women. She argued that pornography is also one the ways men exercise their supremacy over women. She said that women are terrorised and assaulted in the production of pornography. She also argued that pornography has established an incorrect way of viewing women’s sexuality. Like other anti-porn feminists, she supported the view that pornography should be censored. Another anti-porn feminist, Andrea Dworkin also argued that pornography is closely associated with rape, battery, sexual harassment and other kind of sexual violence against women. She argued that the production and consumption of pornography both depict a lot of violence against women.

On the other hand, pro-sex feminists argued that pornography is not the cause of male violence against women. They refute the anti-porn feminists call for the censorship of pornography. They thus argued that pornography should not be censored or outlawed. In their view, banning pornography would restrict the freedom of individuals to take part in and use pornography. They thus advocated that women choice to participate in and use pornography should be protected by the law and not restricted by the law.

“ During the 1980s, then the battle line became drawn between those who felt pornography should be banned and those who feared that that ever

more stringent censorship would put a greater curb on people's freedom and would first affect those already seen as marginal – such as gay men and lesbians" (Pilcher & whelehan, 2007: 98).

A pro-sex feminist, Carole Vance argued that pornography is not the cause of male violence against women. She argued that male violence against women is a characteristic of the patriarchal structures of the society.

" From Carole Vance's point of view, the fantasy that violence against women is located or originates in objectionable sex magazines or videos rather than being part of the deep cell structure of every institution, in our culture struck some feminists as hopelessly naïve and wrong....." (Pilcher & Whelehan 2007: 99).

It is true that some women consume pornography. However, we should not ignore the many dangers that pornography poses to women. So far, this essay has shown that pornography is a form of violence against women. We must understand the fact that pornography is mostly produced and consumed by men. Only a few women use pornography. " Pornography represents the general interest of men" (Itzin, 1992: 557). The free circulation of pornography causes more harm to women than good. However, those harms are misapprehended, misinterpreted, misrepresented or ignored by those who opposed the censorship of pornography. There are evidences that pornography poses a lot of harm to women. The account of the young who confessed that he began to develop rape fantasies after watching a porn movie clearly shows that pornography could lead to sexual violence. Research also showed that men who often use pornography tend to

be sexually violent against women. “..... studies.....show that men who are exposed to violent pornographic materials (either in printed or pictorial medium) develop calloused attitudes towards women, and are more likely to be more aggressive towards women in subsequent interactions than those who do not view such materials” (Allison & Whelehan, 1993: 38).

Research and studies have consistently shown that pornography can instigate sexual violence against women. In the light of this, the safety and well being of the majority population of women should not be jeopardised just because we do not want to restrict individual’s freedom to participate in or use pornography. Pornography should therefore be outlawed as it is a form of violence against women.

In conclusion, it is very evident that pornography is a form of violence against women. It has led to different form of sexual violence and assault against women. It develops the fear of being raped in women.

Pornography also depicts violence against women as it contains images of violent, abusive and aggressive behaviours towards women. It is also evident that some of the violent images in pornography are actually real.

Pornography also objectifies women. It reduces women to objects of sex - a sex machine. Pornography helps men to exercise control over women. This thus indicates that it is one of the many weapons of patriarchy.

It is very imperative that pornography is outlawed. Pro-sex feminists have argued that male violence against women is not a consequence of pornography. That is certainly not true because research and studies have

revealed that pornography is closely linked with rape and other forms of male violence against women.

The feelings, emotions and lives of women should not be put at risk because we want to defend the liberty of individuals who want to get involved in or consume pornography. Pornography should therefore be outlawed as its costs (violence and harm against women) outpace its benefits.