NET NEUTRALITY:
A LACK OF ASSOCIATION
BETWEEN PORNOGRAPHY EXPOSURE AND
SEXUAL FUNCTIONING AND WELL-BEING
Ruth Charig, Trainee Clinical Psychologist

STUDY OVERVIEW

WHO WATCHES VIOLENT ACTION/HORROR MOVIES?

WHO BELIEVES THAT BY WATCHING VIOLENT MEDIA, YOU
ARE MORE LIKELY TO COMMIT VIOLENT ACTS??

HOW MANY OF YOU WATCH / HAVE EVER WATCHED
PORNO??

• A popular website streaming free pornographic content
reported 21.2 billion visits to its site in 2015

• International studies consistently report high rates of
pornography use in the range of 80% to 99% among men
and 30% to 86% among women (Hald, Seaman & Linz, 2012)
How many people feel that watching porn is harmful to sexuality and well-being?

What do people have against porn?

The role of perceived realism

• There is still little known about the processes that underlie the relationships between sex explicit media use and psychosocial outcomes, hindering the formation or validation of theories relating to sexual media effects.

• The role of perceived realism has been highlighted as an important individual difference in the susceptibility to these sexual media stimuli (Baams et al., 2015).

• Perceived realism refers to the extent that the consumer believes the material depicted in the sexually explicit material (SEM) is a realistic portrayal of sexual relationships.

• Social realism

• Utility

Family communication about sex

• What influences perceived realism?

• Research suggests that a young person’s ability to communicate with their parents about sexual topics can influence their sexual development and subsequent behaviors.

• Without this, individuals may be (1) more likely to consider SEM to be a realistic and definitive model of sexual relationships, and concomitantly (2) more susceptible to be influenced by SEM.

Research aims

• What is the relationship between (1) use of SEM and (2) sexual satisfaction, sexual attitudes, body satisfaction, and psychological well-being?

• What is the role of perceived realism in mediating the relationship between SEM exposure and these outcomes?

• If this relationship exists, is it moderated by family openness and communication about sex?
METHODS

• A mixed-gender sample of adults (aged 18 and above) was sampled opportunistically through the use of advertisements around host universities and social media (Facebook and Twitter)
• We utilised a cross-sectional, online survey design using a secure institutional survey platform to design and distribute the questionnaires
• Participants completed a number of self-report measures embedded in the survey

RESULTS

• 372 participants completed the survey
• Age range 18 to 70
• 68.6% female, 27.9% male and 2.8% other gender identity
• 71.8% sample reported using oSEM in the last 3 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>oSEM Use</th>
<th>Body Satisfaction</th>
<th>Sexual Satisfaction</th>
<th>Perceived Realism</th>
<th>Ambivalent Sexism</th>
<th>Ambivalent Sexism Toward Men</th>
<th>FCSQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. oSEM Use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Perceived Realism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Body Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sexual Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ambivalent Sexism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Total Ambivalent Sexism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Total ambivalence toward men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. FCSQ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• A significant indirect relationship between oSEM exposure and Ambivalent Sexism through Perceived Realism
• A significant indirect relationship between oSEM exposure and Ambivalent Sexism Toward Men, through Perceived Realism

• No relationships between oSEM use and sexual satisfaction, body satisfaction, sexist attitudes and psychological well-being uncovered
• Small indirect effect of oSEM on sexist attitudes, through perceived realism
• No moderating effect of family communication

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical:
• The Differential Susceptibility in Media Effects Model (DSMM; Peter & Valkenburg, 2013)
Research:
• Results portray a neutral picture regarding the influence of pornography on a range of outcomes
• Methods not sophisticated enough to effectively and meaningfully examine these relationships
• Sexuality too intricate a construct to be understood in quantifiable terms

Clinical:
• Provides an interesting challenge to dominant narratives around the impact of pornography
• Importance of ideographic approach when formulating the role and function of pornography for the individual

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Any questions?