



Prevalence of Pornography Addiction among Adolescents in Selected Secondary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Pornography addiction may predispose adolescents to negative behavioral and emotional patterns and consequently affecting their psychosocial well-being. There is need to determine whether adolescents watching pornography are merely satisfying some curiosity or struggling with a compulsion. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of pornography addiction among the students in selected secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. Classical Conditioning and Social Learning theories were considered in explaining the subject of pornography addiction. The study employed a quantitative research approach that was conducted among students in two selected secondary schools in Nairobi County. The sample size comprised 666 students who were purposively selected from the two schools. Data collection was done using a questionnaire and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21. The study found that a significant number of students are addicted to pornography. The prevalence is attributed to internet accessibility and affordability of pornographic materials. Based on the results, the study recommends the development of a curriculum that addresses age appropriate sexuality lessons at all levels. Furthermore, parents, educators and other stakeholders of interest should be equipped with knowledge to foster healthy development of adolescents sexuality while minimizing the risks related to pornography addiction.

Keywords: *Pornographic materials, pornography addiction, pornography prevalence, students and pornography, adolescents and pornography*



INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a brain disorder characterized by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequence. Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control and craving. Other signs include diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors, interpersonal relationships and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death. Addiction also affects neurotransmission and interactions between cortical and hippocampal circuits and brain reward structures. As a consequence, the memory of previous exposures to rewards (such as food, sex, alcohol and other drugs) leads to a biological and behavioral response to external cues which in turn trigger craving and/or engagement in addictive behaviors. (American Society for Addiction Medicine, 2019).

Sexual exploitation through pornography is perpetuated by adults who take advantage of the psycho-social challenges experienced by adolescents (Grauerholz, 2000). Sexual exploitation through pornography may add more challenges on adolescents when adults continue to exert negative influence on the young minds. According to Halgin and Whitbourne (2009), sexual engagements with underage individuals are regarded as atypical and are driven by the older individual need for gratifying their psychological desires. The challenge brought about by sexual exploitation is that adolescents may not have the ability to cope with addictive behaviors resulting from exposure to explicit sexual content.

Human brain is naturally customized to function in an environment where sexually alluring inducements are rare (Polk 2015). Pornography has become another form of contemporary super-normal stimulus, more rewarding than junk meals. This may lead to negative consequences in social, mental, physical and economic aspects (Stein, Hollander and Rothbaum, 2009). Apart from the social, mental and physical well-being, therapists and medical practitioners may be subjected periodically to handling cases of sexual difficulties such as pornography induced erectile dysfunction (PIED) and other sexual satisfaction problems. Clinical review reports by Park, Wilson, Berger, Christman, Reina, Bishop and Doan (2016) state that conventional considerations that earlier elucidated man's sexual complications are unsatisfactory in explaining the increase in cases of erectile dysfunction and low libido in men under the age of 40 years. Pornography addiction alters the brain's system of motivation and this is a possible cause of sexual problems related to pornography (Park et al, 2016). It is critical to note that although pornography addiction is excluded in the Diagnostics and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-5), the resultant effects of viewing sexually explicit content can bring about serious negative consequences.

Online pornography addiction increases sexual activities among the adolescents (Luder, Pittet, Berchtold, Akre, Michaud and Suris, 2011). In the United States of America, Gilkerson (2013) reported that there were many websites with over 4 million pages of pornography material. The first exposure takes place at around age 11 years and the largest consumers of



pornography are 12 to 17 year olds (Gilkersen, 2013). Studies regarding prevalence of pornography in different parts of the world are important in understanding emerging trends and for therapy purposes.

In a research of adolescents in south-west Nigeria involving 232 adolescents, it was established that 9.5% of respondents spent most of their internet time watching pornography (Longe, Chiemeké and Onifade, 2007). Thatcher and Goolam (2005) found prevalence rates of pornographic internet use in South Africa at 5% of the country's population. These findings in other African countries may indicate that the challenge of pornography addiction is a global issue. Pornography indications in key African countries like South Africa and Nigeria which share economic and social cultural aspects may be indicative of a similar situation in Kenya

Pornography viewing in Kenya, just like other countries, is becoming widespread due to its availability and affordability (Communication Commission of Kenya, 2004). A survey by Njue, Voeten and Remes (2011) on pornography among the youth in Kisumu, showed a third of the participants stating that their sexual behavior increased after watching pornographic material. The survey report highlighted the story of a 17-year old boy who visited a neighbor and the house girl played porn videos and convinced the boy to practice what was in the video with her. The survey also stated that video show halls were popular leisure spots for teenagers where they go to watch movies. The authors also found out that eight out of 12 videos played contained pornography with most attendees being young men, but some girls as young as 12 years being allowed to watch. M'itiiri (2007) in a research on pornography among the youth in contemporary churches in Nairobi found out that pornography affected almost every family in Nairobi in one way or another. The youth who participated in the interview indicated that 65% were exposed to pornography during their leisure time.

Despite various studies having been taken on addiction to pornography among the adolescents, this remains an issue in Kenya due to increased pornographic materials in social media platforms. Given this gap, this study intended to address the prevalence of pornography addiction among adolescents in selected secondary schools in Nairobi County.

METHODOLOGY

The study was quantitative in nature and targeted two schools in Nairobi County. This approach was used because the study comprised of numerous respondents. Moreover, data from their responses would be used objectively to measure prevalence of pornography addiction among adolescents in selected secondary schools in Nairobi County.

The study sample comprised of students who were enrolled and in session in two schools in form one to form four. Purposive sampling was adopted since the two secondary schools had dominant adolescent populations that were appropriate for the study. It is important to note that the study excluded students who were 20 years and above.



In regards to data collection instruments, the study utilized questionnaires to screen and also to get socio-demographic information of the participants. The first questionnaire was used to screen the participants for pornography and other addictions. Most important in the questionnaire was information on whether the participant had engaged in pornography or in other addictions. The information in the questionnaire included age, gender, class level, family details, religion they subscribed to and other pertinent information. The use of the structured and semi-structured questionnaires was helpful in gathering in-depth information as well as clarifying to the respondents what may not have been clear to them earlier.

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Specifically, data collected from the questionnaire, were input into the statistical package, coded and the outcome was used to present the research findings using tables and figures. The study observed people's rights and ethical issues throughout the research process. Participants had to indicate their willingness to participate in the study through a consent granted by their school principal.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

In this study, data on gender, age distribution based on mean, level of study and parental status was sought. This was to ensure that the selected sample represented the entire population

More than a half (54.8%) of the students who participated in the survey were male while 45.2% were female. This shows that the selected sample had more male students than female students. This is because the population of male students is more than the female students

The age distribution of the selected students is 16.5 years. This indicates that majority of students from the represented sample were 16 years old.

Slightly over one-third (35.3%) of the students were from form one, 24.5% were from form two, 25.3% were from form three and 14.6% were from form four. This indicates that the form one students were more willing to participate in the survey unlike the other classes.

Almost two-thirds (60%) of the respondents lived with both biological parents while 20.2% lived with single parents. However, 19.8% stated that they lived with a step parent, alone, with a guardian, with divorced or separated parents or orphaned by one parent or both. This means that a vast majority of the participants were raised by both biological parents and single parent.



Prevalence of Pornography Addiction among Adolescents in Selected Secondary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya

The study sought to examine the prevalence of pornography addiction among adolescents in selected secondary schools in Kenya. In order to respond to this objective, the study covered the following areas: gender based distribution on prevalence of pornography addiction, whether students access internet, whether students watch pornographic materials and the duration of watching pornographic materials.

Gender Based Distribution on Prevalence of Pornography Addiction

The study sought to establish the prevalence of pornography addiction among students in each of the selected schools. Table 1 shows the distribution of students in selected schools on pornography addiction when classified by gender.

Table 1

Gender Based Distribution on Prevalence of Pornography Addiction

	School 1		School 2		General	
Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	172	57.7	192	52.5	364	54.8
Female	126	42.3	174	47.5	300	45.2
Total	298	100	366	100	664	100.0

In school 1, over half (57.7%) of the respondents with prevalent pornography addiction were male while 42.3 % were female. In the school 2 based on gender distribution on prevalence of pornography addiction slightly over half (52.5%) of the respondents were male and 47.5% were female. Overall, the male students with prevalent pornography addiction were 54.8% whereas 45.2% were female students.

Students' Accessibility to Internet

The students were asked to indicate whether they had access the internet. Slightly more than half (54.6%) of the students indicated that they did not have access to the internet while 45.4% reported that they had access. The findings show that a considerable number of students had access to the internet.



Whether Students Watch Pornographic Materials in Selected Schools

The students were asked whether they watched pornographic materials. 21.3% of the students indicated that they watched pornographic materials while a vast majority (78.7%) of them indicated that they did not watch pornographic materials. This is an indicator that there are a number of students who have access to pornographic material.

The Duration of Watching Pornography among Adolescents in Selected Secondary Schools

The students were asked to indicate the duration they took to watch pornographic materials. Figure 1 shows students responses.

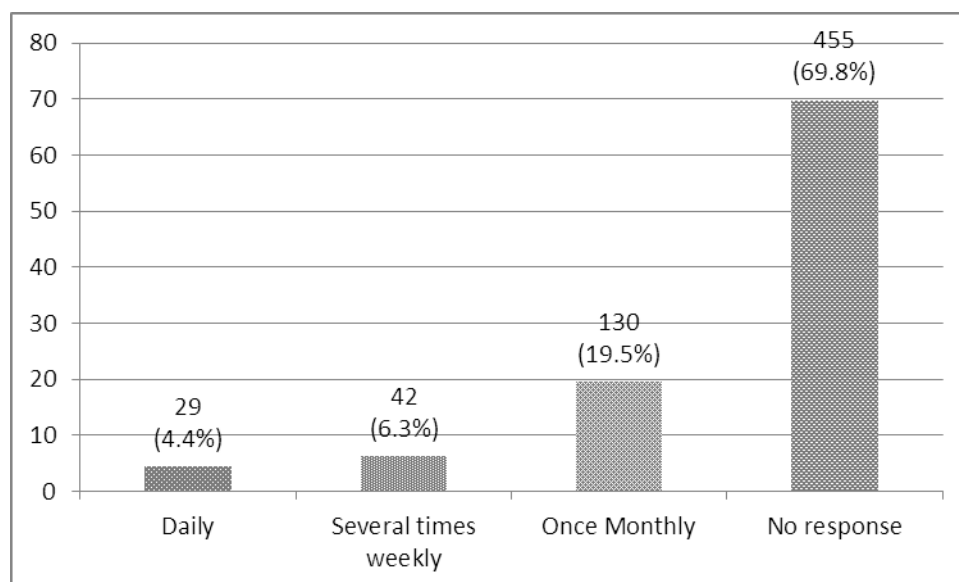


Figure 1 Duration of watching pornographic materials among students

On the duration of watching pornography by those who watch pornography more than two-thirds (69.8%) did not respond 19.5% indicated that they watched it once a month, 6,3% indicated several times a week while 4.4% pointed out that they watch pornography daily. From the results, it is clear that a significant number (10.7%) spend much of their time watching pornographic materials.



Association between Demographic Characteristics and Pornography Addiction

The study examined the association between demographic characteristics (gender, access to internet) and pornography addiction. Chi-square test for independence was used to establish association.

Association between Gender and Pornography Addiction among Students

The study examined the association between gender and pornography addiction among students in selected secondary schools in Nairobi County. Table 2 shows chi-square test results.

Table 2

Chi-square Test for Association between Gender and Pornography Addiction

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	237.576 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	313.618	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	176.448	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	664		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.10.

Chi square tests showed a significant association between gender and pornography addiction, 0.05, χ^2 (3, N=664) =237.576, P= .000. This implies that prevalence of pornography addiction is dependent on gender.

Association between Access to Internet and Pornography Addiction

The study examined the association between access to internet and pornography addiction among students in selected secondary schools in Nairobi County. Table 3 shows chi-square test results.



Table 3

Chi-square Test for Association between Access to Internet and Pornography Addiction

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.690 ^a	1	.001		
Continuity Correction ^b	9.921	1	.002		
Likelihood Ratio	10.683	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.674	1	.001		
N of Valid Cases	658				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 36.35.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Chi square tests showed a significant association between access to internet and pornography addiction, $0.05, \chi^2 (1, N=658) = 10.690, P = .001$. This implies that pornography addiction is dependent on access to internet.

DISCUSSION

This study indicates that a significant number of the students watch pornographic material. This is because pornographic materials are easily available and affordable as earlier stated by the Communication Commission of Kenya, (2004). In addition increased use of the internet by the adolescents could also contribute to pornographic material exposure. According to the CCK (2013) the number of internet users in Kenya stood at 21.2 million by December 2013; representing a 52.3 % of the population. There is therefore a possibility of growing unregulated internet which would lead to a relative increase in unlimited exposure to pornography. Furthermore, the Internet is present and prioritized in the lives of many youth (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickur, 2010). For example, in the United States, 93% of all adolescents ages 12 to 17 use the Internet; 63% go online daily and 36% are online several times a day (Lenhart, Purcell et al., 2010). The World Internet Report surveyed 12 to 14 year olds from thirteen different countries and found that 100% of British youth, 98% of Israeli youth, 96% of Czech youth, and 95% of Canadian youth reported using the Internet regularly (Lawsky, 2008). Given that the average American teen owns 4 mobile devices (Lenhart, Purcell et al., 2010), it can be assumed a great deal of their online activity is portable, hence largely unmonitored (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005).

From the findings, majority of the respondents were boys. This is because boys are more exposed to sexually explicit material. This echoes Flood (2007) in a study among 200 Australians aged between 16 and 17-years. The study found out that three-quarters of boys and one-tenth of girls had watched an X-rated movie. Three out of four participants had been accidentally exposed to pornographic websites, 2% of girls and 38% of boys had deliberately



searched for online sexual content. Pizzol, Bertoldo and Foresta, (2016) in a study among 1,565 final year high school students in Italy showed that 1163 (77.9%) admitted to have consumed pornographic content with 59% of the boys admitting that pornography always stimulated them.

During the survey, it was concluded that a significant number of the students spend much of their time watching pornography and this is an indicator of addiction. This is attributed to the fact that pornography is widely accessible (millions of sites with sexual explicit content are available 24 hours a day; 7 days a week), from a number of sources: books, adult magazines, videos, internet and airing of sexually explicit movies on cable television (Kerby, 2009). Also the frequency and explicitness of sexual content in mainstream media has increased greatly (Straus, 2004).

From this study, a vast majority of the students (98.5%) live with a parent or a guardian who takes care of them. Despite having guardians, prevalence of pornography addiction is evident among adolescents in this study. This is because the traditional methods of sex education are not available and the traditional roles of the society, grandparents, aunts and uncles as educators on sexuality issues are limited. This is attributed to rural-urban migration of many families cutting links with the traditional educators, parental absenteeism and lack of indigenous culture (Ahleberg, 1994). Where parents are available some are too shy to talk about sexuality to their children. This has led to a vacuum on sexuality education which is being bridged by the media. However, media provides unfiltered knowledge on sexual issues which coupled with the loose regulatory mechanisms may lead to university students turning to pornography materials as a source of sexuality information.

The results show a statistical significant association between gender and pornography addiction. The findings agree with studies by Fattore and Melis (2016) which explored gender and sex dissimilarities in behavioral control. Among the behavioral addictions studied, sexual addiction which is usually referred to as compulsive sexual behavior was discussed. Conclusively, it was established that men are more likely to use cybersex and experience craving for pornography than women (Fattore and Melis, 2016). In another study by Carroll (2017), after the frequency of pornography use was examined, casually dating men were 42 times more likely to report viewing pornography at least weekly or more than casually dating women. From the same studies, pornography use was considerably less in more committed relationships with a nearly 50% difference in the level of frequent use (Carroll, 2017). Fundamentally, there was a constant trend where many women reported little or no use in comparison to men who regularly used pornography.

Findings show a statistical significant association between accessibility to internet and pornography addiction. This aligns with studies by Chowdhury, Chowdhury, Kabir, Perera and Kadera (2018) which highlighted how digital technologies had become an aspect of everyone's lives. With an increase in online accessibility, there was a noted increase in consumption of pornography among young adults, especially in school, college, and universities in Bangladesh. The merit of that study was that it rendered thorough evidence on



the behavioral patterns of students as a result of consumption of online pornography. In other studies by Jenkins (2017), there was evidence that the advent of internet especially from the 1990s has contributed to wide handiness of pornographic movies and images.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there was a significant association between gender and pornography addiction among students in selected secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. Basically, the results confirm a persistent difference in pornography patterns between male and female students. Although these variances may have slight or no practical importance, it is evident that gender had a role to play in pornography addiction among the students.

Further, the study indicated a statistical significant association between accessibility to internet and pornography addiction among students in selected secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. Fundamentally, the high prevalence of internet use among students suggests that they are more inclined towards online pornographic materials. Therefore, frequency of internet use was significantly related with constant accessibility of sexual content from explicit sites.

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