

Prevalence and Factors contributing to Pornography viewing among Male Students in selected Universities in Kenya.

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Abstract: Pornography viewing afforded through advanced technology has become a widespread social phenomenon globally and has contributed to changing the terrain of human sexuality in both positive and negative ways. Technology in form of computers and internet has made the availability of pornography faster and easier than ever before. However, the media provides unfiltered sexual explicit materials which when coupled with the loose regulatory mechanisms may expose university students to pornography. This paper explores the prevalence and factors contributing to viewing of pornography among male students in selected universities in Kenya. The Social Learning Theory was used to inform this study. The study adopted a descriptive research design employing a mixed method approach in data collection. Proportionate, random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 487 students from public (270) and private (217) universities and four students' counselor in Kenya. Research data was collected using a questionnaire and a structured interview guide. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistic, while the qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The findings of the study revealed that 93% of the respondents had been exposed to some forms of Sexually Explicit Materials (SEM) and 16.7 % were highly exposed. The highest age in which participants were first exposed to porn viewing at 62% was between 13 to 18 years. The findings of the study revealed that the students are exposed to pornographic images found in various sources; magazines, videos, televisions, computers and internet. Forty eight percent (48%) of the respondents indicated that they use pornography to satisfy their curiosity, 43% to seek for sexuality knowledge and information and 43% for entertainment purposes. The study recommends for provision of age appropriate sexuality information and education at all educational levels, public and media forums. Strong policy guidelines and programs to control and regulate pornography use should be put in place for the betterment of humanity.

Key words: Sexuality, Media, Pornography, Sexually explicit materials

I. Introduction

Pornography viewing in Kenya, just like elsewhere in the world is becoming widespread due to its availability and affordability of porn materials (Communication Commission of Kenya, (CCK,) 2004). Pornographic materials are easily accessible and available on the internet, television, videos and print materials. According to the CCK (2013) the number of internet users in Kenya stood at 21.2 million by December 2013; representing a 52.3 percent of the population. There is therefore, a possibility that increase in unregulated internet would lead to a relative increase in unlimited exposure to pornography more so to the young people.

The world has become a highly sexualized cultural environment (APA, 2007) and the frequency and explicitness of sexual content in mainstream media has increased steadily (Straus, 2004). Use of pornography is becoming increasingly common in today's society, particularly on the internet (Hald and Malamuth, 2008). This has been attributed to the theory entitled, Triple- A Engine: Affordability, Anonymity and Accessibility as advanced by Cooper, Delmonico and Burg, (2000). Pornography is affordable due to widespread competition from distributors as well as increasing chances of free supply. Viewers can use pornography in the privacy of their homes; hence, it is anonymous (Carroll *et al.*, 2008). Pornography is also 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). The easy access to porn material exposes all those that are interested in viewing to unfiltered porn material irrespective of their age.

In traditional Kenyan society, the topic of sexuality was handled at an appropriate stage by the elders, grandparents, aunts and uncles. There were cultural activities that catered for the education of both boys and girls on sexual matters, for example, during initiation (Mbiti, 1991). This form of sex education helped to prepare the young people for their adult life. However, in the contemporary society, 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 can be 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.

College students have reported highest levels of pornography use (Brussels, 2005). This may be due to the fact that students are at crucial stage in life where they are making choices that affect their sexuality. The college years; 18 to 24, represent a transitional phase for young adults into adulthood (Kelly, 1998). Arnett (2000) referred this time span as “emerging adulthood” and he noted that the stage is particularly important in exploring sexuality and is connected to a higher likelihood of display of deviant behaviours and possibly to a higher frequency of pornography use. The university students at this stage have a great deal of freedom to choose their own relationships and sexual activities. Multiple studies by Boies (2002); Gordon, Juang, and Syed (2007) reported that about 40% of college students viewed internet pornography during their lifetime. Wallmyr and Welin (2006) found that 15- to 25-year-old males primarily viewed pornography to get aroused and masturbate (at 48.8 %); out of curiosity (39.5%) and because ‘it’s cool’ (28.5%). This was also supported by studies by Goodson, McCormick and Evans (2001), and Emmers-Sommers (2005) in which males claimed that their motivation for viewing sexually explicit content was curiosity about sex and for sexual entertainment.

Although studies have been conducted in developed countries on prevalence and factors that contribute to porn viewing, empirical data from developing countries is lacking. This is despite increased development of new technologies which greatly contributes to ways of accessing disseminating and selling the porn materials. According to CCK (2013) the number of internet users has increased tremendously in Kenya. Arguably, the university students, who are in the institutions of higher learning, are more exposed to internet use more than any other group in Kenya. This is because most universities have invested heavily in development of technologies to enhance learning. However, as highlighted, the media exposes people to unfiltered material hence the university students could easily get access to the pornographic material. Moreover the university student are at are at a transition phase into adulthood hence possible interest in issues on sexuality. According to the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), pornography viewers can learn, imitate and model the behaviours they view from the pornography. This study therefore, sought to establish the prevalence and factors contributing to viewing of pornography among students in selected universities in Kenya.

II. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design so as to obtain the current status of the pornography viewing. Pornography viewing is the independent variable while prevalence and for pornography viewing is the dependent variable.

The study targeted the male students’ population in both Public and Private Universities in Kenya. Theorists and researchers have suggested that mens’ interest in pornography can be attributed to their evolved interest in sexual variety and multiple partners (Mosher, 1988; Malamuth, 1996). Pornography provides men with a multiple of physically attractive “virtual” partners which help to provide physical gratification without commitment (Malamuth, 2001). Universities are centers of new technologies and effects from exposure to new technologies like internet can therefore be evident. Students were chosen for this study because they are a sexually active group of the society and have minimal limitations of their sexual exploration and exposure. Student’s counselors drawn from the sampled universities also participated in the study. Students are likely to confide with the students’ counselors who emphasize with them on various psychological concerns from a non judgmental perspective (Corey, 2009).

Proportionate stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the participants for the study. The Universities were stratified into; Public and Private Universities. Only the main campuses of Public Universities, and Private Chartered Universities were used in this study. Proportionate population from each cluster was considered for sampling. A sample size of 487 respondents; Public Universities (270), Private Universities (217) responded to the questionnaire and four students’ counselors were interviewed.

A self-report questionnaire with closed and open ended questions was used to collect information on the SEM to provide data on the prevalence and the factors contributing to students’ use of pornography. A questionnaire was used to enable respondents express their opinions freely and to give them adequate time to give well thought out answers. According to Kothari (2004), the use of questionnaires helps to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings. Structured interviews were conducted with the student counsellors to elicit in-depth information on opinions and views on the topic of study. Students’ counsellors deal with student private matters that affect their healthy functioning. They were included in the sample because they were in a position to contribute to the topic based on the interaction with students.

Quantitative data analysis was done by use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive data and qualitative data analysis was achieved through thematic analysis while open ended questions and interviews responses were recorded manually and transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

In the ethical consideration and concerns, permission was sought from the relevant authorities from the national to the University level. Similarly, informed consent was sought from the participants who took part in the study. Moreover, confidentiality and anonymity were assured and observed during data collection and management to those who participated.

III. Results And Discussions

Most of the respondents (81%) were in the age bracket of 20 to 24 years and in their second and first year of study (62%). 16.7 % of the respondents were highly exposed to pornographic images found in magazines, videos, television, computers and internet. The SEM materials were used to: satisfy curiosity (48%), seek for knowledge and information about sexuality (43%) and for entertainment purposes (43%). 42% of the participants further indicated that they get information about sexual relationships through watching sexual explicit materials.

The age of first exposure to SEM of the respondent was viewed as crucial as it is likely to influence individual’s sexual development. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of the respondents’ age of first exposure to SEM:

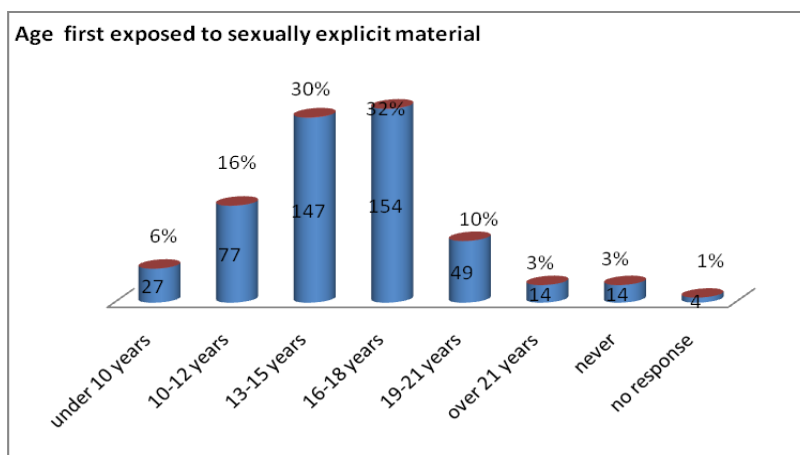


Figure 1: Age of first exposure to SEM

The age of first exposure to SEM among the respondents was highest between age 16-18 years (32%) followed by 13-15 years (30%); then 10 to 12 years (16%). Some of the respondents had been exposed to SEM as early age 10 years and below (6%). The percentage of respondents who had never been exposed to SEM was small (3%). This implies that 93% of the respondents had been exposed to one form of SEM or other. These results resonate with studies by Cline, (2004) which indicated that boys between the ages of 12 and 17 are the primary consumers of pornography.

The frequency of exposure to SEM was to inform on the prevalence of exposure to pornography as illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Frequency of Exposure to Sexual Explicit Materials

Aspects	No response	Never	At least once a year	At least once a month	At least once a week	At least once a day	Involvement in SEM
I have to find time to watch pornography on films and videos	4%	43%	22%	18%	9%	4%	53%
I can surf the internet in my own space so I can watch pornography	6%	42%	19%	17%	9%	6%	51%
I watch women in lingerie/swimsuits	8%	42%	15%	18%	10%	7%	50%
One can learn a lot about sex from the cyber, so I make a point of practicing cyber sex	8%	70%	9%	6%	4%	3%	22%
strip joints are common in major towns, so I make some time to visit these joints	7%	65%	17%	7%	2%	3%	29%
It is through reading romantic/erotic novels that you learn about sex, so I make some time to read such	8%	39%	23%	21%	6%	4%	54%

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materials							
It is through practicing phone sex or video sex that I learn about sex	7%	55%	11%	13%	6%	8%	38%
AVERAGE FREQUENCY	6.9%	50.9%	16.6%	14.3%	6.6%	5.0%	42.2%

Table 1 show that majority of the respondents indicated reading romantic and erotic novels at 54%, watching pornographic films and videos at 53%, surfing the internet at 51% and watching women in lingerie/ swimsuits at 50%. The average frequency of exposure to any sexual explicit materials was at 42.2 % with exposure to at least once a day being small (5%). The small percentage of respondents who view SEM on a daily basis cannot be ignored because the sample was drawn from a general population. Several studies have revealed that adolescents and young adults report using offline SEM for example books, magazines, movies and phone sex hotlines at 50% (See Boies, 2002; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2003). According to Floods & Hamilton (2003); 5 % males were exposed to x-rated videos weekly and 16% exposed every 3 to 4 weeks while for On-line exposure 24 % were exposed weekly and 22 % every 3to 4 weeks.

The researcher further explored the extent of exposure to SEM of the respondents. The levels were classified into three categories; none, low and high exposure as illustrated in Table 2;

Table 2: Levels of exposure to Sexual Explicit Materials

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
NO EXPOSURE	17	3.5	3.7	3.7
LOW EXPOSURE	366	75.2	79.6	83.3
HIGH EXPOSURE	77	15.8	16.7	100.0
Total	460	94.5	100.0	
System	27	5.5		
Total	487	100.0		

The percentage of exposure to SEM was: 3.7 %, no exposure; 76.2 %, low exposure and 16.7 %, high exposure. Hence, 96.3% of the respondents had been exposed to some forms of pornographic materials while 3.7 % had not been exposed. Researches carried out by Boies, (2000); Goodson, McCormic & Evans, (2001) that indicated that approximately 50% of college students report viewing pornography on internet. Mass production of visual images in videos, television and now internet that are found in places which were formerly not reached by these media, may have contributed to the high percentage of exposure.

Views from Students counselors reinforced this findings . The counselors indicated that students access pornography through various sources as exemplified in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 1

Phones, print media- books and magazines, photographs, printed materials, internet being the major source due to privacy, videos, advertisement, and strip joints, social media; sharing pornography on face book, twitter etc, students are able to create porn on the social media by use of cameras on phones, laptops; take photographs of nude individuals in sexual acts and post them on social media, dating sites e.g. u-tube films are free of charge and accessible

Students consume pornography materials from a variety of sources; internet, print media, books and magazines among other sources. They also pointed out that students can also create their own SEM which they share with their friends through the social media. Incidences of pornography use among university students were further confirmed through interviews from the students’ counselors:

Excerpts 2

Yes, but a few, presence of photography with nude pictures in the hostel rooms, students seeking counseling after they are trapped in the addictive aspects of pornography. Requests for room exchange by students who are uncomfortable with roommates who uses porn are not uncommon. Some students seek for assistance when they are caught by hostel supervisors watching pornographic movies and videos.

The study established fairly high percentage of pornography viewing among university students sampled. The average frequency of exposure of the respondents was at 42.2 % and 16.7 % of the respondents were highly exposed to SEM. The trend of viewing SEM appears to be on the increase. From the local media, an article featuring in the Kenyan Dailies; (The Standard News paper, 2014, June 20) confirmed that SEM has become common in our society. The article by Muchene, (2014) entitled; “Full- frontal nudity, explicit and raunchy lyrics “noted that various kinds of videos have found their way into the local scene provoking a major debate as to whether the boldness, sexy and eye-watering extreme artsy shown is health to our generation”. The

article cited a case of a topless boys' band dancing suggestively with female actors that had been banned from T.V. screens yet it had received 621,500 views on YouTube. According to the author, viewing SEM material was becoming more fashionable especially to the young people. Towards this end the musicians who are out to sell use sexual imagery while the film makers perfect their skills in using SEM to attract audience.

Given the increasing use and tolerance to porn material in the wider community, the study sought to find out the factors that contribute to pornography consumption among university students in Kenya. Table 3 illustrates the factors that contribute pornographic viewing among students;

Table 3: Factors contributing to viewing of pornography

Factors	Percentage Response
To satisfy curiosity	48%
Learn more about sexuality	43%
For entertainment	43%
To get information about sex	42%
To relax	20%
To turn me on	15%
My partner and I like it	11%
Because I do not have a sexual partner	11%
As a safe out let for sex	10%
Because my friends approve it	8%

The respondents indicated that they viewed pornography to; satisfy curiosity at 48%, learning more about sexuality at 43 %, for entertainment at 43% and to get information about sex at 42%. Only 8% of the participants viewed pornography because their friends approved of it. These findings resonate with existing literature that shows that male view pornography due to various factors. For example, Wallmyr and Welin (2006) found that 15- to 25-year-old males primarily viewed pornography to get aroused and masturbate at 48.8 %, out of curiosity (39.5%) and because 'it's cool' (28.5%). This was also supported by studies by Goodson, McCormick & Evans, (2001), and Emmers-Sommers (2005) in which males claimed that their motivation for viewing sexually explicit content was because they were curious about sex and for sexual entertainment.

Curiosity is a desire to know, see or experience that motivates exploratory behavior towards acquisition of new information (Litman & Jimerson, 2004; Litman & Spielberg, 2003). Lenner, (1998) pointed out that sexuality is a deep and significant human value throughout the whole life. The adolescents and young adult who are in the psychosocial stage of developing identity and intimacy respectively (Erickson, 1968) are in great need of sexuality information. Haney, (1989) noted that adolescent curiosity about sexuality is a normal and healthy aspect of human development. But in the absence of socially accepted channels of learning about sexuality they may resort to the freely available SEM in the media to get information about sexuality. Flood, (2009) further pointed out that exposure to pornography shapes sexual knowledge. However, the media does not have a forum through which the viewers could raise questions or seek clarification thus leaving them with no option but take the material as offered. Pornographic viewers are likely to imitate and model similar behaviours with other human beings.

For the majority of pornography producers and consumers, pornography functions as entertainment rather than art, (McKee, Albury and Lumley, 2012). Pornography is a form of adult entertainment but due to its availability, virtual all individuals can access it. According to Cranes, Delmonico and Griffins, (2001) pornographic materials provide very powerful sexual stimulants leading to sexual release through masturbation. Hence, viewing of pornography which may start casually as to satisfy curiosity, for sex information or for entertainment may eventually become the way of life leading to pornography addiction

Responses to an open ended question on why students turn to pornography viewing, the respondents gave four themes: curiosity, education, entertainment and a safe outlet for sex;

Excerpt 1: Curiosity

Just curious, it is a way of satisfying curiosity, people use this to kill curiosity, it maybe to satisfy curiosity, it enhances curiosity and helps to retrieve sexual urge at old age

Excerpt 2: Entertainment:

It's fun, it's a source of entertainment, It is only entertainment, its entertainment, if the motive is entertainment then it is not wrong, it's a form of entertainment, it keeps the brain sexually upfront and its some sort of entertainment, if the motive is entertainment then it is not wrong, the intentions of making porn is purely for entertainment, if the reason is for entertainment purposes.

Excerpt 3: Education:

It exposes us to more information in the field of sex, we want to learn more, it at sometimes helps to learn more about sexual intercourse related issues, knowledge is power, sometimes it is used for education purposes, teaches us what society doesn't; it's quite educating, it can be informative, they enable the viewer to know more about sexuality and be able to sustain his/her relationship with the other partner, one learns a lot from watching, It is a learning resources, for me it is knowledge, acquiring sexual information is not bad, it educates those who are not experienced in sexual matters, one learns a lot from the sex, because it provides insight on human sexuality, it has no health implications and since you were having sex there is no harm in learning new tricks.

Excerpt 4: Outlet for sex:

It can be a sexual outlet, it can be a tool for sexual release as long as it doesn't affect someone's daily activities, safe way to sexually release, masturbation is said to be healthy, helps to retrieve sexual urge at old age

If such uses of SEM; to satisfy curiosity, for entertainment, education and as a safer outlet for sexual tension are pursued unabated then the negative aspects of pornography can easily spread in the society. For example, pornography as a safe way for sexual relief could lead to addiction and abnormal sexual expressions (see Cranes et al, 2001). On the other hand, education from the pornography exposes young people to both positive and negative aspects and without guidance they could acquire socially undesired sexual behavior. More constructive means of satisfying curiosity, educating, entertaining and releasing sexual tension by the youth should be encouraged so as to discourage the use of SEM. As highlighted, the traditional Kenyan society had ways of safe sex education that was embedded in social values for the youth. It appears that forums through which the youth used to acquire socially desired sexual education have been abandoned but without alternative approaches creating vacuum of sexual knowledge that has exposed the youth to unfiltered sexual education from the media.

IV. Conclusion And Recommendations

From the findings of this study, it was shown that students get exposed to pornography as early as 10 years of age and below with highest age of exposure being between 16 to 18 years. Pornography viewing was evident among students with 96.3% of respondents exposed to some forms of pornography and a small percentage (5%) exposed on a daily basis. Therefore based on the data from this research porn viewing is prevalent among male in Kenyan universities.

Many factors contribute to pornography viewing among them curiosity, seeking for sexuality education and for entertainment purposes. The implication is that there is a dearth of knowledge and the society need to come up with alternative methods that will equip the youth with socially desired sexual knowledge.

Therefore the study recommends the Kenyan education sector management should come up with curriculum and programs that addresses age- appropriate sexuality education at all levels. This is to provide sexuality information from balanced and objective sources where the adolescent and young adults are free to engage and to seek for clarification on sexuality issues. In addition, recognizing the prevalence of SEM use among young adult college students and the likelihood that SEM use can begin in childhood and adolescence the study recommends that parents, educators, policy makers, health professional, and law enforcement be equipped with knowledge on sexuality that can enable them foster a supportive environment that can facilitate health development of youth sexuality, while minimizing the risk potential for negative effects related to pornography. Moreover research ought to be carried out on the addictive effects of pornography, rehabilitation and treatment of pornography addicts in Kenya.

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