



ARTÍCULO ORIGINAL

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Recibido: 5/02/2019. Aceptado: 02/04/2019

CONSEQUENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY USE: BRIEF REPORT

CONSECUENCIAS DEL CONSUMO DE PORNOGRAFÍA: BREVE REPORTE

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LEER



ISSN 2565-0564

Psicosom. psiquiatr. 2019;9:18-25



ABSTRACT

Introduction: Despite the various investigations carried out to date, the debate on the possible harmful consequences of pornography remains open. There are different opinions on the possible negative or positive consequences of its use. Some authors argue that these consequences are measured by other variables such as attachment, sex education or personality traits, which will determine their magnitude.

Method: The objective of this study is to obtain a brief and general approximation to the type of consumption of a Spanish-Speaking population (N=3.700), through a short survey, in order to meet a starting point that allows us to continue the research in this field.

Results: The results highlight that 30- 45% of the participants could be suffering some difficulties derived from pornography use in different areas (Family, Social, Academic or Work), being unable to stop looking at pornography and using pornography as emotional regulation strategy. A large percentage of participants (55-70%) do not suffer any consequences. Only 7,06% of the subjects spent more money on online sex material than they had planned.

Conclusions: It would be interesting to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the possible effects of pornography use and the variables that mediate this process, such as sexual education, personality traits, morality or attachment.

Keywords: Pornography; Sexuality; Sexual Relationships; Online Sexual Activity.

RESUMEN

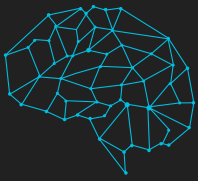
Introducción: A pesar de las diversas investigaciones realizadas hasta la fecha, el debate sobre las posibles consecuencias perjudiciales de la pornografía sigue abierto. Existen diferentes opiniones sobre las posibles consecuencias negativas o positivas de su uso. Algunos autores sostienen que estas consecuencias se miden por otras variables como el apego, la educación sexual o los rasgos de personalidad, que determinarán su magnitud.

Método: El objetivo de este estudio es obtener una breve y general aproximación al tipo de consumo de una población de habla hispana (N=3.700), a través de una breve encuesta, con el fin de conocer un punto de partida que nos permita continuar la investigación en este campo.

Resultados: Los resultados ponen de manifiesto que entre el 30-45% de los participantes podrían estar sufriendo algunas dificultades derivadas del uso de la pornografía en diferentes ámbitos (familiar, social, académico o laboral), siendo incapaces de dejar de ver la pornografía y de utilizar la pornografía como estrategia de regulación emocional. Un gran porcentaje de participantes (55- 70%) no sufre ninguna consecuencia. Sólo el 7,06% de los sujetos gastaron más dinero en material de sexo en línea de lo que habían planeado.

Conclusiones: Sería interesante realizar una evaluación en profundidad de los posibles efectos del uso de la pornografía y de las variables que intervienen en este proceso, como la educación sexual, los rasgos de personalidad, la moralidad o el apego.

Palabras clave: Pornografía; Sexualidad; Relaciones sexuales; Actividad sexual en línea.



INTRODUCTION

The consumption of online pornography worldwide totals more than 26,500 million annual visits (Kamaruddin, Rahman & Handiyani, 2018).

The United States is at the top of the world ranking and Spain is among the top 20. According to Ollero (2016) 3 out of 4 Spaniards consume online pornography. The money this generates exceeds the combined revenues of sports industries such as soccer, baseball or basketball, or the joint billing of television stations such as NBC, CBS or ABC (Stoner & Hughes, 2010).

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONSUMPTION OF PORNOGRAPHY

Since the 1970s, there have been several studies that show that the consumption of pornography produces harmful consequences, facilitating aggressive behaviour in the sexual sphere, favouring gender stereotypes and sexual roles (the content of pornography is mostly focused on men, and women are usually treated as an object), promoting promiscuity, generating family conflicts and producing sexual dysfunctions (Brown, Amoroso & Ware, 1976; Wright, Tokunaga & Kraus, 2015; Doornwaard, van Den Eijnden, Baams Vanwesenbeeck & Ter Bogt 2016; Park et al., 2016; Fisher & Kohut, 2017).

It has been observed how regular pornography consumption is even capable of altering the brain's chemical structure, specifically the frontostriatal connections, which play a role in the development of intimacy with others (Struhers, 2010).

PPU also could cause negative consequences that could be considered as a behavioural problem, such as difficulty refraining from use and problems with sexual thoughts (Cooper, Delmonico, Griffin-Shelley & Mathy, 2004; Orzack & Ross, 2000).

There are also several studies that state that the consumption of pornography does not have any harmful consequences on the person using it (Garcia S. 2013; Vandenbosch & Eggermont 2015). Furthermore, Kvaalem, Træen, Lewin & Stulhofer (2014) show in their results that pornography can have positive effects on men's sexual self-esteem. Other studies claim that the influence of pornography consumption is mediated by attachment style (Gouvernet et al. 2017; Maas, Vasilenko, & Willoughby, 2018).

However, pornography addiction is still not recognized as an independent diagnostic entity in manuals par excellence

even though there is a great deal of scientific literature that considers it a new addiction without substance.

Potenza, Gola, Voon, Kor & Kraus (2017) argue that there were several pros and cons to including Compulsive Sexual Behaviour in the International Classification of Diseases 11 (ICD-11) as an impulsive pathology rather than addictive one. On the other side, Prause, Janssen, Georgiadis, Finn & Pfaus (2017) argue that there is still not enough data supporting that excessive or frequent sexual activity should be considered as an addiction. Finally, ICD-11 included CSB as an impulsive control disorder (Krause et al. 2018).

Regardless of its classification, the fact that CSB is included in ICD-11 allows for greater visibility of people suffering from uncontrolled sexual pathologies and facilitates the evolution of research and treatment for a better understanding of this population.

EMPIRICAL STUDY

OBJECTIVES

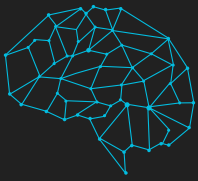
The objective of this study is to obtain a brief and general approximation to the type of pornography use in the general Spanish-Speaking population, through a brief survey, to meet a starting point that allows us to further the research in this field.

METHOD

A short survey of only 8 items (Table 1) on pornography use and its possible impact on people's lives was carried out. It was distributed through various media outlets such as national newspapers, television and radio, as well as on social networks such as Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook. The sample size (N) consisted of 3,700 subjects.

ETHICS COMMITTEE AND INFORMED CONSENT

After evaluating with the Ethic Committee (Dr. Carlos Chiclana, Madrid) and the Direction of the Dale Una Vuelta Association (through which the survey was disseminated), we have decided that because there is no type of data that compromises the confidentiality of the person who participates in the research and no population at risk of those mentioned in the Declaration of Helsinki, it was not necessary to use this procedure for the participants of this Brief Report. In addition,



in accordance with the Official Spanish Data Protection Law (RGDP, 2018) and the Institutional Guidelines of our Country, as there is no sociodemographic data on the participants it is not necessary the use of a formal informed consent. The informed consent was implied through survey completion

RESULTS

The results according to the survey are shown below in Table 1.

DISCUSSION

According to the results extracted from the brief survey, different aspects of interest for discussion are highlighted.

In the first place, it can be observed that 40.77% of the participants report to have had a negative impact in the personal, social, labour or academic sphere due to the use of pornography. This data indicates the existence of a possible problematic use in a big percentage of Spanish-Speaking population and also that the viewing of pornography, like other behavioural problems, can produce a similar deterioration or discomfort in different areas.

For some authors, the use of pornography can be considered as a new behavioural addiction due to the similarity of the characteristics of the person who consumes it and the impact it has on their lives. In addition, alterations in reward systems have been observed in brain structures, dysfunctions that link addictive behaviour to addictive substances disorders (Orzack & Ross, 2000; Cooper et al., 2004; Gola et al. 2017).

Some authors affirm that problematic pornography use is not an addiction, but is instead caused by moral attitudes and different ways of understand sexuality, influenced by cultural aspects (Humphreys, 2017). Here we have an interesting focus research trying to understand why people consider pornography use as a problem in their lives and why others do not consider it a problem. Is it only because of a moral attitude? Are the negative consequences the only item to consider pornography use as a problem?

The next result that attracts attention is that approximately 36,02% of the subjects spend more than 5 hours per week online for sexual purposes, using pornography as a reward. This can be related to the symptoms of dependence, tolerance and habituation (Voros, 2009), which are observed

Table 1. Brief Survey Results

	Yes	No
Online pornography has once interfered with certain aspects of my life: family, social, academic, work.	40,77%	59,23%
I spend more than five hours a week using my computer or smartphone for sexual purposes	36,07%	63,98%
I've spent more money on online sex material than I've planned.	7,06%	92,94%
I use online pornography to experiment with different aspects of sexuality, such as sex games in which couples are tied or other variations.	31,95%	68,05%
I have my own website that contains some sexual material or pornographic content stored on my computer	23,58%	76,42%
Sometimes I use pornography as a reward for getting something, like finishing a job, after a stressful day, etc.	45,42%	54,58%
When I can't access sexual content material online I feel anxious, angry or disappointed.	30,74%	69,26%
I feel like I can't stop looking at pornography.	38,38%	61,62%
Online pornography has once interfered with certain aspects of my life: family, social, academic, work.	40,77%	59,23%

in the prototypical profile of the addict. Walton (2017) gives another explanation, stating that there is a "Sexhavior Cycle" of hypersexuality which can potentially explain the neuropsychology and maintenance cycle of hypersexuality. For this author "the sexhavior cycle" suggests that, for some hypersexual persons, high sexual arousal may temporarily and adversely impact cognitive processing (cognitive abeyance) and explain a repeated pattern of psychological distress when interpreting one's sexual behaviour (sexual incongruence)". Also, the compulsive model of hypersexuality can explain the need to act out and spend higher amounts of time in sexual activity to reduce anxiety or distress (Chiclana, Contreras, Carrilles & Rama, 2015).



It is characteristic of people with addictions to invest more time than planned in everything that surrounds addictive behaviour, occupying a time that could be useful for their professional or personal development and yet is diminished by the need to consume. Such material instead of promoting healthy behaviours, hinders the proper development of a human dimension as important as sexuality.

The following result refers to the economic expenditure of the participants in web pages of pornographic content. It can be seen that only 7,06% invest money in this type of pages. This can be due to the triple A (Accessibility, Affordability and Anonymity) of which Stoner & Hughes (2010) speak, specifically the affordability of the pornography, because with a simple click it is possible to have access to any type of sexually explicit content without any cost.

Following the brief survey, the results show that 31.95% of the 3,700 participants used pornography to experiment with different aspects of sexuality, such as sexual games involving the couple or other variants. This shows that some individuals can learn to behave sexually through what they observe in pornography. Perhaps in this percentage of the participants may exist a lack of social and educational resources with regard to sexual relations and sexuality in general. This can lead to an extrapolation of all kinds of misogynistic, aggressive and degrading practices towards real sexual intercourse, as has been seen in various publications (Malamuth, Addison & Koss, 2000; Vega & Malamuth, 2007). It would be of interest to further investigate in this regard the possibility that pornography may impose a model of power and submissiveness that trivializes aggression in the sexual area and may fosters stereotypes and gender roles as other authors have said (To, Lu Kan & Ngai, 2015).

We can also observe how 23.58% of the subjects have their own favourite online pornographic site on their computer, something that makes us think about the normalization on the viewing of pornography and, in turn, the necessity to have it accessible in case of need to consume (Orzack & Ross, 2000). Another explanation could be that some users get bored easily of a specific material and need to change websites in order to get a more extreme, different, sophisticated stimuli.

Another significant finding of this first short survey is that 45.42% of the participants sometimes use pornography as reinforcement for having achieved something, or after a stressful day. This should indicate that the purpose of these

consumers of pornography is more a dysfunctional strategy to celebrate a success or recover from failure, that is to say, to regulate emotionally. An explanation could be found in Reid, Bramen, Anderson & Cohen (2014) where patients suffering from hypersexuality have lower levels of emotional regulation or in Reid, Carpenter, Spackman & Willes (2008) where the hypersexual patients experience more negative affects as depression, alexithymia and vulnerability to stress.

Finally, it should be noted that in reference to the symptoms of anxiety, a significant percentage (30,74%) of the subjects presented anxious symptoms when they could not access pornography. These results can be paralleled with those of Duffy, Dawson & Das Nair (2016). Both results maintain that the malaise that the abstinence of pornography can produce is similar to the syndrome of abstinence that happens with other addictions. The last result obtained goes in this same line, showing that 29.82% of the subjects feel that they cannot stop looking at pornography.

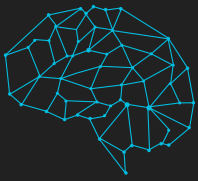
CONCLUSIONS

According to the results, we have observed that pornography can have a negative impact in different areas of the lives of some of participants of the study. Furthermore, they can feel angry or disappointed when they cannot access online pornography, sometimes they feel that they cannot stop looking at pornography or that they use pornography as an emotional regulator. It would be interesting to continue investigating the percentage that has some difficulties with pornography use, in order to know more about which the specific problem areas are and how these problems vary in different profiles of age, gender, occupation, personality and other variables.

It is not clear yet what kind of people would be more affected by the pornography use and what people can use pornography as a recreational use without any problems.

It is important, therefore, to consider the viewing of pornography when evaluating and dealing with patients who come to the clinic requesting help for problems in the sexual function, since the frequency of viewing of this material may be interfering in the development of healthy life and sexuality.

It's true that after more than 50 years of scientific research and several empirical demonstrations of the harmful consequences of pornography use in people's lives, it is time to start acting. We need to get in-depth knowledge of what is



happening with pornography use and why people can make a problematic use or even be addicted to such material.

The trivialization of the viewing of pornography in which the current society is immersed tries to avoid the problem. However, this produces greater ignorance and a worse handling of the problematic situations that can derive from this use.

This study presents interesting data that support the existing theories about the possible negative impact of pornography on the consumer.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is intended to be the first in a series of articles on the possible consequences of the use of pornography, therefore only these first 8 items have been considered to provide a starting point for further research. There are some limitations to consider, such as the lack of some socio-demographic information (age, sex, sexual education or gender perspective) and empirical data.

It is important to continue investigating the impact of pornography on the different areas of functioning of individuals. A desirable field would be the purpose of pornography-use in regard to the adaptive or maladaptive regulation of emotional states of the person.

It is of interest to develop new evaluation tools that allow us to establish a cut-off point between problematic and responsible use in Spanish-Speaking population, to encourage the emergence of pornography addiction as a new entity in diagnostic manuals par excellence.

It would also be interesting to estimate how pornography is affecting the ability to relate, due to the lack of human contact that such viewing favours and the total extinction of the affective nature of the sexual relationship.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP, GOOD PRACTICES AND TRANSFER OF RIGHTS

- 1) Funding: No funding has been obtained for this project.
- 2) Contribution: Authors A and B designed the study and wrote in the protocol. Author A wrote and collected the survey data and author B revised and corrected it.
- 3) Conflict of interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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