Comparative Study

Pornography, Self-Esteem, Capacity for Intimacy: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to examine how Pornography affects our perceived effect on self-esteem and capacity for intimacy. Participants' self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg self- esteem scale. Their capacity for intimacy was measured by using Miller social intimacy scale. Potential effects of consumption of porn on one's self esteem and capacity for intimacy was analysed for male and female respectively. Also, how number of hours of watching porn affects our self-esteem and capacity for intimacy was also analysed. Through convenience sampling sample size of 60 male and 60 females were taken (age 19-25yrs). Through t test analysis it was seen that there exists significant difference between male and female perceived self-esteem ($p < 0.01$ i.e., 99% significance level) and capacity for intimacy ($p < 0.05$ i.e., 95% significance level). The result found that female self-esteem is lower as compared to male watching 1-4 hrs. of porn per week. And with respect to capacity for intimacy it was seen that females had scored higher as compared to males watching 1-4 hrs. of porn per week. The data was further bifurcated into 35 each (consisting of male and female) based on number of hours a participant consumes porn. Two sub groups in data were number of participants who watches more than 2 hrs. of porn per week vs less than 2hrs of porn per week. Analysis through independent t test showed that there is no significant difference between two groups i.e., both groups reported to have similar self-esteem level and capacity for intimacy.

Keywords: *Pornography, Perceived Self-Esteem, Capacity for Intimacy*

Pornography as an institution existed since ages. But the easy accessibility and anonymity which is present today is unprecedent. Digitalisation and coming of internet has changed its consumption pattern. During the past two decades, there seems to have been a mainstreaming of pornography in the mass culture, for instance, in music videos and women's literature (Comella, 2013). Continuous advancements in technology have made Internet pornography increasingly more accessible to young adults worldwide. Peter and Valkenburg defined pornography as professionally derived or user-generated pictures or videos (clips) intended to sexually arouse the viewer.

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George, Maheshwari, Chandran, & Rao, George (2019) et .al tries to find how porn affects society. He writes a critical analysis where he says that too much consumption of pornography has been associated with anxiety, depression, and even sexual dysfunction. Individuals with porn addiction have lower social integration, increase in delinquent behaviour, and decreased emotional bonding with caregivers.

Fakri Seyed Aghamiri (2022) et.al did a peer review of journals to understand the impacts of pornography linked compulsive sexual behaviours on the well-being and experiences of female intimate partners. The narrative review concludes that compulsive pornography consumption can lead to risky and uncontrolled sexual behaviours, which have the potential to spawn addictive behaviours, relationship challenges and adverse societal repercussions.

Binge on porn can lead to mental health problems although it has been found that watching porn is a way to soothe one's trauma. It is seen that people tend to find validation and sense of connectedness when they watch porn.

METHODS

The study uses convenience sampling. The sample size includes total 120 participants. 60 females and 60 males each. Age range varies from 19-25yrs. Questionnaire was created using Rosenberg self-esteem scale and Miller social intimacy scale (MSIS). The study includes primary data through this questionnaire.

Scale

As the questionnaire consist of two scales i.e., Rosenberg self-esteem scale and MSIS. Rosenberg self-esteem scale is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be uni-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has demonstrated reliability and validity across many different sample groups and has been translated into and validated in various languages. The test-retest correlations are between 0.82 to 0.88 and Cronbach's alpha between 0.77 to 0.88(2).

The MSIS is a 17-item tool designed to assess intimacy in a variety of relationships such as friendships, family, and spouse (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982). Each of the items is rated on a 10-point scale, ranging from 1 (very rarely) to 10 (almost always). The higher the score on MSIS the higher is the intimacy. Results provide evidence for internal consistency and test-retest reliability as well as for convergent, discriminant and construct validity.

Analysis and data processing is done using Microsoft excel program and SPSS.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Result-1 Perceived self-esteem for males and females (one to four hrs. per week)

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Female	60	20.0500	4.98957	.64415
	Male	60	22.6833	5.24159	.67669

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	.052	.820	-2.819	118	.006	-2.63333	.93426	-4.48341	-.78325
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.819	117.715	.006	-2.63333	.93426	-4.48346	-.78321

This data shows the females have lower self-esteem after watching same number of hrs. of pornography as compared to males (1-4 hrs.). Through t test analysis it was seen that there exists significant difference between male and female perceived self-esteem (p<0.01 i.e., 99% significance level). Lundin et.al 2014 in this study examined the associations among the frequency of viewing Internet pornography and sexual self-esteem in young adult. Most of the participants had sought mainstream pornographic content. A hypothesized relationship between self-perceived positive effects of pornography uses and a higher level of sexual self-esteem was found for men but not for women. Self-perceived effects of Internet pornography use, genital appearance satisfaction, and sexual self-esteem among young Scandinavian adults by Ingela Lundin Kvalem et.al A hypothesized relationship between self-perceived positive effects of pornography use and a higher level of sexual self-esteem was found for men but not for women. The American Psychological Association reports that Women are more commonly exposed to high-impact trauma (sexual trauma) than men at a younger age. Self-esteem also suffers at the hands of emotional trauma, which might include incidences of harassment or adverse childhood events such as neglect, verbal abuse, an alcoholic parent, or parental separation. The trauma of a really bad relationship, divorce, an abusive boss, or an extremely humiliating experience can scar self-esteem, too. According to psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakkar in a society that has traditionally defined a person through her relationship rather than her individuality, a woman is certainly a person when she is mother, a daughter, a sister or wife. The individual self is missing. This makes women's self-esteem vulnerable as she derives her worth more from society than individual self.

Result-2 Capacity for intimacy after watching pornography for one to four hrs. per week

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Female	60	123.4667	30.56056	3.94535
	Male	60	109.0667	33.22286	4.28905

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	1.724	.192	2.471	118	.015	14.40000	5.82767	2.85962	25.94038
	Equal variances not assumed			2.471	117.186	.015	14.40000	5.82767	2.85879	25.94121

The result table shows capacity for intimacy is higher in females than males. Through t test analysis it was seen that there exists significant difference between capacity for intimacy (p<0.05 i.e., 95% significance level). E. Constant et al. (2016) sought to measure the different personal assessments of intimacy experienced by men and women. Constant et al.

found women as more inclined to communication, affection, and emotional closeness, and men are more inclined to share activities or engage in joint leisure time, in addition to placing significant value on the <u>sexuality</u> component of a relationship. Chyng Sun et.al in this study tried to analyse association between pornography and dyadic sexual encounters. He found that higher pornography use was negatively associated with enjoying sexually intimate behaviours with a partner. It was concluded that watching pornography provides a powerful heuristic model in men's expectation during sexual encounters. This might be the reason for low capacity for intimacy in male. Imaginative stories written in response to either 6 or 10 different Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) pictures by over 1,500 college students in two studies were scored for intimacy motivation (McAdams, 1980), women scored significantly higher than men on intimacy motivation, especially with respect to the intimacy themes. Also, basic principles of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) explain that emotional "safety" matters in a relationship - for both partners. Being able to demonstrate this to one another can be challenging. But its seen that women long for intimacy more than men. Emotional safety is bedrock of good intimate bond. And many times, men tend to measure emotional closeness through sexual connection. Whereas women tend to need emotional closeness before experiencing sexual connection and pleasure. Therefore, it can be implied that women are higher on capacity to intimacy as compared to men.

Result-3 Comparing how porn affects self-esteem in female and male who prefer to watch porn for 2-4hrs per week to participants who watch porn 1-2hr per week.

Group Statistics					
	HOURS	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
SCORE	More than two hours	35	22.4857	6.03115	1.01945
	Less than 2 hours	35	22.4857	5.15850	.87195

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
SCORE	Equal variances assumed	1.711	.195	.000	68	1.000	.00000	1.34148	-2.67688	2.67688
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	66.404	1.000	.00000	1.34148	-2.67805	2.67805

Here the result shows no significant difference in self -esteem of participants who watches porn for more than 2hrs and who watch less than 2hrs. Study done by Alexandra Gillespie of Purdue University examines the relationship between pornography acceptance and frequency of use and self-esteem, sexual satisfaction, and overall relationship satisfaction Results showed that acceptance of pornography use positively predicted sexual satisfaction for both men and women. Self-esteem as impacted by pornography was found to have no significant relationship. In recently-published research, Loving Oneself: The Associations Among Sexually Explicit Media, Body Image, and Perceived Realism by Emily A. Vogels showed that for male viewers, porn use correlated with higher self-esteem, and greater satisfaction with their own bodies. For female viewers, porn viewing correlated with greater comfort being nude, and higher self-esteem. Also, the study had sample size of 35 and number of hours one watches porn is ranging from 1-4hrs per week which is not a very significant number therefore its difference on self -esteem is not noticeable.

Also, there is a probability that as the sample size includes both male and female it is a possibility that male's self-esteem which is generally high after watching porn result-1 might have counter -balanced female low self- esteem which is generally low after watching porn(result-1). And that is reflected in this result as the difference between the self-esteem of a participants who watches porn for more than 2hrs to who watches less than 2hrs is same.

Result-4 Comparing how porn affects ones capacity for intimacy in female and male who prefer to watch porn for 2-4hrs per week to participants who watch porn 1-2hr per week.

Group Statistics

	HOURS	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
SCORE	More than two hours	35	119.0857	29.88544	5.05156
	Less than 2 hours	35	116.3143	33.00158	5.57828

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
SCORE	Equal variances assumed	.162	.689	.368	68	.714	2.77143	7.52566	-12.24579	17.78865
	Equal variances not assumed			.368	67.342	.714	2.77143	7.52566	-12.24845	17.79130

Štulhofer et.al (2012) in his study of adolescent exposure to pornography and relationship intimacy in young adulthood (aged 18–25 years) found no direct relationship was found between adolescent exposure to pornography and relationship intimacy in young adulthood. Research in the early 2000s asked the question, "If a man or woman had an affair, what would be more hurtful to their partners. The findings were a bit surprising, as studies revealed that men, just as much as women, were looking for emotional bonding and support through extramarital relationships. This is still true today.

Therefore, not much difference in capacity for intimacy is seen between people who prefer to watch porn for 2-4hrs per week to participants who watch porn 1-2hr per week.

Limitations

As the sample size is 120 collected through stratified random sampling, 60 male and 60 females ranging age group 19-25yrs its result cannot be generalised to all segment of population. Also seeing the categories of porn available on internet it is equally imperative to take that into consideration.

CONCLUSION

As young people today do engage with a mass of sexual media content, it is important to understand how its consumption impacts one's self-esteem and intimacy. Through this research we examine the patterns of personal porn use and how it affects especially one's self esteem and capacity for intimacy. Further research on this field is quintessential to broaden our understanding on the same.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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