Examining the Effects of Pornography on the Individual and the Family

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Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in Family and Consumer Sciences at Eastern Illinois University. Find out more about the program.

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Abstract

The expansion of technology, namely the Internet, has contributed greatly to the increase of available pornographic material (Cooper, 2009). This increase in material has created a platform to engage in discussion regarding the available forms of media the influence it has on individuals and family members consuming pornography. The purpose of this research was to examine the influence and attitudes of pornography on an individual and family members of individuals who use pornography. A mixed methods study with the following objectives was conducted: a) investigate the differences between recreational pornography use and addiction; b) identify the key attitudes toward pornography held by the individual and family members of individuals that use pornography; and c) examine the influences of pornography use on individual and family relationships. This study examines the results gathered by the researcher, which suggest pornography use by an individual and family members has both negative and positive effects.

Further research should explore the specific details attributed to pornography addiction, susceptibility to addictive materials, education tactics and treatment methods for practitioners.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my friends, partner, and each individual who has helped along the way.
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In the United States, every second, $3,075.64 is being spent on pornography, 28,258 Internet users are viewing pornography, and 372 Internet users are typing key search terms related to pornography into popular search engines (Family Safe Media, 2006). The Internet provides consumers unlimited and anonymous access to pornography, any day or time, as long as there is a domain. Consequently, this vast amount of sexually explicit material allows individuals a limitless route to fuel their pornography consumption (Family Safe Media, 2006).

The pornography industry grows annually, bringing in over $97 billion internationally each year (Ackman, 2001). Despite an economic recession and other trials, the pornography industry has continued to thrive. In 1988, 1,300 pornography titles, released, compared to the 9,228 in 1998 and 13,588 in 2005 (Family Safe Media, 2006). Outside of nearly all forms of media, the pornography industry includes the salaries of directors and producers. Peter North, who launched North Star Productions, has a net worth of $10 million, and Ron Jeremy, popular porn actor, with a net worth of $5.5 million (DiVirgiollio, 2013). As both the technology and the pornography industries grow, individuals have the ability to access pornography from their personal devices, televisions, local video store, and virtual chat rooms. There is no evidence that currently indicates the pornography industry; stalling or decline of the material, instead there are only projected future increases. However, the amount of pornographic domains has begun to express adverse effects on individual consumer’s material and their families (Ackman, 2001).

There are important social consequences from the increased access to sexually explicit material. These consequences cross several lines, including: addiction, chronic
masturbation, sexual openness, and willingness to communicate with partners, and exploring sexuality, separation, divorce, and extra martial affairs (Schnieder, 2000).

As individuals explore sexually charged material through the Internet, susceptibility to addiction of these materials becomes ever present. As many people enjoy watching horror films, because they release dopamine and serotonin in our brains, similarly, so do pornographic videos (Paul & Kobach, 2014). Clinicians, therapists, and physicians characterize these chemical reactions as habit forming and key components in classifying addiction. Studies have shown that the use of pornographic material can influence complications in spousal and family relationships. The outcomes and examples of pornographic influence might include divorce, job loss, and loss of trustworthiness (Schnieder, 2006). While a specific definition of pornography addiction has not been agreed upon, further study of pornography use and its impact on the family is needed.

**Purpose and Objective of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of pornography use on an individual and family relationships, for this study, cybersex; including the use of chat rooms will be included. The objectives of the study were to: a) investigate the differences between recreational pornography use and addiction; b) identify the key attitudes toward pornography held by the individual and family; and c) examine the influences of pornography use on individual and family relationships.

**Research Objectives**

The specific research objectives include the following:

1.) How does pornography addiction differ from recreational use of pornographic materials?
2.) What key attitudes are attributed to the use of pornographic material?
3.) What are the positive and negative attitudes associated with the use of pornographic materials?

**Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were developed in relation to research objectives of this study:

1a.) Recreational pornography use will have a significant correlation with positive attitudes toward pornographic material.

1b.) Individuals using pornography recreationally will associate positive attitudes.

2a.) Addictive behavior toward pornographic material will have a significant correlation within negative attitudes towards pornography.

2b). Individuals with addictive behaviors will express negative attitudes toward pornographic material.

3.) Families in which there is pornography use categorized, as addiction will have a significant correlation with negative attitudes toward the user and subject.

**Significance of Study**

This study examined the impact of pornography within the family when an individual member is a consumer of pornography. Currently, there is little research exploring the attitudes toward pornography held by family members when an individual is engaged in using pornographic material. Further, much of the literature is based on one framework, which is that pornography is unhealthy, detrimental, and unnecessary (Family Safe Media, 2006). Existing of literature gives few definitions, implications, and
recommendations for therapists, educators, and clinicians in addressing the social issues with pornography.

**Definition of Terms**

**Addiction:** Maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

**Avatar:** An embodiment or personification, as of a principle, attitude, or view of life (Dictionary, 2015).

**Cisgender:** A term for someone who exclusively identifies as their sex assigned at birth. The term cisgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2016).

**Cybersex:** An erotic communication between two people online via text, audio or video chat (PC Mag, 2015).

**Family:** Social unit created by blood, marriage, or adoption, and can be described as nuclear or extended (North Carolina Sociological Association, 2004).

**Gender bending:** An individual who brazenly and flamboyantly flaunts society’s gender conventions by mixing elements of “masculinity” and “femininity.” The gender bender is often an enigma to the uninitiated viewer, who struggles to comprehend sartorial codes, which challenge gender bipolarity (Bowling Green State University, 2016).

**Pornography:** Representations designed to arouse and give sexual pleasure to those who read, see, hear, or handle them (Slade, 2000).
Recreation: A pastime, diversion, exercise, or other resource affording relaxation and enjoyment (Dictionary, 2015).

Sexual Activity: Any activity- between two persons, or in a group- that includes sexual arousal (Encyclopedia, 2015).

Summary

Most likely, pornography will always make some individuals uncomfortable and it can also have a destructive effect on an individual and family members. Thus, there is a growing need for researchers to examine the topic to better serve this population. In exploring viewing behaviors and their impact on the family, this will lead to a greater, societal and professional understanding of pornography.
Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

This review of literature examines behaviors associated with Internet pornography, a billion dollar industry that continues to attract an increasing number of consumers each year (Stack, 2004). Research suggests that Internet pornography is the most frequently searched topic online (Cooper, 2009), with sex related topics making up 25% of all search engine phrases (Roelato, 2012).

Pornography

When discussing pornography, the first area to review should be the two types of material one can access, as well as the different formats presented. Pornography can be split into two separate categories, contemporary and traditional. Once split into separate mediums, the types of pornography formats can be explored. Further, implications for pornography use and addiction on the family will be reviewed.

Contemporary versus Traditional Pornography

In 1986, the Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography, initiated by then president Ronald Regan, identified pornography as “any material that is sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal” (McManus, 1986, p. 2). This definition broadly encompasses what is viewed as traditional pornography. Traditional pornography might include books, magazines, telephone hotlines, and even media means that are not overtly sexual. For example, a television commercial with two individuals kissing, to some, can be viewed as pornography due to the eroticism (Slade, 2000). Traditional pornography, noted consensual sexual experiences an affectionate sex with warmth and love (Slade, 2000).

Contemporary pornography is categorized as “professionally produced or user generated material on or from the Internet which depicts sexual activities and (aroused)
genitals in unconcealed ways, usually with a close up on oral, anal, or vaginal penetration” (Peter & Valkenburg, 2010, p. 2). Furthermore, according to Peter and Valkenburg (2010), contemporary pornography is increasingly defined by themes of male dominance in which a male uses a female as a sole means of his own satisfaction. The authors summarized that in 12 years, between 1986 and 1998, 98% of sexual scenes examined concluded with a male satisfying him onto a female’s body.

Types of Pornography Consumption

Pornography is consumed through two main media outlets, Internet video and Internet chat room. As access to the Internet has increased, the consumption methods of pornographic materials have followed suit. Pornographic materials and consumption have become a part of popular culture, “porn movies” having 37 million Google hits versus “Harry Potter” at 823,000 (Perrin & Duggan, 2015). These Internet access points can be split into subcategories including: Internet video, webcam, and virtual reality (avatar). Thus, with a wide array of subcategories Internet consumption and the methods of doing so are accessible and private.

Internet Consumption

Approximately 84% of the United States had access to the Internet in 2015, compared to the 78% in 2012, 52% in 2000, and 15% in 1984 (Perrin & Duggan, 2015). This increase in Internet access and technological reality has increased pornography consumption. In 2012, it was estimated that 37 million Google hits contained the phrase; “porn movies” and 506 million searches included the word “sex.” In this expansion of the Internet, in general, pornography has become cheap, accessible, and private. The majority of pornographic material is distributed through online portals through the
Internet. The Internet, which is characterized by a “Triple-A-Engine” accessibility, affordability, and anonymity (Cooper, 1998) makes the content readily available with little public shame, embarrassment, or harassment, which might have been the case when visiting adult film stores (Barak & Fisher, 2001; Barack & King, 2000; Cooper McLougin & Campbell, 2000; Cooper, Putnam, Planchon, & Bois, 1999). This anonymity has led to an increase in consumption of pornographic materials. Thus, pornography has become a part of many adults and adolescents’ daily routine and social context (Hare, Gahagan, Jackson, & Steenbeek, 2014). The accessibility to Internet via Smart Phone, Internet, and free websites surrounding pornography make content quick, easy, and discoverable.

**Cybersex**

Cybersex is a subcategory of online sexual activities and is defined as two or more people engaging in sexual talk while online for the purposes of sexual pleasure, which may or may not include masturbation (Daneback, Cooper, & Mansson, 2005). Cybersex can be used as a compliment to an already existing sexual relationship; a safe way of experimenting with sexuality, or as an alternative for sexually marginalized groups (Lieblum, 2001). In an Internet study of cybersex participants, Daneback, Cooper and Mansson (2005) found that 30% of men and 34% of women had experience with cybersex. Of these 1,458 respondents (658 women, 800 men) 72% stated these interactions had taken place in chat rooms followed by Microsoft Messenger (52%). Further, the difference between male and female participants was not statistically significant (Daneback, Cooper, & Mansson, 2005). This detail encompasses the myths and facts that surround the connection between gender identity and pornography. As
expressed by Daneback, Cooper, and Mansson men and women showed similar habits in viewing pornography and engaging in cybersex. Although there are myths surrounding pornography viewers, namely that men engage more than women, current research suggests both men and women view at similar rates (Daneback, Cooper, & Mansson, 2005).

**Gender**

Although cultural bias exists in beliefs regarding women and cybersex addiction, it is important to recognize that each gender engages in online sexual activity. However, there are significant differences and behaviors attributed to all genders. In an earlier study, Daneback, et al. (2005) suggested that there was little to no connection between gender and the use of pornography. However, researchers Ven-hwei and Wei (2002) concluded that men dominate the use of Internet pornography and women perceive the use of pornography as negative. This difference in beliefs is often attributed to the emotional ties women feel regarding their partner’s pornography use. This can be characterized through women feeling they are being compared to people on screen, unrealistic physical attributes, as well as sexual stamina (Daneback, et al. 2005). Furthermore, women tend to believe other females versus males share their attitudes toward Internet pornography (Ven-hwei & Wei, 2002). These attitudes can be articulated through how men and women view sexual acts. Males, while watching pornography, respond with greater sexual arousal to both traditional and contemporary video content. Women, experience less sexual arousal to both content categories (Paul & Kobach, 2014). Despite this difference in perception and opinions, one study notes that 87% of
young adult men and 34% of young adult women report using pornography with regularity (Wright, 2013).

Cooper, Delmonico, and Burg (2000) found that women prefer using chat rooms to other types of online sexual behaviors. In their study, 70% of females who exhibited compulsive cybersex behaviors expressed a preference for chat rooms rather than pornography or real life sexual encounters. One of the most remarkable differences between men and women is the likelihood to engage in real-world encounters. Ferree, in a 2003 study, discovered that women are more likely to move their online behaviors to a real world interaction. It should also be noted that women are more likely to role-play a character opposite of themselves. This is different from men who are more likely to portray an online character (cybersex) that resembles themselves (Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg 2000).

The appearance of gender fluidity in chat rooms can be attributed to two main factors. One popular idea is that it is easier for women to relate to someone of the same gender, if men portray themselves as women it can open lines of communication. Heterosexual men are more likely to gender bend in chat rooms- thus, if a cisgender male presents himself as a cisgender woman this is viewed to be commonplace (Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg 2000).

Another perception, in extreme cases such as kidnapping, assault, and domestic violence, is that by portraying another gender, one can “trick” someone into meeting up in real time for a real life encounter. These differences can be attributed to institutional, cultural, and social backgrounds. In many instances, as noted in the documentary, “Life. 2.0” a look at the virtual world Second Life women are seeking an escape from an
unhappy or abusive marriage. The documentary maps out the Internet intentions of individuals both committed and single. The virtual reality captured in Second Life was created for one reason- to allow players to do whatever, whenever they wanted. There are few rules and regulations, which includes sex. This allows users to create avatars and engage in relationships that are categorized as cybersex. This life outside reality allows users, particularly women, to connect with partners around the world. In some cases, as seen in the film, connecting via online portals, these women can avoid potential dangerous of meeting up with partners for sex, but still experience arousal. Further, women tend to have well thought-out motivations for using the Internet for sexual arousal. Thus, explaining why these key differences exist. Women note creating strong emotional bonds, sexual stimulation, making money and not having to worry about getting sexually transmitted infections (Craft, 2010). Men cite similar attitudes plus the addition of sexual experimentation, same-sex contact, and exploration within bondage and Bondage, Discipline, Dominance and Submission (BDSM) (Craft, 2010). The difference in attitudes is attributed to one reoccurring argument throughout literature. The response men have to women in pornography, be it online video or cyber chat, might be rooted in objectification and dominance (Paul & Kobach, 2014). Research by McKenzie-Mohr and Zanna (1990), for example, illustrates that exposure to pornography, over time in heterosexual men, shapes their view of women as objects. This influence carries into why men and women have different attitudes on the subject.

**Sexual Orientation**

The use of pornography as a means for sexual discovery has been noted since the late 1970's. While many individuals were being affected by the outbreak of HIV/AIDS,
pornography offered a safe and entertaining way for many gay men to express their sexuality. Throughout the last two decades, pornography has evolved not only to encompass gay/straight relationships, but to all sexual and romantic identities (Morris, & Paasonen, 2014).

Upon the emergence of pornography, research has hypothesized distinct differences between heterosexuals and those who identify within the queer umbrella. Daneback, Cooper, and Mansson (2004), in an earlier study, noted that gay men were over four times more likely to have had cybersex compared to heterosexual men. In another study presented to clinicians, several differences between heterosexual and gay or bisexual men were pinpointed. The most distinct difference was the option of anonymity. Participants who identified as bisexual or gay were more likely to engage in cybersex to conceal their sexual orientation. In other words, individuals who identify as anything other than heterosexual find anonymity on the Internet to be a safe and interactive way to gain sexual pleasure (Ross, Rosser, McCurdy, & Feldman, 2007). There are advantages for gay and bisexual men to seek online companionship. Arguably, one of the most common reasons for online interaction is safety concerns. When an individual is unable to disclose their sexual orientation in their personal life, outside of online, the Internet proved to be a safe place for them to explore their sexuality. In this regard, the Internet is important for people who are experimenting or questioning their sexuality. The anonymity involved in online videos and chat rooms lends itself to a lack of pressure to perform face to face (Ross, Rosser, McCurdy, & Feldman, 2007).
Religion

Initial research regarding Internet pornography use suggested that individuals with religious inclinations would be less likely to participate in pornography consumption. However, researchers have hypothesized a strong connection between heterosexual Christian males and Internet pornography compulsivity. Currently, there is little research that supports this hypothesis as Christians and non-Christian individuals did not express significant differences in pornography consumption (Short, Kasper, & Wetterneck, 2014). However, Christian, heterosexual, males in viewing Internet pornography felt that the content interfered with their relationship with God the most, their spirituality second, and remaining relationships (marriage, job/school) last (Short, Kasper, & Wetterneck, 2014). This theme is carried out through other research targeting morality and pornography. One study in particular weighs on the costs of viewing pornography by those who categorize themselves as religious. In this research, cost is measured by the self-reported happiness levels of those who report viewing pornography versus those who do not. Results suggest that while reported pornography consumption is correlated with lower levels of reported happiness on average, this relationship is the strongest among individuals who regularly attend a religious denomination with strong attitudes against the use of pornography (Patterson & Price, 2012).

The dialogue at the annual Anti-Pornography Conference in Boston, Massachusetts is strikingly similar. When asked about their experiences connecting pornography to religion, one man states, “Yes, I have used pornography in the past and masturbated to it on some occasions. This is a shameful topic for me, and I experience considerable self-reprimand about it” (Boulton, 2008, p.13). Consequently, many men
attending the event felt that sex should be used as a way that God intended, for
procreation and not for pleasure (Boulton, 2008).

Religious and non-religious individuals struggle with sexuality and compulsivity,
although religious men are more likely to experience shame and isolation while viewing
Internet pornography or taking part in cybersex. Common characteristics of Christian
Internet pornography addicts include compartmentalized thinking, immature faith,
inconsistent life patterns, lack of intimacy, and double standards in faith and values
(Altemeyer, 1996).

Addiction

In literature and therapy practice there is no diagnosis or clinical definition of
that the neurobiology of sexual arousal parallels that of cocaine, in that both are
associated with dopamine, the brain’s neurotransmitter connected to pleasure. Thus,
dopamine can be released into synapses in the brain through substance use, such as
cocaine, and also through the viewing of pornography. The DSM IV has very few
examples and definitions for behavioral addictions; however, currently the manual only
lists pathological gambling. Addiction, broadly, is defined as “maladaptive pattern of
substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress” (DSM-IV,
American Psychiatric Association, 2013). However, pornography addiction can be found
under the umbrella of hypersexual disorders.

Hypersexual Disorder

A hypersexual disorder, or hypersexuality, is defined by the inability to regulate
impulsivity with sexual desire (Kafka, 2010). This proposal was a proposed additive in
the DSM-IV, which concluded in 2014, leaving much of the previous literature regarding pornography at academic disposal. Although this proposal was rejected for both the DSM-IV 2012 and 2014, clinicians align several of the behaviors associated with addiction to hypersexual disorders.

It should be noted that outside of addiction, individuals who view pornography might also fit into the mold of having personality, obsessionality, or compulsivity disorders. This, again, blurs the line between individuals with an addiction versus those who have personality differences. Obsessionality is associated with a variety of behavioral problems including what some believe might be associated with what could be described as a “craving” toward pornography. This is often connected to compulsive masturbation and obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Participants who are categorized as neurotic expressed higher rates of consumption as well (Egan & Parmar, 2013). This does not, however, mean that people who have personality, obsessionality, or compulsive disorders are more vulnerable to addictive behaviors. Merely, this body of research suggests that there are differences between the two and should be noted.

The lack of definition regarding pornography addiction, until now, lies heavily in the inability to measure what constitutes normal Internet behavior or pornography use. Without a clear definition of pornography addiction, there are few gateways to treatment. It allows individuals to spiral into addictive behaviors without recognizing the potential dangers and harm. In contrast to the addictive nature of pornography, the notion of perceived addiction has been explored (Grubbs, Volk, Exline, & Pargament, 2015).
Perceived Addiction

Perceived addiction focuses on the individual and their ability to interpret personal use of pornography in a pathological manner (Grubbs, Volk, Exline, & Pargament, 2015b). There is little knowledge of pornography addiction and no clinical definition currently exists. However, the connection between perceived addiction, personal distress, and family relationships is quickly growing. There is a fair amount of evidence suggesting that individuals can experience addiction to Internet pornography, even in the absence of clinically verified diagnosis to subsume such a disorder. To better understand perceived addiction, one must examine the three subcategories: perceived compulsivity, access efforts, and emotional distress (Grubbs, Staunder, Exline, Pargament & Lindberg, 2015a).

According to Grubbs et al., (2015a), perceived compulsivity refers to the extent to which one feels unable to regulate pornography use. This includes but is not limited to the individual’s self-identified difficulty in controlling their behavior. Perceived compulsivity can include the inability to proceed with daily functions until they have viewed or engaged in pornographic material. Access efforts refer to the extent to which pornography users feel pornography interferes with their daily routines. Access efforts can include traveling to buy limited pornography, paying for an Internet subscription to websites, and user generated role-playing. These access efforts might cause an individual to miss work, family outings, or financial distress. Finally, emotional distress constitutes the amount of guilt, shame, and regret in the pre and post use of pornography.

Pornography, like many other activities, causes chemical changes in the brain, anatomical and pathological changes which result in dysfunction. These chemical defects
categorize what many people understand to be addiction. Addiction occurs when pleasure/reward pathways are hijacked by drugs such as opioids or by natural substances such as food or sex (Hilton & Watts, 2011). When drawing attention to addiction, the focus must be on the dysfunctions occurring in the pathways. Sexual experience, like drugs or food, can induce alterations in neurons. Sex, in particular, increases our five senses and creates sensitivity in the brain and body.

The connection between perceived addiction and pornography is rooted in the negative thoughts about oneself that may or may not reflect reality. Perceived addiction, specifically, focuses on addiction with pornography in a pathological manner (Grubbs et al., 2015). However, it is important to note that the direct implications between pornography use and distress are not readily available. This lack of information is directly related to the inability to quantify addiction, and the subjective nature of the subject. Further, addiction is often rooted in relational conflict not implications that happen immediately after the viewing of a pornographic film or engaging in cybersex. Instead, perceived addiction focuses on morality, emotional behaviors, sexual well-being and mental health.

This leads to two major differences within the medical community: inability to measure the feelings associated with believing one is addicted to pornography and evidence that pornography can be addicting. Although, as stated prior, sexual arousal can induce alternations in neurons there is little to no research that tracks the amount of change experienced while engaging in pornography or cybersex (Grubbs et al, 2015).

Evidence that pornography can be addicting, especially when being evaluated by an individual who is not in the medical field naturally creates concern for those who are
clinicians, therapists, and medical doctors. The idea of perceived effects, particularly the effects being positive can be categorized as perceived optimism (Hald & Malamuth, 2006). This can be due to participants desire to not be categorized as an addict, due to stigma, or because they truly believe all sexual arousal is a positive experience. These two differences have created holes within the research, and have shaped the way people do or do not define what constitutes addiction to pornographic material.

Positive Outcomes of Pornography Use

It should be noted that a body of research suggests that pornography has positive effects (Grubbs et al., 2015). Although there is much discourse between positive and negative effects or pornography, some research regarding positive outcomes has been completed. As explored with perceived addiction regarding pornography, there are perceived effects of pornography consumption. These are how one person perceives their consumption of the subject without influence from outside sources. Men and women both note having moderately positive effects from using pornography. Men report a greater positive correlation between pornography consumption and sexual openness. Consequently, men also perceive pornography as a positive experience with little negative perception (Hald & Malamuth, 2006). In all genders, sexual background variables can predict the overall positive and negative perception. Individuals who had been exposed to pornography in adolescence report a more positive experience versus those who had not (Hald & Malamuth, 2006). Further, pornography creates and maintains jobs for sex workers, editors, and individuals working in information technology.
The defense of pornography, for some, can be expressed throughout this single idea. Editors for novels, magazines, and websites need content to keep their job steady, and erotica/pornography does count as content. Although “porn stars” are not enthusiastic about being studied due to the stigma surrounding their line of work, some porn actresses do report entering the adult sex industry simply because they enjoy sex, with as few as 1%, in this particular study, noting they were forced into the career (Young, 2009). Similarly, there are over 10,000 people who consider themselves “porn stars” and this statistic does not touch on homemade or webcam videos from individuals who are unpaid (Young, 2009). It is imperative to understanding pornography addiction and the effect on the family that researchers explore what is happening behind the scenes. As noted previously, many individuals experience guilt and shame in watching these films, videos, or engaging in cybersex. This is linked back to a stigma that surrounds actors and actresses in pornographic features. When the lines between viewership and backstage reality are defined, there will certainly be a different approach to pornography addiction and psychological distress.

**Pornography Effect on Relationships**

The significance of pornography use in romantic relationships, in some cases, can be defined as a traumatic event (Bergner & Bridges, 2002). In heterosexual relationships when a woman discovers her partner’s extensive pornography use, confusion, devastation and loss may follow (Bergner & Bridges, 2002). In examining the effect of extensive pornography use on romantic heterosexual relationships, when men are the users, women report two main themes. The themes are the following: feel their partner lacks intimacy within their own relationship and feel a loss of sexual desire. Women also report feeling a
new view of themselves, in that they feel less value and self-worth. Another overwhelming theme is the use of the words “weak and stupid.” These views also shaped the way they see their current romantic partner. In many cases, the individual is viewed with a different character and with less respect. When children are involved, the user often comes to be seen as a failure as a husband and a father (Bergner & Bridges, 2002).

In some cases, pornography use can be used as a predictor of material distress, separation, and divorce. Married women note feeling significant distress by a partner’s online pornography consumption versus those in a dating relationship (Manning, 2006). The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers in Chicago, Illinois released an informal study in 2002. Of this data, 56% of the divorce cases involved one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites. In addition, 33% of divorce cases involved one party spending excessive times in chat rooms (Dedmon, 2002). In a qualitative study of partners who are experiencing interference from pornography, one woman stated:

I am no longer a sexual person or partner to him, but a sexual object, he is not really with me, not really making love to me...He seems to be thinking about something or someone else- likely those porn women...He is just using me as a warm body (Bergner & Bridges, 2002, p.197).

The decrease in sexual intimacy between spouses of cybersex or pornography “addicts” supports the idea of lost sexual desire and meaningful intimacy. The same study outlines specific themes for the impact of pornography on marriage: the user makes excuses to avoid sexual intimacy, the partner feels hurt or angry, during relational sex the user appears distance, emotionally detached or interested in their own pleasure, their
spouse or partner does all of the initiating in an attempt to get the user to deuce their online activity, the user blames the partner for their sexual problems, and the user wants the partner to participate in sexual activities that he/she finds objectionable (Schneider, 2000). Additionally, from a male perspective, men use pornography to relieve stress in their relationship, educate themselves, get support with sexual matters, and socialize with other women (Cooper, Galbreath, & Becker, 2004). In three studies, women view cybersex and/or pornography as a form of infidelity (Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Bridges, Bergner, & Hesson-McInnis, 2003; Schneider, 2000). Both men and women found that any online sexual activity within a marriage is an act of betrayal that is as real as offline acts (Whitty, 2003). Overwhelmingly, partners report feeling that cyber affairs were just as emotionally painful as offline affairs and this was true both of pornography and cybersex (Schneider, 2000).

Along with spousal or dating relationships, the effect of pornography on children and adolescents must be explored. It is important to understand that addiction need not be present for pornography to directly influence a family unit (Manning, 2006). Schneider (2000) found that there are several negative effects that can impact children in homes where a parent might be involved with online sexual behavior. These negative influences can be defined as: decreased parental time, encountering pornographic material a parent has acquired, encountering a parent masturbating, overhearing a parent engaged in phone sex, increased risk of parental separation or divorce, increased risk of parental job loss, financial strain, increased risk for pornographic consumption themselves, exposure to the objectification of human beings, namely women, witnessing parental conflict, and experiencing home stressors in relation to online activities.
As access to the Internet has increased, the same is true regarding the amount of clinicians providing assistance on specific issues pertaining to cybersex behaviors and their impact on the family. According to a study of 91 couples, conducted by Schneider (2000), 2.3% of relationships with an individual partaking in cybersex concluded in separation or divorce. Of this sample, 68% of the couples had lost complete interest in sex with their spouse. Thus, highlighting the loss in real life sexual encounters between spouses when engaging in pornography and cybersex. This study pinpointed adverse effects on families with children including: exposure to pornography, involvement with spousal conflict, lack of attention due to one parents’ involvement with the computer and the other parents’ preoccupation with the cybersex offender and breakup of the marriage. The couples overwhelmingly felt that cyber affairs were as emotionally painful as an offline affair. In particular, with one spouse feeling pornography had replaced their physical being. These children were more likely to experience emotional distress caused by these events, resulting in depression and anxiety (Schneider, 2000).

These stressors can contribute to the lack of satisfaction in relationships where one partner is viewing or taking part in pornographic material. They not only influence the individual but their surroundings, as well.

Summary

There are many ideas as to what classifies pornography addiction and the influence on an individual or their family. The use of pornography as pleasure, stress relief, or as a way to connect socially is becoming more prevalent as the Internet and access to the Internet expands. In this expansion, there will be more ways to access this
material and perhaps more innovative ways to partake in online sexual activities. To learn how Internet pornography is influencing the family, several outlets should be explored.

Although research is beginning to look at how pornography impacts the family unit, some important issues must be addressed. These issues addressed in this body of research will include the role of pornography on an individual and the impact on family members of those who use pornography, key attitudes attributed to pornography use, differences between recreational use and addiction, and negative and positive influences of pornographic material.
Chapter 3 - Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the key attitudes, and influences pornographic material, including cybersex can have on an individual and family members of individuals who use pornographic material. Through this study, the researcher seeks to: a) investigate the differences between recreational pornography use and addiction; b) identify the key attitudes toward pornography held by the individual and family; and c) examine the influences of pornography use on individual and family relationships.

It was hypothesized that families in which individuals who used pornography recreationally will see less adverse effects compared to those battling an addiction. The researcher also hypothesized that individuals using pornography will have a different perception of their behavior versus individuals in their family unit.

Design of the Study

A mixed methods research design provided the foundation for this study. The study explored the relationship between pornography addiction and recreation, but did not address cause and effect. Participants of this study included individual and family members of individuals who use pornographic material. The instrument included both quantitative and qualitative questions resulting in a mixed methods study. The questions focused on demographics, attitudes, addictive behaviors and recreational activities associated with an individual who uses pornography and their family.

Participant Recruitment

A self-reported questionnaire, developed by the researcher was distributed to a sample gathered from social media platforms. This questionnaire required participants to be age 18 or older. This was accomplished by offering the consent form acknowledging subject material and stating the 18 years or over request. Next, the participant was
prompted to enter their date of birth, if this did not match 18 years they were thanked and the questionnaire did not continue. The call for participants was first shared on the researcher’s personal Facebook account using snowball sampling by Facebook “shares” to gather more participants. The link to participation was also sent through Eastern Illinois University Panthermail.

Instrumentation/Measurement Description

The researcher generated two questionnaires, one for an individual addressing age, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, and attitudes toward pornographic material. Additionally, the second questionnaire addressed the impact of a romantic partner’s and family members’ use of pornography and was available to spouses and family members of individuals using pornographic material. The questionnaires also evaluated the attitudes and differences between pornography addiction and recreational use of pornographic materials. The researcher implemented the use of vignettes throughout both questionnaires. The use of vignettes offered relatable scenarios to help respondents conceptualize differences in healthy versus unhealthy behaviors. The individual questionnaire incorporated four vignettes while the family/spouse questionnaire utilized two.

The instrument concentrated on issues by specifically addressing attitudes on pornography addiction, recreation, and the influence it has on a person and family members. This instrument was utilized because it offered complete anonymity and privacy and this aspect was useful in addressing the research questions, as pornography is a sensitive topic. Further, individuals participating in the questionnaires could opt out at any time during data collection.
Procedure for Data Collection

The University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study before beginning data collection. This review ensured that proper precautions were taken to protect the rights and health of the participants. The questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics and posted to Facebook and email listservs. The researcher was available by email and phone to address questions as well as written instructions through Qualtrics. The researcher provided instruction and emphasized the voluntary nature of the survey. Participants were informed of their right to refuse participation with no negative repercussions. As this was administered through the Internet, it can be assumed there was privacy in participating in this study. There was no tracking of IP addresses. The data were and continues to be securely locked with a password only available to the researcher through Qualtrics. This password and data will remain with an Eastern Illinois University employee and thesis committee member when the principal researcher graduates, respectively. A statement of consent was included on the questionnaire which all were required to read before answering the questions. There was no personal identifying information on the questionnaire to ensure full anonymity. The participants were allotted an infinite amount of time to complete the questionnaire. When the questionnaire reached completion, participants were instructed to close out of all Web browsers. Participants who did not wish to proceed in the questionnaire had their data erased and the data were not analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through SPSS and Microsoft Excel. In both questionnaires, the researcher performed data analysis in a mixed methods approach. For the individual
questionnaire, the researcher performed qualitative analysis to identify commonalities and themes. The quantitative analysis for the individual questionnaire included computing the mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and valid percentages.

The family/spouse questionnaire included both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The researcher computed the mean, standard deviation, and frequencies. Qualitative analysis was used to find commonalities and themes. The frequencies and counts were used to construct tables and charts.
Chapter 4 - Results

The objective of this study was to assess the attitudes and thus influence of pornography on the individual and the family members of those who use pornography. The research questions of the study were as follows: a.) How does pornography addiction differ from recreational use of pornographic materials? b.) What key attitudes are attributed to the use of pornographic material? c.) What are the positive and negative attitudes associated with the use of pornographic materials?

Instrumentation

Data were collected using two questionnaires designed by the researcher and administered through Qualtrics. The individual questionnaire consisted of 51 questions, two verifying age and seeking consent and one for debriefing of content. The 47 questions included four vignettes, targeting individual scenarios regarding the individual use of pornography. Other questions included scales to properly assess the attitudes of individuals who personally view/use pornography. However, due to previous research regarding attitudes associated with this behavior, including guilt or shame, specific questions were created throughout the questionnaire in questions eight through 38 (Dedmon, 2012). Similarly, the family/spouse questionnaire consisted of 41 questions, two of which verified the respondent’s age and one debriefing the content, this initial question was seeking consent by verifying age. This questionnaire consisted of 38 questions and two vignettes exploring scenarios regarding pornography use by a family member or spouse. In both questionnaires, due to a mixed methods approach, respondents had the opportunity to expand upon their responses after questions assessing attitudes. This assessment allowed for an individual to elaborate on their personal experience with pornographic materials.
Sample One, Demographics of Individual

Participants were asked to choose between two questionnaires in order to gather the most accurate information for the influence of pornography on their individual or familial experiences. This specific sample is composed of the individuals who completed the questionnaire targeted toward personal use of pornographic material.

A total of 94 individuals completed the Individual Pornography Use Questionnaire. Participants were recruited through Facebook and university email listervs. Of the participants, 30.9% (n = 29) were male, 63.8% were female (n = 60), 4.3% were genderqueer or gender non-conforming, and less than 1% (n = 1) identified outside of the binary options. Individuals who completed this questionnaire fell into several relationship statuses 39.4% (n = 37) were single, 9.6% (n = 9) reported cohabitating, living with their partner, 25.5% (n = 24) were in a committed relationship, 16.0% (n = 15) were married, 2.1% (n = 2) were divorced or separated, and 7.4% (n = 7) reported “other” including, open relationship, polyamorous, married/polygamous, and multiple relationships (see Figures 1-4).

Sample Two, Demographics of Family and Spouse

Nineteen individuals completed the Family and Spouse Pornography Use Questionnaire. Of the respondents, 5.3% (n = 1) were male, 84.2% (16) were female, and 10.5% (n = 2) identified as genderqueer or gender nonconforming. Of this sample, 10.5% (n = 2) were married to an individual using pornography, 36.8% (n = 7) were in a committed relationship, 31.6% (n = 6) were a sibling of someone using this material, 5.3% (n = 1) were the parent of an individual, and 15.8% (n = 3) reported other. Finally, of these respondents, 36.8% (n = 7) were single, 21.1% (n = 4) were cohabitating, living
with their partner, 21.1% (n = 4) were in a committed relationship, and 21.1% (n = 4) were married (see Figures 1a-4a).

**Objective #1: What are the differences between addictive behaviors and recreational pornography use?**

Within both questionnaires, participants completed questions to distinguish the difference between the perception of recreational and addictive behaviors. These differences were targeted, specifically, in four vignettes. Each vignette presented a scenario with both attributes of addiction and recreation. The vignettes used in both questionnaires are listed below and will connect with numbers one through four.

**Vignette One**

1.) “Marcus has disclosed to his best-friend John that he is watching pornographic Internet videos each day for up to 3 hours. Marcus even noted that occasionally he is late for work, class, or doesn’t join gatherings of his peers, because he is “too busy” watching the videos. John is unsure of how to classify his friends Internet behavior, how would you classify Marcus’ Internet activity?

   a.) Marcus is showing signs of addiction, because he is unable to fulfill daily requirements such as class, work, or socialization.

   b.) Marcus is not showing signs of addiction; this is acceptable Internet behavior

   c.) Marcus might be showing signs of addiction, John should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.)

In vignette one, 73.7% noted, “Marcus is showing signs of addiction, because he is unable to fulfill daily requirements such as class, work, or socialization.” Of the respondents, 26.3% reported, “Marcus might be showing signs of addiction, John should
consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.). Overwhelmingly, participants reported that signs of addiction were present in Marcus’ behavior (see Figure 7).

Vignette Two

2.) James forgot to log out of his personal account on his computer, upon opening up the Internet browser, his wife, Emily notices he has five websites for pornography bookmarked. What should Emily do?

a.) Close out of James’ browser and move on, not mentioning it to James
b.) Close out of James’ browser and bring up the bookmarks to James.
c.) Emily should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.)

In vignette two, 66.4% elected to, “close out of James’ browser and bring up bookmarks to James,” 26.3% responded, “close out of James’ browser and move on, not mentioning it to James,” and 5.3% indicated, “Emily should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.). From the responses, it was evident that participants felt that James could be engaging in addictive behaviors, and should be addressed by his wife (see Figure 8).

Vignette Three

3.) Sarah mentions to her boyfriend, Caleb, that she occasionally watches pornographic videos on the Internet, once or twice a week. Caleb is unsure of how to classify his girlfriend’s Internet behavior. How would you classify Sarah’s Internet activity?
a.) Sarah is showing signs of addiction, because she is watching pornographic material.

b.) Sarah is not showing signs of addiction; this is acceptable Internet behavior.

c.) Sarah might be showing signs of addiction, Caleb should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.)

In vignette three, 94.7% responded, “Sarah is not showing signs of addiction; this is acceptable Internet behavior” and 3.3% responded, “Sarah might be showing signs of addiction, Caleb should contact a professional.” The responses from the participants demonstrate that they did not see signs of addictive behavior and that Sarah is displaying acceptable behavior (see Figure 9).

**Vignette Four**

4.) While holiday shopping online, Sharon noticed her wife, Joanne, has been visiting cybersex chat rooms. Although Sharon trusts Joanne, she is unsure if this behavior is an affair. What should Sharon do?

a.) Continue shopping online, pretend she never saw the chat rooms

b.) Ask Joanne about the chat rooms, ask for clarity

c.) Call a professional (therapist, trusted doctor, etc.)

Finally, in vignette four, 94.7% responded, “Ask Joanne about the chat rooms, ask for clarity.” Participants felt that, in this scenario, it was best to talk with Joanne and gain a clear understanding of her intentions online (see Figure 10).

Throughout the course of both questionnaires three similar themes emerged within the qualitative responses targeting the definitions between addictive and recreational behaviors. When asked to define “recreational pornography use” the three
most prevalent themes were as follows: casual viewing without interference of daily tasks ($n = 36$), entertainment ($n = 20$), and sexual stimulation ($n = 32$). One participant supporting the theme of sexual stimulation, when asked to define recreational pornography use noted his or her own experience,

A way to excite my soul in the midst of extreme loneliness. The human body, mind, or soul, was not meant to be alone. Viewing the sex acts between consenting adults can be a healthy alternative in a world of STDs.

When asked to define “pornography addiction” the three themes included: obsessing over pornography ($n = 20$), frequency of pornography use becoming problematic ($n = 49$), and damage of personal and romantic relationships ($n = 21$).

Similarly, one participant elaborates, “Pornography addiction would be when pornography affects their lives in a way they cannot perform day-to-day functions, like going to work, and taking care of personal responsibilities.” This perspective directly supports all three themes, this participate identifies the obsession and frequency of material, “affects their life in a way they cannot perform day-to-day functions.” Finally, they note the aspect of “taking care of personal responsibilities” which indicates damage to personal and romantic relationships.

**Objective #2: What key attitudes are attributed to the use of pornographic material?**

It is important to note throughout examined literature there is little information regarding the attitudes held by individuals using pornography and their perception of the effect on their family. This attitude was targeted in both the family/spouse questionnaire and the individual questionnaire. Respondents within the family/spouse questionnaire
were asked to rank their personal attitudes toward their own pornography use and the affect it has on their romantic partner(s). These attitudes were ranked on a scale of 1 to 10 with one being “does not affect” and 10 “completely affects.” Of the participants 36.4% responded, “does not affect,” 45.5% “somewhat affects,” and 18.2% “affects” (see Figure 11). These results suggest that their interactions with pornographic material do not greatly affect their family members. The next question inquired about the attitudes held by individuals using pornography and the affect it has on relationships within families (children, extended relatives, etc.) Participants were asked to rank their attitudes on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 representing “no affect” and 10 “completely affects.” In this question, 44.4% responded, “does not affect,” 22.2% “somewhat affects,” 11.1% “affects,” 11.1% “strongly affects,” and 11.1% “completely affects” (see Figure 12). Thus, participants indicated that, overall, their attitude was that pornographic material does not affect their family.

Within the family/spouse questionnaire, respondents were asked, “How does your family members use of pornography make you feel?” Several themes emerged throughout this portion of the questionnaire: consensual versus non-consensual sex (n = 9), the impact on their current relationship(s) (n = 4), replacement for physical intimacy (n = 4), fantasy (n = 5), normalcy (n = 7), and negative feelings of self-worth of romantic partners (n = 6). Consequently, participants explained negative emotions, “(I feel) jealous, upset, saddened, betrayed, hurt, confused, questioning all forms of love in general, causes my confidence to lesson and shame.” Another participant explains the role of fantasy,
I feel like it hurts my relationship sexually. The person not viewing feels like they aren’t good enough since the other person as to go online to get pleasure. Or look at people doing things they wouldn’t do that were extreme. Your self-confidence is shattered basically because they are choosing to view someone else more experience, wild, or hotter. It causes a huge range of awful emotions.

On the other hand, another participant wrote, “I think it is a healthy part of our sex life together. We’re open with each other about our pornography use.” While common themes emerged they captured both positive and negative attitudes toward pornographic material.

**Objective #3: What are the positive and negative attitudes associated with the use of pornographic materials?**

Participants in the individual questionnaire were asked to disclose in three questions, their experience with counseling for themselves or their romantic partner. Participants were asked if their romantic partner was currently enrolled for their pornography use, 62.1% of the respondents answered, “no.” Of these respondents, 1.1% were currently enrolled in treatment for their own pornography use, and 1.1% have sought out counseling or other resources for their use of pornography (see figure 6). The results demonstrate that very few participants had experience with seeking out treatment or additional resources.

Participants in the family/spouse questionnaire were asked if they have ever sought out resources or counseling due to their partner’s pornography use, 10.5% of the respondents answered “yes” (see figure 2). Further, participants were asked, “How, if at
all, have you tried to influence or change your family member’s pornography use?”

Overwhelmingly participants stated they “do not talk about it.” This could easily be attributed to the amount of taboo that surrounds discussing pornographic material, and stigmas held across cultural and societal norms. Of the respondents who disclosed expressing distain towards pornography use to their partners, participants answered, “I did not talk about it until I was in a committed relationship as an adult and discussed the issue with my partner. It was a sensitive subject to me so I wanted to be sure my future husband knew how it had hurt me, and was not something I could handle in our relationship.” By the same accord, participants noted, “I have confronted issues before with it and made it clear I find it unacceptable.”

Of the themes negative attitudes of or toward pornography use, three themes emerged: illegal compared to legal material (including consent) \((n = 9)\), impact on personal relationships \((n = 4)\), and influence on self-esteem and self-worth \((n = 6)\). One response explains the impact of pornography on an individual’s family,

(Pornography) makes me very concerned, sad, and worried about my nephew his wife, kids, my sister, and her husband. I am concerned about the degree to which my nephew has become addicted to this behavior. I worry about manipulative people I’m seeing on his part. (I’m) worried about the tension in my sister’s home now and about health issues she is experiencing from the stress.

Subsequently, three themes regarding positive attitudes of or toward pornography were shared: acceptance of healthy behavior \((n = 9)\), consensual sex \((n = 5)\), and means of arousal \((n = 4)\). Participants elaborated on acceptable behavior, “Curiosity in sex is
natural. I think as long as it isn’t terrifying porn, like abuse, then I’m not worried about my partner viewing it occasionally.” Another explaining consensual sex,

I feel it is acceptable, so long as the people in the videos being viewed are all consenting adult. Granted, in online videos, you can likely never tell if someone is truly consenting, as we never know what is behind the scenes. However, at least only viewing things that contain adults engaged in intercourse is a good start.

While both negative and positive attitudes emerged, it is clear that there is support each attitude and the attributes that are connected to each.

Discussion

Pornography is one of the most popular, yet taboo portions of popular culture. It seemingly rules the Internet with countless searches per minute, and grosses nearly $97 billion dollars, internationally each year (Family Safe Media, 2006). Yet, this topic has limited research and is almost forbidden in the field of social and family services.

The present study examined a.) the differences between addictive and recreational behavior, b) the key attitudes attributed to the use of pornographic material, and c) the positive and negative attitudes associated with the use of pornographic material. Individuals aged 18 and older participated in the current study. Recruitment for participation was through social media and email. A total of 94 individuals completed the individual questionnaire and 19 completed the spouse/family questionnaire. The researcher created two questionnaires through Qualtrics as a form of data collection. The questionnaires were based on the work of a pilot study conducted in two Family and Consumer Sciences, graduate level courses. The Individual Questionnaire consisted of 51 questions, two verifying age and seeking consent and one for debriefing of content. The
47 questions included four vignettes, targeting individual scenarios regarding the individual use of pornography. The Family and Spouse questionnaire consisted of 41 questions, two of which verified the respondent’s age and one debriefing the content, this initial question was seeking consent by verifying age. This questionnaire consisted of 38 questions and four vignettes exploring scenarios regarding pornography use by a family member or spouse. The data was analyzed through Qualtrics, SPSS, and Microsoft Excel.

**Objective #1: What are the differences between addictive behaviors and recreational pornography use?**

According to the collected data, individuals who reported watching pornographic material were able to offer clear differences between perceptions of addictive and recreational behaviors. The three themes within pornography addiction included: obsessing over pornography, frequency of pornography use becoming problematic, and damage of personal and romantic relationships. This data is directly supported throughout research regarding addictive behaviors, specifically hypersexual disorder. Hypersexuality is defined by the inability to regulate impulsivity and sexual desire (Kafka, 2010). Thus, a line can be drawn between participant’s explanation of obsession and frequency to the traits defined in hypersexuality.

The participants in the individual questionnaire noted viewing pornography as “normal” and “healthy” which directly corresponds with the 97.9% who indicated viewing pornography. Further, 55.6% reported that their pornography use did not affect their relationship with their partner, 98.4% of respondents have never perceived their pornography use as an addiction, and 98.9% have not been enrolled or sought out professional resources due to their use of pornography.
Overall, these findings may reflect that there are clear differences between addictive and non-addictive behaviors. These findings support the hypotheses 1 and 1a, “Recreational pornography use will have a significant correlation with positive attitudes toward pornography material” and “individuals using pornography recreationally will associate positive attitudes.” As presented in the current study, the majority of individuals who stated they used pornography for recreational or casual purpose had a positive view toward pornographic material. On the other hand, the hypotheses 2) and 2a), “addictive behavior toward pornographic material will have a significant correlation between negative attitudes toward pornography” and “individuals with addictive behaviors will express negative attitudes toward pornographic material” was not supported. Overall, participants who disclosed using pornographic material with addictive behaviors did not cite negative feelings toward their personal use of pornography.

Although the current body of research does not offer a definition or strong guidelines for pornography addiction, the individuals participating in this questionnaire indicate that there is more to be discovered within human sexuality and online behavior.

Objective #2: What key attitudes are attributed to the use of pornographic material?

Of the individuals who completed both the individual and family/spouse questionnaires several themes regarding attitudes toward pornographic material emerged. These themes supported the researcher’s hypothesis 3) “families in which there is pornography use categorized as addiction will have a significant correlation with negative attitudes toward the user and subject.” These negative attitudes and themes seemingly developed out of family relationships that spiraled out of control due to the use of
pornographic material. Thus, due to this discomfort with the subject or individuals suffering from addiction respondents who had interactions with addicted persons felt negatively toward pornography. In examining these attitudes, themes emerged these themes include: consensual versus non-consensual sex, impact on current relationships, replacement for physical intimacy, and fantasy. Overwhelmingly, participants were steadfast in offering approval and viewership to consensual pornographic material. These participants also noted that it was difficult to determine which forms of pornography could be classified as consensual. In both questionnaires, participants indicated that there were few ways to determine if pornographic material is conducted in a safe and healthy manner.

In the same regard, consensual pornographic material is deeply rooted in material that is legal or illegal. The legality of the content encompasses topics such as child pornography, sexual assault, and violence. While there are few ways the viewer can decipher this information this topic was widely discussed throughout both questionnaires and surrounds the discourse within academia.

**Objective #3: What are the positive and negative attitudes associated with the use of pornographic materials?**

The majority of respondents indicated that they believe pornography use, if regulated and not obsessive cannot cause harm to an individual. However, several respondents within the Family/Spouse questionnaire noted that they experience jealousy, sadness, and lack of confidence. The data collected throughout both questionnaires associated with negative attitudes aligns with the current body of research. Individuals who felt disapproving toward their partner’s use of pornography were more likely to have
negative feelings of their body image. This included feeling less attractive and having little sexual appeal. However, due to little research the data exploring positive behavior stands alone. The individuals who noted positive behavior felt it was a positive part of their sexuality, a healthy part of society, and if consensual a means of sexual exploration.

Summary

The present study used two questionnaires to collect information on the influence and attitudes held by individuals and families who are impacted by the use of pornographic material. Overall, the study suggested that the majority of people do participate in some form of pornographic material, whether it be Internet video, cybersex, or another form of media. Participants reported watching pornographic material, seeking out resources for family members using pornographic material, and their emotions associated with the use of pornography. Although these data are certainly not all encompassing, the data offers clear perspectives of pornographic material from individuals, families, and spouses currently interacting with pornographic material in some facet.
Chapter 5- Limitations

There were limitations to the current study. The sample size of the Family/Spouse questionnaire ($n = 19$) was not representative to the individual questionnaire ($n = 94$). The majorities of both samples consisted of female identified people, and were largely under the age of 30, which may not reflect the attitudes and frequency of pornography use for older adults. The majority of participants also did not belong to religious groups, or have any spiritual association. Further, the majority of the participants were white, indicating little variance across race and ethnicity. Another limitation of the study was the inability to gauge the connection between specific pairs of individuals and their direct family. It would have been useful to draw parallels within specific familial units. Detailed demographic data were collected but not analyzed in depth; therefore, information regarding race/ethnicity and geographic location could not be discussed within the confines of the current study.

Limitations also emerged within the method of data collection. The questionnaires were lengthy and difficult to analyze within the constrained time parameters.

Recommendations for Future Research

In future research regarding research on the influence of pornography on individuals and families, it would be beneficial to explore the following:

1.) Pornography is more prevalent for high school and college age males (Craft, 2010). Therefore, this form of media can influence perceptions of sexuality throughout adolescence. Research on viewing habits specifically of this age group should be explored in order to properly educate this demographic.
2.) Open-ended questions regarding the intersections of identities (e.g.: race/ethnicity and sexuality) would allow individuals to speak of their own experiences and expand current research to be more inclusive of other diverse race/ethnicities.

3.) Explore the impact of pornography on individuals living with illness, both physical and mental. This will assist in understanding the motivations of other groups who engage in pornographic material.

Recommendations for Practitioners

1.) Education regarding pornographic material is necessary for any professional serving in a client-based field. Although research is currently swayed toward one body of literature, it is important to remain unbiased when speaking to clients about pornographic material. This is especially important for adolescents who might be exploring their sexuality throughout online mediums.

2.) Focusing solely upon white heterosexual males gives us little understanding regarding the intersections between race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and pornography viewing habits. It is imperative that practitioners understand differences within subgroups and different cultures. Thus, they can educate their clients on specific tactics for prevention and healthy viewership as well as healthy conversations.

3.) Creation of clear definitions within social sciences to determine whether individuals are experiencing pornographic addiction. While a specific definition has been created and denied publication within the latest DSM model it is important to have a starting mark while creating a treatment plan. Practitioners and educators should be cognizant of all forms of addictive behavior to better serve their clients or students.
Summary

This study focused on the influence of pornography on an individual and their family/spouse, including attitudes and behaviors of these individuals. Overall, pornographic material is being viewed internationally. As a growing concern, as well as a healthy outlet for sexual desire, groundwork must be laid for professionals within client based or helping fields.

Despite little current research, aspects of this research study can be connected to current literature and present conversation. The decrease in sexual intimacy and increase in anger and jealousy is indicated throughout the negative attitudes toward pornography (Bergner & Bridges, 2002). These themes were present in data from both questionnaires and are widely regarded as popular themes surrounding pornographic material.

However, not all research regarding pornography is negative, some research, as well as the findings from this study, suggests that it is a healthy portion of adolescent and sexual relationships (Grubbs, 2015). With a booming industry, pornographic material certainly influences our global economy positively (Wosik, 2015).

The development and understanding of the attitudes presented in this study will aid in the development of specific programs to inform individuals of how to properly engage in conversations regarding pornography, regulating behavior and understanding the implications of pornography as a social issue. Additional research on this topic will lead to more specific details about what constitutes addictive behaviors. As the Internet and high technology devices expand and become even more prevalent so will the use of pornographic material. It is necessary, in order to be an effective researcher and
practitioner to understand the influence of pornography consumption on both individuals and families.
Figures for the Individual Pornography User

**Figure 1**
Gender Distribution of Sample 1 ($N = 94$)

**Figure 2**
Distribution of Relationship Status of Sample 1 ($N = 94$)
Figure 3
Distribution of Sexual Orientation of Sample 1 (N = 94)

Figure 4
Distribution of Race/Ethnicity of Sample 1
Figures for the Family Members an Individual that Uses Pornography

**Figure 1a**
Gender Distribution of Sample 2 \( (N = 19) \)
Figure 2a
Distribution of Relationship Status of Sample 2 (N = 19)

Figure 3a
Distribution of Sexual Orientation of Sample 2 (N = 19)

Figure 4a
Relationship toward Individual Using Pornography in Sample 2 (N = 19)
Figure 5
Distribution of Race/Ethnicity of Sample 2 (N = 19)

Figure 6
Distribution of Individuals Seeking Counseling Sample (N = 19)
Figure 7
Distribution of Sample ($N = 19$)

Figure 8
Distribution of Sample ($N = 19$)
Figure 9
Distribution of Sample (N = 19)

Figure 10
Distribution of Sample (N = 19)
Figure 11
Distribution of Sample ($N = 19$)

Figure 12
Distribution of Sample ($N = 19$)
References


Appendix A: Individual Pornography Use Questionnaire

Q1 Age

Q2 Current Relationship Status

- Single (1)
- Cohabiting, living with my partner (2)
- Committed Relationship (3)
- Married (4)
- Divorced or Separated (5)
- Widow (6)
- Other, please specify: (7) _______________

Q3 Sexual Orientation

- Heterosexual (1)
- Gay (2)
- Lesbian (3)
- Bisexual (4)
- Pansexual (5)
- Asexual (6)
- Queer (7)
- None of these options describe me, please specify: (8) _______________

Q4 Gender Identity

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Male to Female (MTF) (3)
- Female to Male (FTM) (4)
- Genderqueer or Gender Non-Conforming (5)
- None of these options describe me, please specify: (6) _______________

Q5 Religion

- Christianity (1)
- Hinduism (2)
- Buddhism (3)
- Judaism (4)
- Non-Religious (5)
- Other: (6) _______________

Q6 Race/Ethnicity

- Hispanic/Latino, or Spanish origin (1)
- Black/African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian Indian/Chinese/ Japanese/ Korean (4)
- White/Caucasian (5)
- Multicultural (6)
- None of these options describe me, please specify (7) _______________
Q7 Geographic Location

- Midwest (1)
- East Coast (2)
- West Coast (3)
- Southern States (4)

Q8 How do you define recreational pornography use?

Q9 Marcus has disclosed to his best-friend John that he is watching pornographic Internet videos each day for up to 3 hours. Marcus even noted that occasionally he is late for work, class, or doesn’t join gatherings of his peers, because he is “too busy” watching the videos. John is unsure of how to classify his friends Internet behavior, how do you classify Marcus’ Internet activity?

- Marcus is showing signs of addiction, because he is unable to fulfill daily requirements such as class, work, or socialization. (1)
- Marcus is not showing signs of addiction; this is acceptable Internet behavior. (2)
- Marcus might be showing signs of addiction, John should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.) (3)

Q10 If you elected to contact a professional, what is your likelihood of doing so?

______ Please Indicate: (1)

Q11 Sarah mentions to her boyfriend, Caleb, that she occasionally watches pornographic videos on the Internet, once or twice a week. Caleb is unsure of how to classify his girlfriend’s Internet behavior. How would you classify Sarah’s Internet activity?

- Sarah is showing signs of addiction, because she is watching pornographic material more than once a week. (1)
- Sarah is not showing signs of addiction; this is acceptable behavior. (2)
- Sarah might be showing signs of addiction, Caleb should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.) (3)

Q12 If you elected to contact a professional, what is your likelihood of doing so?

______ Please Indicate: (1)

Q13 How do you define pornography addiction?

Q14 Do you view pornography? (Internet, television, video, etc.)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q15 On average, how many times per week do you view pornographic material?

- 0 times a week (1)
- 1-3 times a week (2)
- 3-6 times a week (3)
- 6- times a week (4)
- Over 9 times a week (5)
Q16 If you are in a relationship, does your significant other know you engage in pornography?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unsure (3)

Q17 If you answered, "yes," how does your significant other know you engage in pornography?

Q18 Does your family (children, parents, etc.) know you engage in pornography?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unsure (3)

Q19 If you answered, "yes," how does your family know you engage in pornography?

Q20 Which best describes your partner's attitudes toward your use of pornographic material?

_____ Please indicate: (1)

Q21 Are you, or have you ever been, afraid of your partner discovering your use of pornography?

_____ Please indicate: (1)

Q22 If you rated 5 or higher, please elaborate.

Q23 To what extent does pornography use affect your relationship with your family (children, extended relatives, etc.).

_____ Please indicate: (1)

Q24 Which best describes your attitude toward your personal use of pornographic materials?

_____ Please indicate: (1)

Q25 If you rated 5 or higher, please elaborate.

Q26 If you rated 5 or higher, what is your likelihood of seeking counseling or additional resources in the future?

_____ Please indicate: (1)

Q27 Has your use of pornography ever interfered with your daily routine (work, school, etc.)

_____ Please indicate: (1)

Q28 If you rated 5 or higher, please elaborate.

Q29 How often does pornography use affect your relationship with your partner?

_____ Please indicate: (1)
Q30 If you rated 5 or higher, please elaborate

Q31 Have you perceived your use of pornography as an addiction?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unsure (3)

Q32 If you do perceive your use as an addiction, how long have you been using pornography?

Q33 If you answered "yes," when did you perceive your use of pornography as an addiction?
- Within the last six months (1)
- Within the last year (2)
- More than one year ago (3)

Q34 Has your partner ever sought out counseling or other resources due to your use of pornography?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q35 Is your romantic partner currently enrolled in counseling for your pornography use?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unsure (3)

Q36 Have you ever sought out counseling or other resources due to your use of pornography?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q37 Are you currently enrolled in treatment or counseling for pornography use?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q38 If yes, how long have you been seeking counseling?
- Less than 1 month (1)
- 1-3 months (2)
- 4-6 months (3)
- 7-9 months (4)
- Longer than 9 months (5)

Q51 Thank you for your participation, if you are currently experiencing feelings of distress, please utilize the following numbers: Sexual Assault and Counseling Information Service- 1-800-345-2856 HOPE of East Central Illinois- 217-345-4300 Emergency Counseling Hotline (National)- 1-800-273-8255
- Continue to end of survey (1)
Appendix B: Family/Spouse Questionnaire:

Q1 Age

Q2 Relationship Status

- Single (1)
- Cohabitating, living with my partner (2)
- Committed Relationship (3)
- Married (4)
- Widow (5)
- Divorced or Separated (6)

Q3 Gender Identity

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Male to Female (MTF) (3)
- Female to Male (FTM) (4)
- Genderqueer or Gender Non-Conforming (5)
- None of these options describe me, please specify: (6) ___________________

Q4 Sexual Orientation

- Heterosexual (1)
- Gay (2)
- Lesbian (3)
- Bisexual (4)
- Pansexual (5)
- Asexual (6)
- Queer (7)
- None of these describe me, please specify: (8) ___________________

Q5 Religion

- Christianity (1)
- Hinduism (2)
- Buddhism (3)
- Judaism (4)
- Non-Religious (5)
- Agnostic or Atheist (6)
- Other (7) ________________

Q6 What is your relationship toward an individual who uses pornography?

- Married (1)
- Committed Relationship (2)
- Parent (3)
- Sibling (4)
- Grandparent (5)
- Child of individual, over 18 (6)
- Other, please specify: (7) ________________
Q7 Race/Ethnicity

- Hispanic/Latino, or Spanish origin (1)
- Black/African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian Indian/Japanese/Chinese/Korean (4)
- White/Caucasian (5)
- Multicultural (6)
- None of these options describe me, please specify (7) _____________

Q8 Geographic Location

- Midwest (1)
- East Coast (2)
- West Coast (3)
- Southern States (4)

Q9 Marcus has disclosed to his best-friend John that he is watching pornographic Internet videos each day for up to 3 hours. Marcus even noted that occasionally he is late for work, class, or doesn’t join gatherings of his peers, because he is “too busy” watching the videos. John is unsure of how to classify his friend’s Internet behavior, how would you classify Marcus’ Internet activity?

- Marcus is showing signs of addiction, because he is unable to fulfill daily requirements such as class, work, or socialization. (1)
- Marcus is not showing signs of addiction; this is acceptable Internet behavior. (2)
- Marcus might be showing signs of addiction, John should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.) (3)

Q10 If you elected to contact a professional, what is your likelihood of doing so?

_____ Please Indicate: (1)

Q11 Does your partner view pornography?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unsure (3)

Q12 How do you know?

Q13 James forgot to log out of his personal account on his computer, upon opening up the Internet browser, his wife, Emily notices he has five websites for pornography bookmarked. What should Emily do?

- Close out of James’ browser and move on, not mentioning it to James. (1)
- Close out of James’ browser and bring up bookmarks to James. (2)
- Emily should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.) (3)

Q14 If you elected to contact a professional, what is your likelihood of doing so?

_____ Please Indicate: (1)
Q15 Sarah mentions to her boyfriend, Caleb, that she occasionally watches pornographic videos on the Internet, once or twice a week. Caleb is unsure of how to classify his girlfriend’s Internet behavior. How would you classify Sarah’s Internet activity?

☐ Sarah is showing signs of addiction, because she is watching pornographic material. (1)
☐ Sarah is not showing signs of addiction; this is acceptable Internet behavior. (2)
☐ Sarah might be showing signs of addiction, Caleb should consider contacting a professional (counselor, therapist, etc.) (3)

Q16 If you elected to contact a professional, what is your likelihood of doing so?

____ Please Indicate: (1)

Q17 How do you define recreational pornography use?

Q18 While holiday shopping online, Sharon noticed her wife, Joanne, has been visiting cybersex chat rooms. Although Sharon trusts Joanne, she is unsure if this behavior is an affair. What should Sharon do? (For this study, cybersex will be defined as, "exchanging messages, often sexual in nature, to another person via the Internet")

☐ Continue shopping online, pretend she never saw the chatrooms (1)
☐ Ask Joanne about the chat rooms, ask for clarity (2)
☐ Call a professional (therapist, trusted doctor, etc.) (3)
☐ Other: (4)

Q19 How do you define pornography addiction?

Q20 Do you view pornography?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q21 On average, how many times per week do you view pornography?

☐ 0 times a week (1)
☐ 1-3 times a week (2)
☐ 3-6 times a week (3)
☐ 6 times a week (4)
☐ Over 9 times a week (5)

Q22 To what extent does pornography use affect your relationship with romantic partner?

____ Please indicate: (1)

Q23 To what extent does pornography use affect your relationship with your family (children, extended relatives, etc.)

____ Please indicate: (1)

Q24 If you ranked higher than 5, please elaborate:
Q25 If you have not sought out counseling or additional resources, what is your likelihood of seeking out these resources in the future?

Please indicate: (1)

Q26 If you ranked higher than 5, please elaborate:

Q27 How does your family members use of pornography make you feel?

Q28 How, if at all, have you tried to influence or change your family member's pornography use?

Q29 What would you like to change about your family member's pornography use?

Q30 Have you ever sought counseling or other resources due to your partner's pornography use?

Yes (1)
No (2)

Q31 If yes, how long ago were you enrolled in counseling?

Less than 1 month (1)
1-3 months (2)
4-6 months (3)
7-9 months (4)
Longer than 9 months (5)

Q32 How acceptable do you, personally, feel it is for an individual to engage in pornography use?

Please rank your personal attitude: (1)

Q33 If you do not feel that it is acceptable for an individual to use pornography, please elaborate:

Q34 If you do feel that it is acceptable for an individual to use pornography, please elaborate:

Q41 Thank you for your participation, if you are currently experiencing feelings of distress, please utilize the following numbers: Sexual Assault and Counseling Information Service- 1-800-345-2856 HOPE of East Central Illinois- 217-345-4300 Emergency Counseling Hotline (National)- 1-800-273-8255
Appendix C: Informed Consent

Individual Pornography Use Questionnaire:

Thank you for expressing interest in the questionnaire, “Examining the Influence of Pornography on an Individual and the Family.” This questionnaire seeks to address gaps in literature and aid in understanding pornography use and the family. Your participation and honesty is greatly valued and appreciated.

In making the choice to proceed with this questionnaire, the respondent consents to questions regarding their personal attitudes toward pornography. The questionnaire will last between 10 and 20 minutes. This questionnaire will cover topics regarding pornography use, recreation, and addictive behaviors within an individual and the family unit. Thus, due to the subject matter of this questionnaire, any individual under the age of 18 at the time of participating in this survey is not eligible. You may experience discomfort from being asked questions about personal attitudes toward pornography.

This study will not track IP addresses, ask for email addresses, name, or other potentially identifying information. The participation in this survey is completely voluntary and the respondent may choose to not complete the survey at any time. In doing so, the respondent acknowledges their answers will not be used to compile data during analysis.

Please feel free to contact the principal researcher with any questions, concerns, or comments:

This study has been approved by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The protocol IRB number is 16-023.

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 217-581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: euiirb@www.eiu.edu

I hereby acknowledge that I am 18 years or older and consenting in participation of the questionnaire, “Examining the Influence of Pornography on an Individual and the Family.”
Family/Spouse Questionnaire:

Thank you for expressing interest in the questionnaire, “Examining the Influence of Pornography on an Individual and the Family.” This questionnaire seeks to address gaps in literature and aid in understanding pornography use and the family. Your participation and honesty is greatly valued and appreciated.

In making the choice to proceed with this questionnaire, the respondent consents to questions regarding their personal attitudes toward pornography. The questionnaire will last between 10 and 20 minutes. This questionnaire will cover topics regarding pornography use, recreation, and addictive behaviors within an individual and the family unit. Thus, due to the subject matter of this questionnaire, any individual under the age of 18 at the time of participating in this survey is not eligible. You may experience discomfort from being asked questions about personal attitudes toward pornography.

This study will not track IP addresses, ask for email addresses, name, or other potentially identifying information. The participation in this survey is completely voluntary and the respondent may choose to not complete the survey at any time. In doing so, the respondent acknowledges their answers will not be used to compile data during analysis.

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Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 217-581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: euiirb@www.eiu.edu

I hereby acknowledge that I am 18 years or older and consenting in participation of the questionnaire, “Examining the Influence of Pornography on an Individual and the Family.”
Appendix D: E-mail Letter

Greetings,

My name [REDACTED] and I am currently a M.S. candidate in the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Eastern Illinois University. I am reaching out to you regarding a study I am conducting on pornography use on an individual and within families. Any individual over the age of 18 is eligible to participate in the survey links provided below. There will be no tracking of IP addresses and no identifiers of the respondent.

The survey takes around 15-20 minutes to complete. Please follow the links provided to the survey most appropriate for your needs.

Family Survey (People who know someone in their family (son, daughter, grandchild, etc. uses pornography).

Individual Survey (People who currently use pornography)
Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns,

This study has been approved by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The protocol IRB number is 16-023.

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 217-581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

[REDACTED]
Appendix E: E-mail Address

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Appendix F: Disclosure

Thank you for your participation, if you are currently experiencing feelings of distress, please utilize the following numbers: Sexual Assault and Counseling Information Service- 1-800-345-2856 HOPE of East Central Illinois- 217-345-4300, Emergency Counseling Hotline (National) - 1-800-273-8255