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The Relationship between Pornography Viewing and Sexually Aggressive Behaviors among Male Students in Selected Kenyan Universities

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Abstract:

Advance in technology has helped to change the terrain of human sexuality in both positive and negative ways making the distribution of pornography faster and easier than ever before. It is often assumed that pornographic materials educate and offer entertainment to its viewers. However, sexually objectifying media could also increase sexual perpetuation such as sexual abuse that has become rampant in our society today. A few studies have examined the relationship between pornography viewing and sexual aggressive behaviors giving mixed results. To shed more light on this topic, Social Learning Theory and Confluence Model of Sexual Aggression were used to inform the relationships between pornography viewing and sexual aggressive behaviors among male students in selected universities in Kenya. The study adopted a correlational research design. Proportionate random sampling techniques were used to get a sample of 487 students while four students' counselors were purposively sampled. Research data was collected using a questionnaire and structured interview guide. Quantitative data was analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient while the qualitative data was thematically analyzed. The study findings revealed a weak positive correlation between use of sexual arousal (kissing and touching) and use of nude images in magazines, videos, T.V or internet at $r = .111, p < 0.05$; use of graphic photos at $r = .155 < 0.01$ and use of dirty talk at $r = .123, p = .01$. It is argued that although the correlation is weak, it is indicative of development of sexually undesired behavior that could put the whole human race at risk if not addressed. The study recommends creation of awareness on effect of pornography use and the tendency to cause sexual aggressive behaviours among its users. Strong policies and programmes on pornography abuse and regulations to be put in place for the betterment of humanity.

Keywords: Technology, media, pornography/ sexually explicit materials, sexual aggressive behaviors, sexual aggressive attitudes, rape, rape myth acceptance

1. Introduction

Advance in technology has helped to change the terrain of human sexuality in both positive and negative ways. According to Lo & Wei, (2005), the introduction of the internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) has gained prominence in producing, disseminating, storing and presenting pornographic materials known as cyber pornography or cybersex. Pornography is sexually explicit material that is primarily intended to sexually arouse the reader, viewer or listener (Malamuth, 2000). Pornography portrays aspects of violence, aggression and degradation of another human being. Hald & Malamuth, (2008) noted that pornography use is becoming increasingly common in today's society, particularly on the internet. This has been attributed to the theory entitled Triple-A Engine; Affordability, Anonymity and Accessibility (Cooper, Delmonico & Burg, 2000). Pornography is affordable due to widespread competition from distributors as well as increasing chances of free pornography. Viewers can use pornography at the privacy of their homes, Carroll et al, (2008); hence it is anonymous. Sexually explicit materials or pornography is not a new phenomenon, as it has existed in virtually every society throughout history (Robertson, 2002). Pornography is also widely accessible from many sources such as the internet, pay-per-view, television, magazines and other electronic devices. Since the advance in technology, all media technologies from print to internet have been used for sexual purposes (Noonan, 1998). These and many other sources of sexually explicit materials are at the disposal of all individuals regardless of age.

Kenya being part of the global village has not been left behind. In June, 2019, the Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK) indicated that 89.7% of the Kenyan population use internet (CAK, 2019). This indicates a high usage which may translate to a relative increase in pornography exposure to the users especially the young people who are quite inquisitive. Multiple studies by, (Boies, 2002; Gordon, Juang, & Syed, 2007) reported that about 40% of College students indicated viewing internet pornography during their lifetime. There is a possibility that the problem with internet

pornography will continue to get worse as technology advances. The effects of pornography viewing can therefore go unnoticed leading to antisocial behaviors for example sexual aggression.

Sexually aggressive behavior is any sexual behavior which occurs without consent and equality or as a result of coercion, for example, sexual arousal and manipulation, rape and sexual assault (Bryant, 2009). Sexual aggressive behaviour is a social challenge evident in every society. Pornography viewers may model and imitate the actions portrayed leading to acquisition of sexual aggressive behaviors. According to Shaw, Hamm & Knott, (2000), sexual aggression involves the use of threats, intimidation, and exploitation of authority or force with the aim of imposing one's sexual will on a non-consenting person for personal gratification. Studies have indicated that girls and women are the main recipient of sexual aggressive behaviours mainly from male perpetrators. For instance, the World Health Organization (W.H.O, 2002) multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence found that 10-27% of women and girls reported experiencing sexual abuse in their lifetime (Garcia- Moreno, Hansen *et al*, 2005). However, this study indicated that men and boys are also victims of sexual aggression.

In Africa, studies carried out in Ghana and Zimbabwe found that sexual coercion is an important factor in sexual initiation and subsequent intercourse (Phiri and Erulkar, 2000). This study indicated that in Ghana, 25% of females aged 12-24 reported that their first intercourse was forced. Similar sentiments were reported in Kenya; where 24% of sexually experienced females reported to have been forced into their first sexual encounter (Erulkar, 2004). Further, statistics from Gender Violence and Recovery Centre (GBVR, 2013), indicated that one in every five Kenyan women (21%) had experienced sexual violence, with 90 % of reported perpetrators being men.

In Kenya, empirical data on women and sexual violence is available but there is a dearth of knowledge on male sexual aggressive behaviours and more so among male university students. Studies have indicated increasing trends of sexual aggressive behaviors among male university students. George (2001), pointed that most cases of high sexual violence is perpetrated in educational settings. Some of sexual aggressive behaviours committed include sexual assaults and attempted or completed rape. Studies on sexual aggressive behaviours with male college students had established rates ranging from 14% to 61% (Loh, Orchowski, Gidycz & Elizaga, 2007; Lyndon, White, & Kadlec, 2007; Abbey *et al*; 2003; Wheeler, George & Dahl, 2002). However, there is limited empirical data on the relationship between pornography viewing and sexual aggressive behaviours among male students in universities Kenya which is the concern of this study.

Previous studies have indicated relationships between pornography viewing and sexual aggressive behaviours. For instance, studies carried out by Oddone, Paulucci, Genius and Violato (2000) indicated a significant relationship between pornography viewing and sexual aggression. Similarly, a meta-analysis of forty-six published studies done in North America from 1962- 1995 of a total sample size of 12,323 people found that exposure to sexually objectifying media increases sexual perpetuation by 32 % (Malamuth, 2000). Later, studies by Ybarra and Mitchell (2005) indicated that males who frequently consumed pornography had more than four times levels of sexual aggression compared to their peers who infrequently sought pornography. In particular, viewing violent pornography increases males' coercive and aggressive behaviours against female victims (Hines, and Straus, 2007). Studies using male college students indicated that pornography consumption contributed to the prediction of sexual violence against women (Carr and Van Deusens (2004). Most of the studies on relationship between pornography and sexual aggressive behaviours have been undertaken in universities in developed countries (Oddone *et al*, 2000; Malamuth, 2000; Vega & Malamuth, 2007; William, *et al*, 2009). However, there are limited empirical studies on the relationship between pornography viewing and sexual aggressive behaviours in Africa and more so in Kenya. This study therefore sought to fill this gap by focusing on the relationship between pornography viewing and sexual aggressive behaviours among male students in selected universities in Kenya.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopted a correlation research design to establish the relationship between viewing of pornography (independent variable) and sexual aggressive behaviors (dependent variable) among male students in selected universities in Kenya. The study targeted the general male students' population in Universities in Kenya which are the centers of new technology and effects from such exposure can therefore be evident. The private Universities were further categorized into religious and secular based Universities because religion impacts certain beliefs, values, expectations and behaviors on to the students especially on their sexuality. University students are a sexually active group of the society and have minimal limitations of their sexual exploration and exposure. The study focused on male students because majority of sexual offenses are committed by males (see for example, Steffensmeier, Darrel, Hua, Jeff, Schwartz & Agha, 2006).

Proportionate stratified sampling techniques were used to get a sample of 487 participants among the students and four students' counselors were purposively selected for the interview. A self-report questionnaire was used to enable respondents express their opinions freely and to give them adequate time to give well thought out answers. According to Kothari (2004), the use of questionnaires helps to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings. Structured interviews were conducted with the student counselors to elicit information, opinions and views on the topic of study.

Quantitative data analysis was done by use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to provide both descriptive; frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations and inferential statistics through Pearson Correlation Coefficient. Qualitative data analysis was achieved through thematic analysis where patterns that were related were grouped together into themes which were later reported and interpreted.

3. Results and Discussions

To establish the relationship between sexual aggressive behaviors and viewing of pornography the researcher endeavored to establish the nature of pornographic materials used and extent of pornography viewing among male students in selected Universities in Kenya. Then the relationship between pornography viewing and sexual aggressive behavior was established. Table 1 illustrates the percentage use of different types of sexually explicit materials by the respondents:

| Items | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Nude images in magazines, videos, TV or internet | 77% |
| Dirty talk | 63% |
| Images depicting sexual intercourse | 58% |
| Graphic photos e.g. exposed genitalia | 50% |
| Exchanging explicit text or email messages and images | 46% |
| Multiple partners sexual scenes(orgy) | 22% |
| Teenage/children sexual scenes | 17% |
| Same sex sexual scenes | 12% |
| Animal sexual scenes | 11% |
| Average | 39.6% |

Table 1: Type of Sexually Explicit Materials viewed

From Table 1 the most frequently viewed Sexually Explicit Materials were nude images in magazines, videos, Television or internet at 77%, as they are most accessible, available and appealing to the viewers. Use of dirty talk was at 64%, images depicting sexual intercourse at 58% and graphic photos showing exposed genitalia at 50%. On average, 39.6% of the respondents have used sexually explicit materials in one form or another. These results compare well with the surveys of College men by (Demare, Briere, & Lips, 1988; Garcia, 1986) who have shown that 35-55% reported having consumed violent pornography in some form. Also, multiple studies by (Boies, 2002; Gordon, Juang, & Syed, 2007) reported that about 40% of College students indicated viewing internet pornography during their lifetime. Further, studies by Buerkel, (2005) indicated that most University students spend the largest part of their time watching video and films, browsing and chatting on the Internet.

Further, interviews conducted on student counselors on sources of pornographic materials used by students indicated the following:

Excerpt 1

Phones, print media- books and magazines, photographs, internet being the major source due to privacy, videos, advertisement and strip joints

Excerpt 2:

Social media; sharing porn on face book, twitter etc, students are able to create porn on the social media by use of cameras on phones, laptops; take photographs of nude individuals in sexual acts and post them on social media, dating sites e.g. u-tube films are free of charge and accessible

The interview confirmed that students consume pornographic materials from a variety of sources; internet, print media (books and magazines) among other sources. Students can also create their own sexually explicit materials by use cameras on their phones and laptops; which they share with their friends through the social media (Facebook, twitter among others). They take photographs of nude individuals in sexual acts and post them in social media and dating sites. This resonates well with Bryant, (2009) who indicated the content of pornography varies markedly ranging from nudity to the sexually explicit, from nonviolent to violent materials. He noted that online content is more diverse; incorporating self-produced materials often unregulated and therefore can include sexual violence and other illegal sexual content.

Further, the researcher explored the frequency of exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials (SEM) by the respondents as indicated in Table 2:

| Aspects | No response | Never | At least once a year | At least once a month | At least once a week | At least once a day | Involved in SEM |
|---|-------------|-------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| I have to find time to watch pornography on films and videos | 4% | 43% | 22% | 18% | 9% | 4% | 53% |
| I can surf the internet in my own space so I can watch pornography | 6% | 42% | 19% | 17% | 9% | 6% | 51% |
| I watch women in lingerie/swimsuits | 8% | 42% | 15% | 18% | 10% | 7% | 50% |
| One can learn a lot about sex from the cyber, so I make a point of practicing cyber sex | 8% | 70% | 9% | 6% | 4% | 3% | 22% |
| Strip joints are common in major towns, so I make some time to visit these joints | 7% | 65% | 17% | 7% | 2% | 3% | 29% |
| It is through reading romantic/erotic novels that you learn about sex, so I make some time to read such materials | 8% | 39% | 23% | 21% | 6% | 4% | 54% |
| It is through practicing phone sex or video sex that I learn about sex | 7% | 55% | 11% | 13% | 6% | 8% | 38% |
| AVERAGE | 6.9 | 50.9% | 16.6% | 14.3% | 6.6% | 5.0% | 42.2% |

Table 2: Frequency of Exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials

Table 2 revealed the frequency of exposure to some degree of Sexually Explicit Materials as follows; reading romantic and erotic novels at 54%, watching porn on films and videos at 53%, surfing the internet at 51% and watching women in lingerie/ swimsuits at 50%. The average frequency of exposure to any sexual aggressive materials was at 42.2 % with exposure to at least once a day being low, at 5%. The small percentage of respondents who view SEM on a daily basis cannot be ignored because the sample was drawn from a general population where individuals who are exposed to pornography may not be very many. Use of technology indicate higher percent for at least once a day which is the highest frequency (practicing phone or video sex, 8%; surfing internet, 6%; and videos and films, 4%). Further, respondents reacting to open ended question on the availability of pornography had this to say:

Excerpt 1

Pornography is in the net and is accessible to anybody; with the internet anyone can access the material, its everywhere TV, movies, and video games

These results are in line with studies by Floods & Hamilton (2003) that indicated that 5 % males were exposed to x-rated videos weekly and 16% exposed every 3 to 4 weeks while for On-line exposure 24 % were exposed weekly and 22 % every 3to 4 weeks.

According to Allen, D'Alession & Brezgel, (1995) violent pornography is associated with increased risk of aggression. Imitation and modeling of the behaviors seen on pornography is likely to predispose the viewers to sexual aggressive behaviors. Table 3 illustrates the correlations between types of sexually aggressive materials ever used by the respondents and their sexually aggressive behaviors:

| | | Correlations | | | |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| | | Use of a sexual arousal | Use of emotional manipulation | Use of alcohol | Use of physical force |
| Nude images in magazines, videos, TV or internet | Pearson Correlation | .111* | .082 | .043 | .082 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .015 | .069 | .341 | .071 |
| | N | 487 | 487 | 487 | 487 |
| Graphic photos e.g. exposed genitalia | Pearson Correlation | .155** | .010 | .060 | .077 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .824 | .188 | .088 |
| | N | 487 | 487 | 487 | 487 |
| Dirty talk | Pearson Correlation | .123** | .054 | .076 | .037 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .007 | .234 | .093 | .411 |
| | N | 487 | 487 | 487 | 487 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | |

Table3: Relationship between the Types of SEM Ever Used and Sexual Aggressive Behaviors

There was a weak positive correlation between use of sexual arousal (kissing and touching) and use of nude images in magazines, videos, T.V or internet at $r = .111$, $p < 0.05$ at 95% significance level; use of graphic photos at $r = .155$

< 0.01 at 99% significance level; use of dirty talk at $r = .123$, $p = .01$ at 99% significance level. Literature review on pornography consumption has shown mixed results in predicting sexual aggressive perpetration. According to previous studies by Malamuth & Cenitis (1986); the long-term effects of repeated violent porn consumption had no significant impact on sexual aggression. Barak et al. (1999) found that pornography exposure measured by exposure to various type of explicit materials in differing media, was significantly correlated with measure of reported likelihood of sexual harassment behaviours. Similarly, other researchers working with small samples of University students suggested that exposure to x-rated pornographic material was related to perpetration of sexual aggression (Carroll, Padilla-Walker, Nelson & Madsen, 2000; Malamuth, 2000; Vega and Malamuth, 2007; and Williams, Cooper, Howell, Yuille & Paulus, 2009). The evidence of associations between pornography and aggressiveness towards women could be explained by a 'circular relationship' where aggressive males are drawn to the images in pornography that reinforces and thereby increases the likelihood of their controlled impersonal and hostile orientation to sexuality (Malamuth & Huppini, 2005).

The study established a weak positive significant impact of pornography consumption on some aspects of sexual aggressive behaviors. It is worth noting that even relatively small association between pornographic consumption and sexual aggressive behaviors may translate into considerable social and practical significance across larger population and also among sex offender's samples (Rosenthal, 1986). Given the exponential growth and accessibility of pornographic material due to advances in technology (Malamuth et al., 2000), evidence for or against a link between such materials and aggression would be important to public policy debates and legislation, as well as the assessment and treatment of sexual offenders (Seto et al., 2001). Results from this study cannot therefore, be ignored bearing in mind that the study dealt with a general population and sexuality being a private affair many may have underreported.

In line with social learning theory, observation of the media may promote the modeling of behavior similar to those viewed and may reinforce and/ or justify similar attitudes and behaviors in everyday life. People viewing pornographic materials may believe that the way the characters perform sexually is 'normal' and appropriate portrayal of reality. Hence exposure to pornography may be an important factor which contributes directly or indirectly to the development of sexually aggressive behaviors among the viewers.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the proceeding findings, it was concluded that students are exposed to pornographic images found in magazines, videos, T.V., internet and used dirty talk in varied degrees. Technology has played a major role in making pornography available to individuals in all age groups to various type of SEM. The study also indicated that a few respondents had high sexual aggressive behaviors and a weak correlation between certain aspects of pornography viewing and sexual aggressive behaviors was established. This weak correlation should not be ignored bearing in mind that the research involved a general population of students. The results may be an indicator of a deeper psychosocial problem in the society.

In view of the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that the Government to censor all information and programmes reaching out to the youths through the electronic media to reduce moral and sexual decadence in the society. Policy and legal framework on control and regulation of pornography production, dissemination and consumption ought to be enacted and enforced.

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