Internet Pornography Viewing, Mental Health of Viewers, and Socio-Demographic Determinants of the Behavior among Youths in Ogun State, Nigeria

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A B S T R A C T

Background: Internet use has become pervasive in the society and has facilitated unrestricted access to sexual images and videos. Studies have discussed the social and psychological issues associated with this behaviour, especially among youths. However, there is paucity of studies on the prevalence of internet pornography viewing in Nigeria, the socio-demographic determinants of the behaviour, and its psycho-social effects on Nigerian youths. This study examined pornography viewing, socio-demographic determinants of the behaviour, and mental health of viewers.

Methods: The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design and a multistage sampling technique. The study was conducted among undergraduate students of two tertiary institutions in Ogun State Nigeria. Three hundred and fifty (350) copies of questionnaires were administered. Data were collected on internet utilization, prevalence of pornography viewing, and mental health of viewers. Data were analysed through descriptive statistics for categorical data and chi-square test of independence. Basic ethical principles were adhered to.

Results: The prevalence rate of internet pornography viewing was 82.93%. There were significant relationships between gender, marital status and pornography viewing (p<0.05) as pornography viewing was higher among males (80%) than females (32%) and higher among engaged (68%), single (65%) than married (18.5%). Majority of the respondents (60%) complained about their mental health.

Conclusion: Internet pornography utilization is endemic among youths in Ogun state Nigeria as both males and females patronize internet pornography sites. Pornography viewing also has mental health implication on youths in Ogun State Nigeria. The findings of this study suggest the need for public sensitisation about the risk associated with pornography viewing.

Keywords: Internet, Youths, Pornography, Mental Health, Addiction, Masturbation

Introduction

The invention of the internet remains one of the best developments in the world. Internet has made interaction and access to information at both local and global levels seamless (Strasburger, 2009). Internet is a product of advanced human rationality, a distinctive feature of postmodern society which Ritzer (2008) identified as a distinction between modern and postmodern day world. Internet use has become an integral part of everyday life among both the young and old. Global statistics has shown that 63% of the world's population which is more than half are internet users (Statista, 2022). In Nigeria, there are over 109.2 million internet users with internet penetration standing at 51.0% (DataReportal, 2022). Internet use increased in Nigeria by 4.8million (4.6%) between 2021 and 2022 (DataReportal, 2022).

In spite of the positive developments that the invention of internet has brought to the world (Kaplan and Haelen 2011), scholars have identified the moral effects of internet use especially among the young which may have negative impacts on their lives (Arunlogun et al., 2016). One major disturbing effect of internet use among the youths is pornography viewing (Egbochukwu, 2007). There is no doubt, that the cyberspace has been proliferated with sexual explicit pictures and video websites which has influenced the youth behaviour and development (Lofregen et al., 2010). Digital devices with internet connections have indiscriminately facilitated access of people regardless of age to encounter, view and distribute sexually explicit contents with growing evidence among the youths (Flood, 2007; Hagstrom & Nording et al., 2006; Wolak et al., 2010). In Germany, Sweden, Poland and Italy, 98% of youths engage in pornography viewing (Dwuilt et al., 2019; Hagstrom-Nordin et al., 2016; Giordano et al., 2017).

In Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Greece, and the Czech Republic, a moderate prevalence rate of 36%-57% of pornography viewing has been reported (Luder et al., 2011; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2016). One major effect of pornography is its psychosocial effects (Longe et al., 2007). The impact of pornography viewing on cognitive, behavioural and emotional wellbeing of young ones have been well discussed in literature (Dwulit et al., 2019; Owens et al., 2012). The consequences of this behaviour include addiction, isolation, rape, child-pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases and possible increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS due to unguided sexual acts (Longe et al., 2007).

Studies reviewed above have shown clearly that pornography viewing is a global problem with psycho-social implications. However, in Nigeria, paucity of literature on the prevalence of pornography viewing among youths, socio-demographic determinants and the psychological effects of this behaviour exists. This study investigated the prevalence of pornography viewing among youths in Ogun State Nigeria, socio-demographic determinants of the behaviour and the psycho-social effects.

Theoretical Framework

Moral Theory

Moral theory refers to a set of propositions that provide us with the idea of how we should live our lives, what we should do or not and what is good or bad. Moral theory is about reducing harm, danger and behaviours that threatens human existence (Timmons, 2002). Although what is moral and immoral is subjective and based on social-cultural context, scholars have identified basic moral values which are dignity, good will, and non-maleficence (Timmons, 2002). Aristotle in his virtue ethics held that, humans must always show good will to one another as this is the basis for a risk free society. Mills John Stuart (1806-1873) explained that morality is about seeking happiness of others and through this, we promote health and well-being. Studies have shown that pornography viewing especially among youths is associated with moral decadence and may contribute to sexual and gender based violence against either males or females, one which negates human happiness, dignity, respect and inimical to

well-being. This study was conducted to examine the prevalence of this immoral behaviour in Ogun State Nigeria, as well as factors associated with this behaviour for quick intervention development in order to avert the risk that this behaviour might pose to the society at large.

Hypotheses of the Study

There is a significant relationship between gender and pornography viewing

There is a significant relationship between marital status and pornography viewing

There is a significant relationship between religion and pornography viewing

There is a significant relationship between pornography and mental health

Methods

Study Design

This study adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey design. This design afforded the researchers the opportunity to elicit information from a large number of respondents in order to gain adequate insight on the subject of interest within a short period of time.

The study was conducted in two tertiary institutions in Ogun State Nigeria whose name will not be mentioned due to ethical reasons. The choice of a University was because of the substantial number of youths in institutions of learning whom the researchers considered would be able to provide the relevant information for the study.

The population of interest were undergraduate students of two tertiary institutions in Ogun State Nigeria. The population comprises of males and females of 18 years and above.

Inclusion Criteria

a.Internet use at least 6 months before study

b.Willingness to participate in the study

The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination formula. The minimum sample size calculated for this study was 350

Sampling Procedure

The study adopted a multi stage sampling technique. The first stage involved random selection of 2 Universities in Ogun State Nigeria through the ballot method of simple random sampling. The second stage involved clustering of the universities in to faculties. At the third stage, one faculty was randomly selected from the two universities. The fourth stage involved the clustering of the selected faculties in to departments. At the fifth stage, one department was randomly selected from each of the faculties. At the sixth stage, the departments were stratified in to levels. At the seventh stage, the questionnaires were allocated to each level in the selected universities and departments through proportionate sampling. At the eight stages, the questionnaires were administered through systematic random sampling.

Questionnaire

Three hundred and fifty (350) copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered to 350 students in the randomly selected universities. The questionnaire was divided in to four sections; Section A measured the socio-demographic information of respondent, Section B measured frequency of internet use, Section C measured prevalence of pornography viewing, Section D measured mental health of respondents. The questionnaire was designed by the researchers. The reliability of the scale was determined through Cochran test of reliability. The questionnaire was also given to experts in the field of Sociology and Psychology for face validity of the instrument.

Measures
Prevalence of pornography Viewing

Respondents were asked if they watch pornography or not. They were also asked if they watch pornography every day, once a week or anytime.

Mental Health of Viewers

The researcher developed Likert scale questions to ascertain mental health of the respondents. These questions included addiction to masturbation, self-withdrawal from social environment, sleep disorder

and immense pressure to fulfil sexual desire. For instance, the following statements were used to elicit information from the respondents. "I always have the pressure to have sex", "I cannot do without masturbating daily", "I prefer staying somewhere alone watching pornography than staying in the midst of people talking or associating with them" The reliability of the scale was determined through Cochran test of reliability and the score was 0.78. The scores of each respondent on the questions were sum up to calculate the average to determine the mental health of the respondents. The scores were then categorized in to good or poor.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed through descriptive statistics for categorical data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) which were presented in bar charts. Chi-square test of Independence was also employed to examine relationships between variables.

The study was conducted in line with the Nigeria National Code of Health Research Ethics. One of the authors underwent ethical training for this study and was assigned ethical code no NHREC/TR/02/2007a. The study was further reviewed and approved by the Ethical Committee Board of the Department of Behavioural Studies, Redeemer's University.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Males constituted 71.42% of the respondents in this study while females represented 28.57%. Over 42% of the respondents were between the ages of 24-28 followed by respondents between ages of 18-23 who constituted 38.57% of the respondents. Few of the respondents (18.57%)

were 29 years and above. Almost all the respondents (78.57%) were single, 8.28% were married while 13.14 were engaged. Respondents affiliated with Christianity were 47.14%, 47.14% were affiliated with Islam while 10% practice other religion. The results are presented in Table 1

Prevalence of Pornography Viewing

A substantial percentage of the respondents (82.93%) engaged in pornography viewing while only 16.85% were not watch pornography viewers. The results are presented in figure 1

Relationship between Socio-Demographic Factors and Pornography Viewing

Findings from the cross tabulation of socio-demographic information of respondents and pornography viewing revealed that a significant relationship between sex of respondents and pornography viewing. The behaviour was more common among males (80%) than females (32%). A significant relationship was also observed between marital status and pornography viewing as pornography viewing was higher among single (65%) and engaged (68%) than married youths (18.5%). However, no relationship was observed between pornography viewing and religion of respondents. The results are presented in Table 2

Mental Health of Pornography Viewers

Scores from items on mental health reveals that 60% of the respondents had poor mental health. Further statistical test through Chi-square test of independence after categorization of the scores in to good and poor mental health scores revealed a significant relationship between pornography viewing and mental health of respondents. The results are presented in Figure 2 and Table 3.
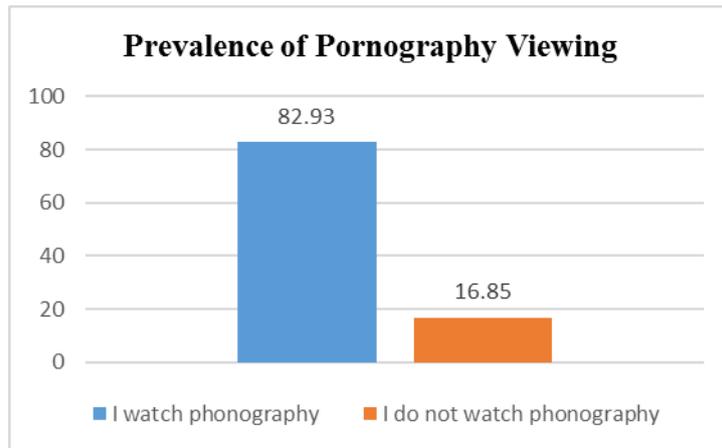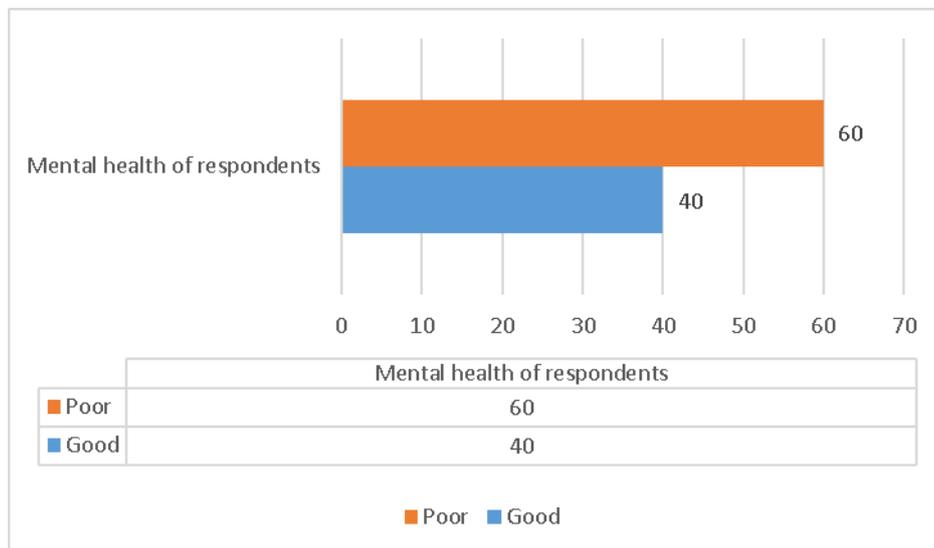
Figure 1. Prevalence of Pornography Viewing

Figure 2. Mental Health of Pornography Viewers

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents		
Variables	**N**	**%**
Sex		
Male	250	71.42
Female	100	28.57
Age		
18-23	135	38.57
24-28	150	42.85
29 and above	65	18.57
Marital Status		
Single	275	78.57
Married	29	8.28
Engaged	46	13.14
Religion		
Christian	165	47.14
Islam	150	42.85
Others	**35**	**10**

Table 2. Cross Tabulation of Socio-demographic Variables and Pornography Viewing					
Variables	**Yes**	**No**	X^2	*df*	*P*
Sex			**3.1977**	**2**	**.002**
Male	200(80%)	50(20%)			
Female	32(32%)	68(68%)			
Marital Status			**9.521**	**2**	**.014**
Single	180(65%)	95(34.5%)			
Married	5(18.5%)	22(81.4%)			
Engaged	33(68%)	16(32%)			
Religion			**16.986**	**2**	**.182**
Christianity	130(78.7%)	35(29.9%)			
Islam	90(60%)	60(40%)			
Others	25(71.4%)	10(28.5%)			

Pornography Viewing

Table 3. Cross Tabulation of Pornography viewing and Mental Health of Viewers					
	Good	**Poor**	df	X^2	*P*
Pornography viewing			2	2.978	.031
I watch pornography	70(28%)	180(72%)			
I do not watch pornography	77(77%)	26(23%)			

Mental Health

Discussion

One of the gaps that this study identified was the lack of empirical data on pornography viewing situation among youths in Nigeria. This study found 100% internet utilization and 83% prevalence rate of pornography viewing among youths in two Ogun State tertiary institutions. This is similar to the earlier findings in Germany, Poland and Italy where authors reported 98% prevalence rate of pornography viewing (Dwuilt et al., 2019; Hagstrom-Nordin et al., 2016; Giordano et al., 2017). It was observed that there was a significant relationship between sex of respondents and pornography viewing. A breakdown of the analysis revealed that males had 80% level of internet pornography utilization while females had 32% level of internet pornography use. This implies that although pornography viewing maybe higher among males, it is a lifestyle in both sexes. This explains the pervasiveness of pornography viewing among Nigerian youths.

This study also found that the level of pornography viewing was higher among engaged and singles than married individuals. This maybe because married youths may be able to satisfy their sexual urge with their partners while singles and individuals who are in relationships but not yet married may consider pornography viewing and masturbation as alternatives to satisfy their sexual desire. However, we did not observe any relationship between religion and pornography viewing. The implication of this is that an individual's religion may not necessarily determine if the individual would watch pornography or not.

Majority of the respondents (60%), complained about their mental health. Further statistical test also revealed a relationship between pornography viewing and mental health of respondents. This is similar to the contribution of Maltz and Maltz (2006) as they noted that pornography leads to masturbation which may disrupt mental health as it may result in addiction, isolation, increased aggression, distorted beliefs and neglecting other areas of life. At the societal level, the consequence of pornography can be devastating which can increase the incidence of sexual and gender based violence in the society such as rape and sexual harassment (Quadara et al, 2017).

Conclusion

This study has shown that internet pornography utilization is endemic among youths in Ogun state Nigeria as both males and females patronize internet pornography sites. Pornography viewing also has mental health implications on youths in Ogun State Nigeria. Given the social and psychological issues associated with pornography viewing, the findings of this study suggest the need for public sensitisation about the risk associated with pornography viewing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest and we did not receive any funding for this study.

Authors' Contribution

Conceptualization, methodology and analysis, O.M., Original draft writing, A.A.O. and F.S., Supervision, O.J.L.

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