

AN EVALUATION OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY AND THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF NIGERIAN UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract: *In our technologically-driven age, the obvious reality is that there are noticeable gross sexual misconducts among undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This work focuses on the Correlation between Internet Pornography and the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates. This research adopted the survey approach. The total population for the study is 35,974 based on the statistics obtained from 5 randomly universities': Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo (FUNAI); Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUAU), Umudike; Renaissance University Ugbawka (RUU), Imo State University (IMSU), Owerri, and Tansian University Umunya (TUU). A sample size of 381 was determined using the Australian National Statistical Service online calculator. Questionnaire and interviews were used to elicit behavioural responses which reflected feelings, beliefs, attitudes and opinions of respondents on Internet pornography, its use and possible correlation with their sex behaviours. Evidence from research data indicates that Nigerian undergraduates who are exposed to Internet pornography differ significantly from those not exposed to Internet pornography in terms of real life sexual practices like sex recklessness and risky sex practices. It was recommended that Internet Service Providers should allocate preconfigured user and password IDs. These can then be programmed to function only on Internet sites with web contents that are healthy for the undergraduate students' consumption.*

Keywords: Undergraduates, Internet use, Pornography, Sex behaviour, and Exposure

INTRODUCTION

One major emerging worrisome dimension in the Nigerian cyberspace is pornography, in its various guises. Aided by technology-induced anonymity, the Internet has popularized cybersex business more than any other means of advertisement. Page | 2

Most crimes perpetuated on the Internet and other IT applications have been largely aided by anonymity. For instance, immoral contents can be viewed in the closet, on a laptop, on a palmtop etc without the suspicion that any other person will know about the content being consumed. Sackson (1996), while supporting the above position, stated that:

With unlimited access to a variety of websites, and the impediment of needing to enter a brothel physically removed, immoral gratification is just the click of a mouse away from any intending customer.

The recent proliferation of Internet-enabled technology has significantly changed the way youths consume sexually explicit materials. With the growth of the Internet, it has become easier and more ubiquitous accessing pornography.

Relative to other media, the Internet is considered a highly sexualized environment (Cooper, Boies, Maheu, & Greenfield, 1999; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006a). Research has shown significant increases in the number of youths who are intentionally or accidentally encountering pornographic material online (Wolak et al., 2007).

Internet-enabled devices have indiscriminately allowed people of all ages to encounter, consume, create, and distribute sexually explicit contents, and a growing body of data reveals these phenomena are increasingly common for young people worldwide (Flood, 2007; Lo & Wei, 2005; Wolak).

Researchers who have studied the influence of pornography, have examined a wide range of ages. Studies have examined the impact of pornography on individuals as young as 10 (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005) and as old as 22 (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009).

Several studies have shown that adolescents use the Internet for activities relating to gaining sexual knowledge and seeking and obtaining sexual satisfaction (Longo, Brown and Orcut, 2002; Wolak, Mitchell and Finkelhor, 2007). In her paper, "Internet Infidelity: A Critical Review of the Literature", Katherine (2006) is of the opinion that people are using the Internet more frequently to form friendships and romances and to initiate inordinate affairs. She provided a critical review of the literature on Internet infidelity.

Young adults in Nigerian universities are considered one of the most susceptible audiences to sexually explicit content on the Internet. Therefore, as their Internet use increases, just as we presently have in Nigeria, it is important to understand the systemic correlation of this medium, and exposure to pornographic stimuli, on these undergraduate consumers of these communicated items.

As Internet penetration surges in different parts of the world, access to a wide range of subjects rises also, particularly the issues of sexuality. While there is ample empirical evidence that youths seek knowledge about sexuality, and get involved in sexually stimulating and/or gratifying activities on the Internet, the relationship between involvement in these online sexual activities and real life sexual behaviour remains a polemical matter.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A wide range of evidence from literature have not established a correlation between exposure to pornographic materials and the sexual behaviour of youths in Nigeria, even though empirical data have shown the use to which Internet is put by young adults.

The puzzle this study seeks to unravel is to establish whether there is a correlation between involvements in internet communicated pornography and real life risky sexual behaviour among university undergraduates in Nigeria. We wish to ask: Is exposure to sexuality related information and involvement in Internet pornography associated with the real life sexual behaviour of Nigerian university undergraduates? Therefore, the extent to which involvement in Internet pornography differs significantly from non-involvement in real life harmful sexual practices forms the basis of this research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Within the broader research framework, this study evaluates the correlation between communicated Internet pornography and the risky sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates. However, the research was conceived to achieve the following objectives:

1. To check the Internet accessibility and connectivity among Nigerian undergraduates.
2. To ascertain the level of exposure to Internet pornography among Nigerian undergraduates.
3. To ascertain the correlation between access and exposure to pornographic materials from the internet among Nigerian undergraduates.
4. To determine the correlation between exposure to pornographic materials and the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates.

5. To check whether Nigerian undergraduates involved in Internet pornography differ significantly from those not involved in Internet pornography in real life sex practices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the foregoing, this paper wishes to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. On what platform(s) do undergraduate students establish Internet connectivity?
2. What is the level of exposure to Internet pornography among Nigerian undergraduates?
3. Is there correlation between Internet access and exposure to pornographic materials from the Internet?
4. To what extent is the exposure to pornographic materials correlative with sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates?
5. How does Nigerian undergraduates' involvement in Internet pornography differ significantly from those not involved in Internet pornography in real life sexual practices with emphasis on sex recklessness and risky sex practices?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

We constructed the following hypothetical statements for test.

Hypotheses One

Ho: There is no correlation between access and exposure to pornographic materials from the Internet.

H₁: There is a strong correlation between access and exposure to pornographic materials from the Internet.

Hypotheses Two

Ho: There is no correlation between exposure to Internet pornographic materials and the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates.

H₂: Exposure to Internet pornographic materials is highly correlative of the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduate students.

Hypotheses Three

Ho: Sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates involved in Internet pornography differ significantly from those not involved in internet pornography in real life sexual practices

H₃: Sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates involved in Internet pornography does not differ significantly from those not involved in internet pornography in real life sexual practices

NIGERIAN YOUTH AND INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY

With the penetration of Internet into Nigeria’s cyberspace in 2001, many youths have upgraded themselves into using the Internet, and this has negatively led to the pronounced level of moral decadence among Nigerian youths. Porn crept into our society beginning from playboy magazine (foreign magazine), Hollywood movies through the display of sexual scenes and then internet. The major carriers of porn in Nigeria are Internet and movies.

Today, Nigerian youths seem to be largest patrons of Internet porns, apart from America. Besides viewing porn materials, you now see explicit sexual materials on mobile phones which come in pictures and videos.

A visit to some cybercafés in urban or suburbs in Nigeria will give credence to the above viewpoint. At cybercafés in Nigeria, particularly at nights, young adults aged between 15 and 25 years are usually seen downloading naked pictures of ladies and videos, while tagging their friends on various social media like instagram, badoo and facebook. At other times, they share the weblink with their friends on various social media gateways. Personally, we (the researchers) have been linked to some sites, only to open the link and discover that they are porn sites.

In all of these, some of these sites permit users to register and upload their own personal porn materials. Moreover, some youths are exposed to these sites unknowingly by either searching the web for information through redirection. Some are tagged on facebook, twitter and YouTube, hence Internet activities can be said to greatly promote pornography.

Table 1: *The highest number of Internet users*

TOP 20 COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF INTERNET USERS - December 31, 2013						
#	Country or Region	Population, 2014 Est	Internet Users Year 2000	Internet Users Dec 2013	Penetration (% Population)	% Growth 2000 - 2013
1	China	1,355,692,576	22,500,000	620,907,200	45.8 %	2,659.6 %
2	United States	318,892,103	95,354,000	268,507,150	84.2 %	181.6 %
3	India	1,236,344,631	5,000,000	195,248,950	15.8 %	3,805.0 %
4	Brazil	202,656,788	5,000,000	109,773,650	54.2 %	2,095.5 %
5	Japan	127,103,388	47,080,000	109,626,672	86.2 %	132.9 %
6	Russia	142,470,272	3,100,000	87,476,747	61.4 %	2,721.8 %
7	Germany	80,996,685	24,000,000	69,779,160	86.2 %	190.7 %
8	Nigeria	177,155,754	200,000	67,319,186	38.0 %	33,559.6 %
9	United Kingdom	63,742,977	15,400,000	57,266,690	89.8 %	271.9 %
10	France	66,259,012	8,500,000	55,221,000	83.3 %	549.7 %
11	Indonesia	253,609,643	2,000,000	55,000,000	21.7 %	2,650.0 %

12	Mexico	120,286,655	2,712,400	52,276,580	43.5 %	1,827.3 %
13	Iran	80,840,713	250,000	45,000,000	55.7 %	17,900.0 %
14	Philippines	107,668,231	2,000,000	44,200,540	41.1 %	2,110.0 %
15	Egypt	86,895,099	450,000	43,065,211	49.6 %	9,470.0 %
16	Korea	49,039,986	19,040,000	41,571,196	84.8 %	118.3 %
17	Vietnam	93,421,835	200,000	41,012,186	43.9 %	20,406.1 %
18	Turkey	81,619,392	2,000,000	37,748,969	46.3 %	1,787.4 %
19	Italy	61,680,122	13,200,000	36,058,199	58.5 %	173.2 %
20	Spain	47,737,941	5,387,800	35,705,960	74.8 %	562.7 %
TOP 20 Countries		4,754,113,803	273,374,200	2,072,765,246	43.6 %	658.2 %
Rest of the World		2,427,744,816	87,611,292	729,713,688	30.1 %	732.9 %
Total World Users		7,181,858,619	360,985,492	2,802,478,934	39.0 %	676.3 %

Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm>

From the Table above, Nigeria ranks 8th, among the top 20 nations out of the 198 countries on earth that are using the internet. Niue has the least internet users (617) with a population of 1,307, and occupies the 198th position globally. Here, *Internet User* is an individual, of any age, who can access the Internet at home, via any device type (computer or mobile) and connection.

Nigeria has a projected estimate of 67,101,452 (* estimate) using the internet as of July 01, 2014, with 37.59% penetration of the 178,516,904 estimated population (www.InternetLiveStats.com). Here, *Internet User* is an individual, of any age, who can access the Internet at home, via any device type (computer or mobile) and connection.

With a population of 167 million (estimated at 178,516,904 by 2014) and 67,319,186 million Internet users as at December 2013, Nigeria is the biggest Internet market in Africa. Of the 115 million mobile telephone subscribers in the country, 35 million use their handheld devices to access Internet data services, Business Day (2013).

Between 2000 and 2012, Internet penetration grew from a paltry 0.06 percent to 34 percent, and there are indications that this trend will continue well into 2020. Nigeria will remain the largest Internet market on the continent because it has a large youth population (one-third of the population is between the 10-24 years age bracket) and a growing middle class estimated at 23 percent (appx. 39 million) of the population.

SEXUALITY AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

Sexual behaviour among youths has been studied in varied situations. Ojo and Fasubaa (2005) opine that adolescents' sexual behaviour in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa is seriously going through transformation from what it used to be in the past. They attributed this to the effect of modernization caused by education, exposure and enculturation through importation of various foreign cultures, which were alien to the people, particularly Nigerian culture.

Before now, the major deterrents against these vices were previously cultural orientation and religious beliefs. Unfortunately, the Internet, more than any other agent of social change has contributed in no small measure to the removal of guilt, fear and shame associated with unconventional sexual activities. This is facilitated by the anonymity which the Internet medium provides.

There is a strong appetite among young adults in Nigeria to explore sex activities. They go out of their way to negotiate sex. Children involved in hawking wares to assist in making ends meet at home sometimes fall victim to the lure of older children or young adults who expose them to Internet pornography in the quest to awaken their sexual responses on the Internet. Emeozor (2005) raised an alarm on the possible relationship between access to pornographic contents on the Internet and risky sexual tendencies that can lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

Adebayo *et al* (2006) examined the relative contributions of gender and Internet use, as well as their interactive influence on young adults' sexual behaviours in Nigeria. They established a correlation between the use of the Internet by males and risky sexual behaviour.

EXPOSURE AND USE OF INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY

Researchers have investigated the relationship between young adults' involvement in online sexual activities such as chats, quest for romantic and sexual relationships and the development of their sexuality (Brown and Eisenberg, 1995).

Researchers have argued that the general social context of Internet use and the place of access in particular, have implications for how the Internet is used (Slevin, 2000; Murdock and Golding, 2005). Although (Kunnuji, 2010) in a study found that the majority of Internet users in Nigeria access the Internet from cafés, away from the prying eyes of adults, the reality in Nigeria, today, is in sharp variance. With availability of Internet on mobile devices, use of cybercafés has become secondary.

Internet sexuality does not depend solely on proficiency in the use of the Internet or intent to access sex related information. A study shows that 25 percent of adolescent Internet users had been exposed to web-based pornography, even when they were not planning to do so and 20 percent had received sexual solicitation online.

A study by Barbovschi (2009), documents the transfer of online initiated romantic encounters to real life instances, identifying the use of instant messaging, time spent online and positive social self concept as predictors.

Wolak *et al.* (2008) show through a study of young person's within the age bracket of 10 to 17 years that youths' involvement in online sexual activities often leads to real life sex crimes in which the young people are abused. Findings of the research indicate that most Internet-initiated sex crimes involve adult men who meet adolescents online and seduce them into sexual encounters.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Is there any relationship between exposure to information on sexuality and involvement in Internet pornography? Does this relationship in any way influence the real life sexual behaviour of undergraduate students? We attempted to explain the likelihood of a relationship by considering the Modeling Theory.

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Kelly (2004), while evaluating the Modeling Theory, asserts that when people are exposed to pornography, there is a great likelihood that they will imitate what they see. In some of the works of Bandura and his colleagues, it has been shown that children learn through imitation (Bandura, Ross, and Ross, 1961; 1963). Using an experimental design, Bandura *et al.* (1961) argue that children imitate aggressive behaviour of models, particularly models with which they can identify. This goes to show that the use of sportsmen, musicians and film stars in sexually explicit materials online can be too compelling for young people to contain, the result being the imitation of what they view.

Bandura *et al.* (1963) argue that human beings learn antisocial behaviours in the media just the way they learn social behaviours. These behaviours are absorbed into their permanent repertoire of responses and they can be activated without apparent cause or obvious provocation, just by the presence of subtle cues in a situation. This negates the assumption by catharsis theory, that there are innate antisocial urges in man looking for outlet.

In modern society, acts of younger members of society are modeled after family members, members of the larger society and characters seen in the media. It is particularly noteworthy that deviant sexual acts are presented as rewarding in the media in general and online in particular. When “celebrities” (many of whom are perceived as models by Internet users) are featured in sexually explicit materials, these Internet users tend to act out what they see the models do, since some rewards (pleasure) are shown to be attached to the acts depicted online.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our study was designed as a survey. Sociometric measures were used in evaluating primary data collected from undergraduate students who were randomly selected from five universities in south east Nigeria.

From a population of 35,974 and at 5.10% relative standard error; 95 % confidence level and precision level of 0.05, a sample size of 381 was determined using the Australian calculator as provided by the National Statistical Service (NSS, 2012: para 1).

Table 2: *Proportionate sample size distribution*

State	Selected Universities	Sample	percentage
Abia	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUAAU), Umudike	152	40%
Anambra	Tansian University Umunya (TUU)	14	4%
Ebonyi	Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo (FUNAI)	46	12%
Enugu	Renaissance University Ugbawka (RUU)	34	9%
Imo	Imo State University (IMSU), Owerri	135	35%
Total	5	381	100%

Source: Field Statistics Calculated.

The above is a product of randomization of all the universities in each state, and one university was randomly selected to represent each state. To effectively test all the variables in this study and give every element in the population an equal chance of being selected, we utilized the “multi-stage cluster sampling” technique” (Creswell 2002, p.167).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

All the three (3) hypothetical statements were tested using the chi-square goodness of fit statistical measurement tool. At 0.05 level of significance and 4 degree of freedom, the *Table Value* is 9.488. The *Calculated Value* (105.47) is greater than the *Table Value* (9.488). Therefore, the Alternate hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. It therefore means that there is a strong correlation between Internet access and exposure to pornographic materials from the Internet.

Evidence from our data on point to opinions being divided among the respondents about the correlation between Internet access and exposure to online pornographic materials; this is because, 105 or 28.2% of the respondents agreed that their access to the Internet ordinarily encouraged them to view online pornographic materials; 89 or 24% strongly agreed; 121 or 32.5% disagreed; 41 or 11% of them strongly disagreed, while the 16 or 4.3% of the respondents were undecided.

However, our data analysis reveals that there is a strong correlation between access and exposure to pornographic materials from the Internet.

In trying to check the correlation between Internet access and exposure to pornographic materials from the Internet, the Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used in measuring the degree of linear relationship between data presented on the Likert scale items 7 and 8 of the questionnaire.

Based on the table of interpretation, the correlation coefficient varies between +1 to -1. The correlation coefficient falls within 0.6 to 0.80; this invariably means that the correlation coefficient between Internet access and exposure to pornographic materials

from the Internet is high. Evidence from both the chi-square and correlation coefficient tests shows that there is a strong correlation between Internet access and exposure of university undergraduate students to pornographic materials from the internet.

Data generated from question item 23 on the questionnaire was used in testing hypothesis Two. At 0.05 level of significance and 4 degree of freedom, the *Table Value* is 9.488. The *Calculated Value* (247.32) is greater than the *Table Value* (9.488). Therefore, the Alternate hypothesis (H_2) was accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_{02}) was rejected. It therefore means that exposure to Internet pornography is highly correlative of the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates. Page | 10

Evidence from our data show that opinions were divided among the respondents about the correlation between exposure to online pornographic materials and their sex behaviours. This is because, 186 or 50% of the respondents agreed that their sexual behaviour today is a product of their exposure to Internet pornographic materials; 79 or 21.2% strongly agreed; 32 or 8.6% disagreed; 64 or 17.2% of them strongly disagreed, while 11 or 3% of the respondents were undecided.

However, evidence from research data analysis points to the fact that exposure to Internet pornographic materials are highly correlative of the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates.

In the attempt to check the correlation between exposure to Internet pornographic materials and the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates, the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used in measuring the degree of linear relationship between data presented on the Likert scale items 23 and 24 of the questionnaire. Based on the table of interpretation, the correlation coefficient varies between +1 to -1. The correlation coefficient, which falls within 0.6 to 0.80, invariably means that the correlation coefficient between exposure to Internet pornographic materials and the sexual behaviour of Nigerian universities undergraduates is very high.

Evidences from both the chi-square and correlation coefficient tests show that exposure to Internet pornographic materials is highly correlative of the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates.

Data generated from question item 25 was used in testing hypothesis three. At 0.05 level of significance and 4 degree of freedom, the *Table Value* is 9.488. The *Calculated Value* (119.11) is greater than the *Table Value* (9.488). Therefore, the Alternate hypothesis (H_3) was accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_{03}) was rejected. It therefore means that the involvement of Nigerian undergraduates' in Internet pornography differ significantly from those not involved in Internet pornography in real life sexual practices.

Opinions were divided among the respondents about the correlation between involvement in Internet pornography which ultimately lead to sexual recklessness and risky sex practices. This is because, 92 or 24.7% of the respondents agreed that their

involvement in Internet pornography has ultimately led them to sexual recklessness and risky sex; 144 or 38.7% strongly agreed; 28 or 8% disagreed; 73 or 19.6% of them strongly disagreed, while 35 or 9% of the respondents were indifferent. According to our data, the involvement of Nigerian undergraduates' in Internet pornography differs significantly from those not involved in Internet pornography in terms of real life sexual practice.

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used in measuring the degree of linear relationship between the involvement or non-involvement of Nigerian undergraduates' in Internet pornography and observable sexual practices.

Results from both the chi-square and correlation coefficient tests show that the involvement of Nigerian undergraduates' in Internet pornography differ significantly from those not involved in internet pornography in terms of real life sexual practice.

CONCLUSION

Results from our study led to the following conclusions:

- i. There is high prevalence of exposure to Internet pornography, a trend that has come to stay as a result of the rise of Internet penetration in Nigeria and unfettered access to Internet-enabled devices and media platforms.
- ii. Nigerian undergraduates are more wired now than ever before; 95 percent of all Nigerians between 16 and 20 years old use the internet
- iii. There is a strong correlation between access and exposure of university undergraduates to pornographic materials from the Internet.
- iv. Exposure to Internet pornographic materials highly correlates with the sexual behaviour of Nigerian undergraduates.
- v. Nigerian undergraduates exposed to Internet pornography differ significantly from those not involved in Internet pornography in terms of real life sexual practices.
- vi. There is strong evidence in the research data, suggesting that the need for sex and sexual excitement, among other factors like leisure and entertainment, curiosity, and sex information are the major promptings for Nigerian undergraduates viewing online pornography.
- vii. Nigerian university undergraduates develop reckless sexual behaviour after viewing Internet pornography, although the consumption of Internet pornography does relax the sexual behaviour of some others after viewing Internet pornography.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, we made the following recommendations:

- While some computer terminals can be dedicated to access all forms of contents, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), particularly in the university environment can filter the Internet access for students so that only healthy Internet materials will get their patronage.
- ICT Centres and Software developers could also partner with mobile phones producers like TECNO, Nokia, Sony, Blackberry, iPhone and Samsung, to preinstall their mobile phone and saving devices with anti-pornography viruses that are capable of deleting or corrupting offensive files or pornographic materials.
- In support of the advocacy of Longe and Longe (2002)' it is recommended that Service Providers should allocate preconfigured user and password IDs. These can then be programmed to function only on Internet sites with web contents that are healthy for undergraduate students' consumption. Such web filtering programs will serve as a robust measure against unwanted consumption of explicit pornography.
- Sex education should be taught in primary and post-primary levels, before they proceed to the university. This is to educate and counsel youngsters on the dangers of pornography and how to avoid it.

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