

# Pornography Viewing Predictors among Secondary School Adolescents in Illinois, Chicago

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**Abstract:** *The belief in the sacredness and sanctify of human sexuality is gradually deteriorating globally. This is aided by the proliferation of pornographic materials through modern technologies. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the predictor of pornography viewing among secondary school adolescents in Illinois Chicago. This study adopted a survey research design. There are several factors that led to pornography viewing and secondary data was used to carry out the survey. The findings revealed relationships between internet addiction; religiosity and peer influence and pornography viewing. Based on this finding, it is recommended that positive peer influence and religious orientation training should be organized to curb pornography viewing. Positive use of internet should be encouraged among adolescents. Also, Religious institutions should intensify their efforts on the training of adolescents moral uprightness so as to curb pornography viewing.*

## INTRODUCTION

The growing exposure to pornography via smartphone among adolescents has become an issue of great concern to parents and the general society (Adegbite, 2013). Pornography appeals to many individuals across all age group and is especially common among adolescents (Gordon & Kraus, 2011; Wright, 2013). Pornography is a sexually explicit websites that describe people having sex, show clear pictures of nudity or people having sex, or show a movie or audio that describes people having sex (Haggstrom, Nordin, Tyden, Hanson & Larsson, 2009; Lo & Wei, 2005). The rapid growth of the pornography facilitates adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit materials either intentionally or accidentally (Flood, 2007).

Recently, tablet computers, smart phones, and other electronic devices have added ubiquity to electronic communication and the Internet. For example, a recent study found that one in three teenagers sends more than 100 text messages a day and 15% send more than 200 a day, or 6,000 a month (Lenhart, 2010). Four percent of teens have sent a sexually suggestive text message, which are often nude photographs, and 15% of this age group has received a sexually suggestive text (Lenhart, 2009). Yet, information from these sources may not be accurate and more likely to mislead adolescents' understanding concerning on appropriate sexuality and reproduction health.

The stage of adolescence underscores an important definition for sexuality. At that stage, adolescent is preoccupied with getting information about sex. One of the important platform through which they learn about sex and sexual related information is the internet. According to Mattebo, (2014), internet pornography create demands and expectations in terms of how to behave in sexual relations. Expectedly, while this has significant influence on their sexual attitude (Jochen & Valkenburg, 2008; Onyebuchukwu, Sholarin & Emerenwa, 2015), their risk-taking tendency means that adolescent would be more than willing to experiment what they watch than other individuals within other developmental brackets (Kunnuji, 2014). This situation seems more pertinent given the fact that the revolution in communication which makes available sophisticated phone at cheaper rate as well as ease in accessing internet without limitations increased the probability for adolescents to take to online pornography.

The plight of United state adolescents seems worrisome considering the increment in the rate of pornography viewing in many secondary schools (Ihaji & Nase, 2015). Yet more appalling is the fact that young people constitute a large proportion of internet users in USA; and the activity of their internet use ranging from examination related matters such as processing of examination forms, chatting with friends, initiating and maintaining romantic relationships, doing business, doing research, cybercrime, online sexual activities, shopping (Kunnuji, 2014). This has significant impact on adolescents' sexual practice (Okafor & Efetobor (2015). On the consequent side, it portends graver implication for adolescents' social and healthy life. Nwalado, Obro & Ofouasia, (2005), posited that exposure of adolescents to pornographic material has lead to an increase in teenage pregnancy and school drop out.

Gender is an important factor that determines pornography viewing. There has been difference in the pornography viewing of adolescents based on their gender. The girl child engages in pornography viewing at home related to literatures and literary while boy child strives well in sexual risk behaviour. Certainly, human society also exerts influence on the development of gender differences in pornography viewing.

Research on gender differences in pornography viewing has portrayed that boys are better obsessed in pornography viewing as compared to girls (Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006). According to Isabella and Omstein (2010) female do not adhere to the model of pornography viewing, mainly because female pornography viewing are interrupted more frequently than those of male. The general idea is that, because of the relatively disjointed character of female pornography viewing, which mainly caused by more interruptions.

The use of the internet on school campuses and in society has increased dramatically in recent years. Whereas the academic use of the internet is primarily intended for learning and research, the internet has also become an important part of student life. The explosive growth of the internet over the past decade has almost certainly changed the profile of the “internet addict” (Brenner, 1997; Young, 1996). With its convenient communication options and the World Wide Web, the internet provides remote access to other people and abundant information in all areas of interest. It is an environment that could be abused by virtually anyone, regardless of their interest in technology and science (Griffiths, 1998).

Although there is no standardized definition of internet addiction, there is acknowledgement among researchers that this phenomenon does exist. As Griffiths (1998) notes, “excessive use of the internet may not be problematic in most cases but the limited case study evidence suggests that for some individuals, excessive internet use is a real addiction and of genuine concern. Griffiths (1998) further considers internet addiction to be a kind of technological addiction (such as computer addiction), and one in a subset of behavioural addictions (such as pornography and compulsive gambling). Kandell (1998) defined internet addiction as a psychological dependence on the internet, regardless of the type of activity once logged on.

Furthermore, exposure to pornography accounts for more of the variability in an adolescent decision to have sex than influence from parents, religion or schools combined (Kingston, Malamuth, Fedoroff & Marshall 2009). Additionally, the risk of cyber bullying, sexual victimization, or harassment from others is real and pervasive (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011). This increasingly ubiquitous access to the internet use can be positive; for example, people of all ages are turning to this medium for information on sexual education and sexual health (Barak & Fisher, 2001), social connection (Cooper, Boies, Maheu, & Greenfield, 1999), work, shopping, entertainment, news, and academics. On the other hand, unmonitored access for youth raises genuine concerns in light of the potential risks (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011); adolescents often lack the risk attenuation needed to discern and manage online dangers and content in safe and healthy ways (Delmonico & Griffin, 2008). There is also a small, but growing body of research that indicates adolescents are increasingly struggling with compulsive internet use and compulsive behaviors related to internet pornography and cybersex (Van Rooij & Engels, 2010). According to Leung and Lee (2012) students have a natural affinity towards the internet and the conspicuous internet literacy has been linked to internet addiction.

Religiosity as a concept within psychology has grown considerably in the last forty years, which was initiated by the work of Gordon Allport. Whereas, a religious person can be characterized as someone who values a certain religion and its tenets, organized under an entity. In this way, someone could be spiritual and religious, religious but not spiritual, spiritual but not religious, and finally, neither religious nor spiritual (Worthington, 1996). Therefore, it can be best understood that a person can have varying degrees of religiosity and/or spirituality based on beliefs, values and behaviors.

Religiosity is a sociological term used to refer to the condition of being religious to the degree to which one believes and is committed to his or her chosen faith or belief system (Worthington, 1996). Religion plays a significant role in the life of individuals in any society. These highlight the importance of religion in developing the appropriate mentality and disposition towards pornography viewing. It is good to note that the moral philosophy of pornography expression that reigned in the previous century owed much to religious teachings, notwithstanding the difference of religious beliefs and orientations among the cultures, there seemed to be uniformity in the views of all the religious sects on the appropriate sexual attitudes and behavior especially in our societies (Ishayinka & Bolaji, 2009).

According to Templin (1999), there could be two distinct types of religiosity that a person could frame their lives: extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity. He suggested that a person could use religion for either internal or external reasons; one could utilize a faith system that was dynamic and internalized or create a system that was based on external factors such as tradition or social status. Religiosity may or may not be dependent on a young person experiencing a sense of transcendence or spirituality when involved in the formal rites and institutions of an established faith tradition. In fact, according to Benson (1997), religion may be regarded as potentially orthogonal and important sources of thriving among youth.

Religiosity is a variable that has been linked to later pornography viewing and less depression in adolescents (Rostosky, Wilcox, Wright & Randall 2004; Musick 2000). The term “religiosity” refers to ritualistic or liturgical practices, organized belief systems and doctrines, and the desire to relate to the sacred and divine (Kim & Esquivel 2011). It is believed to provide buffering effects through religious plausibility structures, which provide a sense of belonging and support (Kim & Esquivel, 2011). Religiosity has been connected to both depression and pornography viewing, but no exploration has been done in relation to the interaction of all the variables. In this study, religiosity is explored as a potential mediating factor, the predicted outcome being that higher religiosity will buffer the effects of pornography viewing, thus decreasing depression of adolescents.

Peer influence becomes increasingly important during adolescence. Adolescents’ intentions to engage in sex are strongly influenced by their social context in which peers play a major role in determining normative behavior (Sieving, 2008). Meaning affiliation with friends who engage in risky behaviours has shown to be a strong predictor of an adolescents own behaviour. Peer influence can also have positive effects when youths are pressured by their peers towards positive behaviour such as volunteering for charity or excelling in academics. The importance of peer’s declines upon entering adulthood while socially accepted kids often have the most positive experiences (Evans, Julie & Chandler, Joan 2006). Popular adolescents are the most socialized into their peer groups and thus are vulnerable to peer influence, such as behaviours usually reserved for those of a greater maturity and understanding.

Peer groups refers more specifically to the cluster of associates who know each other and serve as a source of reference or comparison for one another (Phillips, 1998) peer groups describes the various ways in which people of similar age, sometimes similar in height, class and the status which include the adults in the society that relate and adjust to each other (Akinboye, 1992). It is also noted that though adolescents may have friends in another neighbourhood or town, the peer group that has a direct impact is the one that dominates the adolescents' daily life settings. People are embedded in a variety of social networks. An individual is often simultaneously a member of a family, a neighborhood, a church, and an office team. However, not all social networks necessarily constitute a peer group (Akinboye, 1992). A peer group consists of those who are of roughly equal status. For teenagers, a peer group is composed of individuals who are approximately the same age. Like their adult counterparts, teenagers can be immersed in a variety of peer networks, looking to friends, classmates, and teammates for support in different social situations (McNeal, 1995). Alexander Astin (1993) defines peers as a "collection of individuals with whom the individual identifies and affiliates and from whom the individual seeks acceptance or approval". Two elements are particularly salient in Astin's definition: connection and acceptance.

Peers are a group of people with whom an individual spends time and feels a sense of connection. Margaret, Patricia, and Jill (2004) underscore this aspect of Astin's definition by arguing that peers and peer groups are "situated through shared participation in particular types of behaviours and activities". Not all students necessarily feel a sense of connection with other students in their school. Only when students are united by a shared identity or by participation in common activities do they form a peer group.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The number of teenagers involved in peer victimization is increasing in epidemic proportion. Hence, the range of the problem of peer victimization is wider than it seems, everything pertaining to the behaviours or attitudes, which the youths exhibit today, can directly or indirectly be attributed to their environment factors. Peer victimization may lead to disaster socially, psychologically and academically especially to the adolescents. Peer victimization social effects on the adolescents include lack of respect for elders, rape and negative attitude toward their own. Psychologically exposure to pornographic sexual content of USA adolescents can be a significant factor in early sexual activities, teenage pregnancy (unwanted pregnancy), significantly increased sexual intercourse with non-romantic friends, self-esteem and masturbation among others. Also adolescents viewing pornography are prone to truancy, school dropout, low academic performance, deviant attitude to teachers and other school authority. It is paramount to know that adolescent pornography viewing does not only affect the adolescent but the society at large. Among the effect on the society are increase in dependent population ratio, insecurity, overpopulation and increase in unemployment among others. Based on the gravity of dangers of pornography viewing of Illinois Chicago adolescents on the adolescents and the society at large, this study therefore determine to investigate the effect of internet addiction, religiosity and peer influence on pornography viewing on Illinois Chicago adolescents.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Ecological Theory**

Urie Bronfenbrenner has been the primary contributor to the ecological systems theory. The ecological theory defines four types of systems which contain roles, norms and rules that shape development. The systems include a microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem is the family, classroom, or systems in the immediate environment in which a person is operating. The mesosystem is two Microsystems interacting, such as the connection between a child's home and school. The exosystem is an environment in which an individual is indirectly involved and has an external impact to his experience, yet it affects him anyway that is, a child's parent's workplace. If the adolescent's parent works in a company that often stressed him/her out and he/she believes in the use of drugs as a coping techniques; then such parents will tolerate the use of the drugs which might encourage the adolescent to the use of drugs.

The macro-system is the largest cultural context. By creating these systems, Bronfenbrenner was the leader in introducing researchers into examining the family, economy, and political structures as influencing the development of a child into adulthood. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory looks at the child's environment in terms of its quality and context. He explains that as the child develops, the interaction within these environments becomes more complex. This complexity can arise as the child's physical and cognitive structures grow and mature. Hence, nature continues to grow on a given path based on the environment and child's physical and physiological makeup. The ecological model of Bronfenbrenner's theory attempts to explain the differences in individual's knowledge, development and competencies through the support, guidance and structure of the society in which they live.

According to Bronfenbrenner, the interactions between a numbers of overlapping ecosystems affect a person significantly. The family, peer group and classrooms or neighborhoods are called the microsystem, which is the primary unit around a child influencing its development directly from these sources. As two microsystems begin to work together i.e. teacher and parent working together to educate a child it happens through the mesosystem. As external factors not directly related to the child influence its development, this ecosystem impacts the child's development by interacting and changing its microsystem. Finally, the society and culture in which children are raised is the underlying influence to all systems and this is the macrosystem. Understanding the interactions of these systems is the key in understanding how a child develops and what factors lead to the failure. Research done by Paquette & Ryan, (2001) looked at the impact of the working environment on the family microsystem.

With technology increasing in the work place, the work environment is moving away from an industrial model and more to a technical model. He stressed further that the instability and unpredictability of family life gives children little interactions with

parents and other important adults in their lives and this according to Bronfenbrenner is the most destructive force to a child's development. The breakdown of a child's microsystem leaves a child with no tools to explore other parts of his environment. Without proper adults and supervision or love available, children look for attention in inappropriate places and these behaviours give rise to problem especially in adolescence such as little self-discipline, no self-direction and anti-social behaviour.

### **Past Studies**

#### **Internet addiction and Pornography Viewing**

Bodrova and Leong, (1998) found that internet addiction plays a role in helping students move to the next level on pornography. Particularly, internet addiction leads students to realize what they know and what they do not know because internet and social media which allow adolescent fixated to pornography. This means internet addiction promote student pornography viewing. In a study of Chinese fifth-graders, withdrawn children were found to hold positive perceptions about pornography in the domains of physical ability, appearance, and peer relations (Xiao & Matsuda, 1998).

A study with young adolescents (age 18–21) found that internet addiction predicted pornography viewing with a high number of media-efficacy, but for those who had numerous friendships (Schwartz, Chang & Farver 2000). Studies have found that adolescent's prefers internet addiction because it arose their pornography viewing in school (Weiss & Ebbeck, 1996).

Dollete, Steese, Phillips and Matthews (2004) who found that internet addiction could act as a negative factor that could increase pornography viewings among students. A study by Wentzel (1998) found that internet addiction provide motivational influence on students' pornography. This study is supported by the findings by Quomma and Greenberg (1994) who found that high internet addiction from these sources would lead to failure.

Rawson, Bloomer and Kendall (1994) on 184 undergraduate students for example, found that students with high internet addiction tend to have higher scores on pornography. This study has found that internet addiction and its structures moderate the effects of pornography among students in their academic life. In a cross-sectional study, Holahan and Sears (1995) found first-year students with higher levels of perceived internet addiction were not better adjusted (i.e., less well-being and happiness) and less distressed (i.e., less depression and anxiety).

Nwadinigwe (2000) found in his research work that student preferred internet addiction and are high prone to pornography viewing in the school environment. This is because they have been enjoyed and love of togetherness, peace, sharing and understanding in the internet with their peers.

Long and forehand (1997) found that adolescents demonstrate internet addiction in demonstrate higher rates of pornography viewing and negative outcomes, this which often resulted into lower achievement scores, and higher dropout rate in the school and society at large. For high-internet addiction, online thinking is encouraged, but students who are fixated with internet are prone to pornography among secondary school adolescents.

#### **Peer Influence and Pornography Viewing**

Liang, Lai, and Ku (2006) found out that peer influence increase or play a pivotal role on pornography viewing appropriately. Berends (1995) found that influence of peers plays a vital role on pornography act and makes peers to achieve their heart desire in other to make their friend proud of them.

Glasgow (1997) found that adolescents who are mingle with their peer had reported to have more acts on pornography viewing than their peers whose parents had lower levels of education, even after controlling for other key variable related to parental education. Yet not all studies have suggested that peers from higher levels of socioeconomic status are related to higher levels of pornography viewing engagement.

Kelly and Emery, (2003) in their finding shows that children have greater a pornographic problems when their peers used pornographic view.

Furthermore, a negative correlation between peer influence and pornography viewing has been reported by Nahid and Sarkis, (1994) in that high level of peers influence have been associated with high level of pornography in college students. Peer influence was found to be one of the most important negative factors for students' pornography (Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000).

Calvete and Smith (2006) found that peer influence have been found to increase the impact of pornography among students. Villanova & Bownas (1994) for example found that peer influence could help to cope with everyday life stressor and darken the burden of pornography viewing among college students. Without enough support from family and friends, they would be in trouble and are prone to pornography and depression.

#### **Religiosity and Pornography Viewing**

Denga (2002) reveal in his work that religiosity from a student make them to be emotionally stable and psychologically balance towards pornography viewing, and it enhances online success.

Osarenren (1996) found that religiosity making student to be high skillfully with their pornography acts and their performance. This poor teaching of religiosity have some negative effect on the children pornography. Children experience emotional stable in religious conduct with pornography viewing. Children have feelings of decreased vulnerability and less stress after the participation of religiosity and it decrease pornography viewing in school and at home

Mallum and Mallum (1990), Akingbade (1991), Akinade (1993), have shown that religiosity commit more acts of student pornography viewing and have high self-concepts. They have great adjusting to pornography viewing and life at the later stage of their life.

Fosukun (2005), found that in the religious for instance the people live happily with their teaching and religiosity is keenly interested in reducing pornography acts of students. There might be a complete presence of contact between the students and the religious teachers

Boy (2004), on the outcome of the religiosity for students series indicate that religious influence has a greater impacts on student pornography viewing and school behaviours, grades and self-concept.

Bergan and McConatha (2000) found that religiosity has a number of dimensions associated with religious beliefs and adolescents involvement in pornography. In arriving at this definition, they pointed out that early research associated with religiosity focuses primarily on the unidimensional concept of religious attendance. Spirituality has most often been defined in terms of individual beliefs and practices related to God or a higher power in the universe, although these beliefs may also be entirely secular (Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2007).

According to Cochran (1994) found that Religion has generally been assumed to have an effect on individual behaviour, but much of the research has failed to define variables in a theoretical context and thus much of the literature in this area was inconsistent and has merited suggestions that the relationship between religion and pornography acts is spurious (Cochran, 1994). Clearly, a theoretical model must be proposed when studying religion and behaviour outcomes. This will lead to more valid, consistent, and replicable measures of religiosity and spirituality that provide a better understanding of the role of religious and spiritual constructs in influencing individual pornography behaviours.

### **Conclusion**

This study was reinforced with the realization that the lingering pornography viewing had permeated in to the school system. This study has therefore, established linking pathways between some variables and pornography viewing. These include internet addiction and peer influence among secondary school students. Changing the face of pornography viewing users in Illinois requires a lot of psychological re-orientation especially considering interventions that employ the independent variables in this study (peer influence; religiosity and internet addiction). School curriculum should be developed along these lines and taught in schools and other centres of learning. Where this is consistently done with corresponding support from government and other stakeholders, the entire perspective would change for good. This study has contributed to knowledge on internet addiction, peer influence and religiosity as correlates of pornography viewing. This research work has established that, there is a positive joint contribution between internet addiction, peer influence and religiosity as correlates of pornography viewing. Also, there is a positive relative effect between internet addiction and peer influence except religiosity on pornography viewing. Nonetheless, there is need for replication and refinement of this work in the future. This study has provided more details to the existing information on the pornography viewing as a factor that required immediate solution. From this study, it becomes clear that various strategies should be design to access the issue of pornography viewing in different schools, attention should also be given to the identified means or factors through which the researcher has been able to identify that can affect the pornography viewing of secondary school students through the internet they are addicted from, the type of peer they associated with and their religiosity.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of these findings, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

Proper peer monitoring and behavioural modification of children should be given from the family. Children's behaviour should be monitored right from home before they become inducted into the society. Parents should also serve as good models, understand their child emotion and should attend promptly to the needs of their children at home and in school.

Also the type of friends adolescents associate themselves with should be well known by the parents and monitored to ensure that they are not pornography viewing users and curb their excesses by constant counselling of the groups which their ward associate themselves with.

Government should control the activities of media through the board of censors to see through all programmes that are put on air. All programmes that are pornography based should be properly regulated and monitored by the board put in place by board. Government should provide social amenities, create employment, train young people about creativity and innovation and other programmes that can improve the economic capacities of people. Also public enlightenment Programmes should be mounted by the government (Federal, State and Local) to broaden the knowledge of the populace especially parents to understand what lies behind young people's pornography viewing.

It is also very important to strengthen the human resources of the adolescents through constant workshops and seminars. There should be establishment of well managed youth-friendly centres to positively engage the adolescents both in-school and out-of-school youths.

There should be improvement in guidance and counselling services - Guidance services in schools should be functional enough to take care of all categories of behaviours exhibited by students. School administrators should understand and appreciate the importance of counselling services in the school and should render all the necessary support to the counsellor.

Personalized counselling services should also be easily accessed to help these youngsters out of their deep psychological, personal and social problems that blur their vision about self and future. The nature of the counselling services should be

developmental, preventive, curative, remedial and therapeutic. It is worthy of note that specific counseling techniques could be used in modifying violent acts and developing or instilling disciplined behaviour in our youths

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