

PORNOGRAPHY USE AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION IN ADULT WOMEN AND MEN

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Objective

Access to online pornography has strongly increased in the past years and it is assumed that pornography use is more frequent in men and more often solitary than with the partner. Empirical research has linked pornography use to addiction and sexual violence, and showed primarily negative effects on romantic relationships. But pornography use can also be a source of relationship quality. Watching pornography together with the partner is associated with more frequent and more varied sexual activities, and can make it easier to talk about sexual preferences and desires. First, this study show how the frequency of solitary and common pornography use is associated with relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction and frequency of sexual activities. Second, we test if common pornography use and sexual communication moderate the negative effect of solitary porn use.

Design and Method

Data was gathered using an online questionnaire study. Participants were recruited via different online platforms and mailing lists. A total of 1091 individuals – 444 women, 647 men – who were in a **heterosexual relationship for at least one year** filled out the questionnaire. Only individuals who reported solitary pornography use were selected for the following analyses.

Sample Characteristics

N 858 | 254 women, 604 men
Age 18 – 60 years (*M* 36.96, *SD* 11.15)
Marital status: 49% single, 44% married, 7% divorced
Average relationship duration 10 years (Range 1 – 55)

Measurements

Relationship satisfaction 'Overall, how happy are you in your relationship?' (1=very unhappy to 6 = very happy)

Sexual satisfaction – Subscale of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Snyder, 1981)

Sexual communication Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale (Catania, 1986)

Self constructed items for porn use and frequency of sexual activities

Results

Table 1. Gender differences in satisfaction and porn use

	♀	♂	
Relationship satisfaction	4.96	4.84	<i>ns</i>
Sexual satisfaction	3.17	2.95	***
Solitary porn use			
- Frequency ¹	1.79	2.93	***
- Average duration ²	1.31	1.45	***
Common porn use	50%	35%	***

¹ Scale from 1= less than once a month to 5= several times a day

² Scale from 1= ≤ 15', 2= ≤ 60', 3= several hours

Table 2. Correlations with sexual activities

	Relationship satisfaction	Sexual satisfaction	Sexual communication	Frequency sexual activities			
				caresses	vaginal sex	oral sex	anal sex
Frequency Solitary use	-.10**	-.22**	-.21**	-.11**	-.11**	-.06	-.01
Common use	.09**	.34**	.37**	.21**	.33**	.40**	.35**
Sexual communication	.35**	.73**	-	.42**	.48**	.49**	.25**

****p* < .001, ***p* < .01

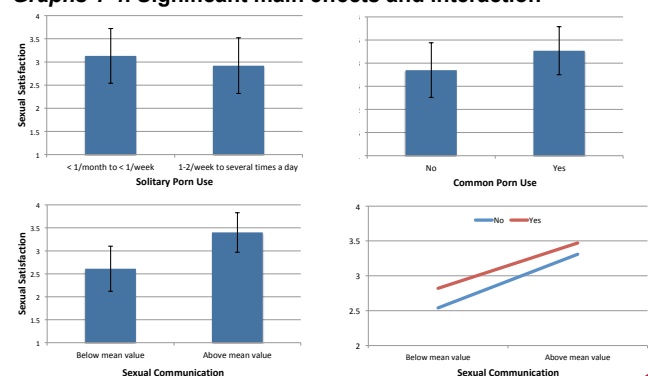
Table 3. Analysis of variance

Variable	df	MS	F	
Solitary porn use frequency (SU)	4	0.60	3.64	**
Common porn use (CU)	1	0.77	4.62	*
Sexual communication (SC)	34	2.10	12.62	***
SU x CU	4	0.07	0.41	<i>ns</i>
SU x SC	106	0.15	0.88	<i>ns</i>
CU x SC	27	0.26	1.55	*
SU x CU x SC				

*** *p* < .001, ** *p* < .01, * *p* < .05

Adjusted *R*² = .54

Graphs 1-4. Significant main effects and interaction



Conclusions

Results confirm that a more frequent solitary pornography use is associated with lower relationship satisfaction and lower sexual satisfaction. In contrast, common pornography use is associated with better sexual communication, more sexual activities and higher sexual satisfaction. The positive effect of common use on sexual satisfaction is stronger in individuals with lower sexual communication. Common porn use and sexual communication are important resources to maintain sexual satisfaction in romantic relationships. They should be fostered in consulting and couple therapies for better relationship outcomes. Future research should test the relationships between pornography use and couples sexuality using longitudinal dyadic data.