

Is pornography associated with sexual dysfunction?

Ana Larissa Marques Perissini¹ , Luis Cesar Fava Spessoto² , Fernando Nestor Facio Júnior^{2*} 

The consumption of digital pornography for the purpose of sexual excitation is a phenomenon that grows every year in countries with unrestricted access to the Internet due to its easy access and anonymity¹. In a world that has become more digital during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, contact with different types of virtual sexual contents has enabled individuals in isolation to maintain their sexual practices, popularizing a modality that had already been growing among adults and adolescents in recent years and alerting society about how this new sexual standard is being molded². The ease, diversity, and level of excitation that can be achieved with online pornography indicates that it may operate as a supernatural stimulus, leading the Internet to become the most important means of the dissemination of pornographic content¹.

The consumption of pornography *per se* is not a disease but can become one when sexual excitation achieved through the online material becomes dominant over experiences with real sexuality and it takes on the characteristics of dependence³. There are several unresolved issues regarding the nature and magnitude of these effects, but pornography may fit the structure of addiction, considering the similar mechanisms as those found with chemical compounds, triggering potential effects on health, especially sexual dysfunctions, with strong evidence of a reduction in sexual satisfaction¹. Impulsivity in sexual behavior, classified as compulsive sexual behavior disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition (DSM-5) and *International Classification of Diseases*,

11th Revision (ICD-11), is a characteristic often highlighted in the problematic use of pornography⁴, including among individuals with complaints of sexual dysfunction.

A low desire for sex with one's partner has become a common observation in clinical practice, as men seek help due to excessive sexual behavior and use pornography combined with masturbation. Studies offer evidence of an increase in sexual difficulties among young men in recent years⁵. The most common diagnosis is erectile dysfunction of a psychogenic nature, low prevalence of an organic origin, anorgasmia, and premature ejaculation, generally associated with depressive symptoms, increased anxiety, stress, and a lack of motivation⁴.

Emotional symptoms, behavioral problems, misinformation about sex, difficulties in affective relations, and an unhealthy lifestyle are common among a large part of consumers of online pornography and hinder the evaluation of the true cause of sexual dysfunction⁵. As a phenomenon of contemporary society with little research on the effects of the consumption of digital pornography, further studies are needed to elucidate this issue.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

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¹Faculdade de Medicina de São José do Rio Preto, Fundação Faculdade Regional de Medicina de São José do Rio Preto, Health Sciences Post-Graduation Program – São José do Rio Preto (SP), Brazil.

²Faculdade de Medicina de São José do Rio Preto, Fundação Faculdade Regional de Medicina de São José do Rio Preto, Department of Urology – São José do Rio Preto (SP), Brazil.

*Corresponding author: fnfacio@yahoo.com.br

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