

A survey study on pornography consumption among young Spaniards and its impact on interpersonal relationships

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ABSTRACT

The rise in the use of new pornography and widespread increase in Internet access represents an unprecedented scenario in interpersonal relationships in young people. This study is pioneering as it focuses on a large scale of perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours in relation to new pornography use and its impact on interpersonal relationships. The main objective was to explore and describe – with a web-based survey – perceptions, opinions, and profiles regarding pornography use and interpersonal relationships. The survey was administered to 2,457 young people aged between 16 and 29 years from representative areas of Spain. The results obtained reveal that the first accesses to pornography occur at an early age (eight years), and the Internet and pornography were shown to be substitutes for affective sexual education, clearly influencing perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of adolescents and young people and increasing risk behaviours. It is concluded that affective sexual education should be improved, and the involvement of different agents of socialisation must be monitored.

Keywords: New pornography, youth, interpersonal relationships, sex education, consumption.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is in continuous development and evolution throughout the entire life cycle. However, it is known that during adolescence and young adulthood is when there is increased awareness of sexuality owing to the integration of different cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions (Kar et al., 2015).

Throughout history, pornography has been the object of discussion (Sullivan and McKee, 2015) from different ethical, moral, and social fields, among others. With the appearance of 'new pornography' new scenarios of debate and reflection have arisen. For instance, the influence interpersonal relationships and gender relationships may have on the development of sexual behaviour (Peter and Valkenburg 2016; Tsaliki 2011).

Aspects such as the normalisation of risk practices, decontextualisation of sexual intercourse, immediacy, superficiality, and instrumentalisation of relationships and people, as well as new forms of prostitution have become elements to be studied in order to improve understanding of this generational change (Döring, 2009; Weitzer, 2010).

New pornography: A generational change

Over the last 20 or 30 years, pornography and the way of consuming it have changed substantially. In the past, pornography was characterised by being difficult to

access (over 18), with a low supply and high cost, and public exposure of those who consumed it (shops, video clubs, sex shops, etc.) – issues that limited its impact. Young people could occasionally have access through third parties (older friends, parents, and others). Nowadays, the changing technological context (Maas et al., 2019) and new pornography widely distributed on the Internet (through different channels open to the general public), makes access easier by including anonymity (Hardy et al., 2019), thereby overcoming the abovementioned limitations and generating new forms of production and consequences for consumers (Maas et al., 2019; Tsaliki, 2011; Weitzer, 2010).

The new generation of pornography has certain defining characteristics (Kornblit and Sustas 2014): a) increased image quality; b) attainable and largely for free; c) accessible; d) without boundaries in its practices; and e) contact ranging from anonymity to intense interactivity. What is more, this new pornography is found to be related to two social phenomena: on the one hand, a patriarchal culture that has not allowed the development of free and equal sexuality; and on the other, the culture of capitalism, which turns sexual intercourse and the people who practice it into objects of consumption. This latter aspect must not be forgotten, as today, behind pornography are large organisations capable of integrating themselves into the media market (Weitzer, 2010). For instance, Pornhub – a huge distribution portal that publicly files reports of its activity – reveals the high attendance received (over 29,980 million visits in 2019, an average of 3.2 million per hour and 910 per second) (Pornhub, 2020).

The rise in the use of the Internet from 2005-2008, enabled by 4G technologies, smartphones, and the generalisation of screen culture, has led to the consumption of pornography becoming widespread among adolescents and young people, like never before seen (Alexandraki et al., 2018; Ballester et al., 2019). If, over dozens of years, the use of pornography gave rise to strong debates, in the last decade its mass consumption in adolescence has caused concern among fathers and mothers, educators, and researchers alike, especially in relation to the sexual socialisation of adolescents and young people (Ballester et al., 2020a; Ballester et al., 2021; Finkelhor et al., 2020; Flood, 2009; Tomić et al., 2017; Yar, 2019).

The first studies conducted after the generalisation of mass access to pornography on the Internet were contradictory, to the extent that in some cases it was suggested that the effect of the use of pornography was limited (Gottfried et al., 2013; Hald et al., 2013); additionally, the statistical significance of the correlations between the level of use of pornography and sexual behaviours among adolescents might simply be due to a selection effect (Steinberg and Monahan, 2011).

However, most of the studies analysed in the reviews found negative effects of the regular consumption of pornography on the formation of attitudes and practices in adolescents (Owens et al., 2012; Peter and Valkenburg, 2016).

Nowadays, there is consistent evidence of the association between regular exposure to pornography and various negative impacts – alterations in the perception of risk or the perception of women – in adolescents; sexist attitudes, a rise in risky practices (less use of contraceptives, group sex...) and violent practices (asphyxia, hair pulling, etc.) (Ballester et al., 2019; Mellor and Duff, 2019). In addition, the impact of pornography on the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional responses of adolescents has been widely researched and reviewed (Dwulit and Rzymiski, 2019).

New pornography has become the main source of sexual learning for minors and young people. The rise in the importance of new pornography in the formation of basic knowledge and attitudes is becoming increasingly more frequent among adolescents. Hence, new pornography on the Internet, with easy access, is becoming the source of answers to the curiosity of adolescents (Dawson et al., 2020).

There are several reasons why adolescents watch pornography, including the search for information and entertainment. Although some adolescents are exposed to pornographic content by accident (Ballester et al., 2020b; Ševčíková and Daneback, 2014), others access pornography intentionally, out of curiosity, sexual arousal, or to learn about sex (Ballester et al., 2020b; Ševčíková and Daneback, 2014).

The use of pornography as a source of sexual information is problematic, especially in countries where sexual information is limited in formal education. Studying the behaviours concerning the use of pornography by adolescents provides researchers and educators with a better understanding of pornography consumption behaviour and the development of sexual attitudes in adolescents (Hornor, 2020).

Within the context of youths in Spain, according to data in 2019, 89% of children use the Internet and 36% do so daily, with a consumption of at least five hours. This consumption time increases with age: children 12-13 years old stay connected for seven hours a day (González and Alonso, 2019), and most of the Internet practice is carried out by 99% of young people between 16-24 years of age (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2020). Labay-Matías et al. (2011) carried out a study that reported that 29% of visits to pornography sites correspond to children aged 11-15 years, 32% to adolescents aged 15-18 years, and 39% to those over 18 years of age. However, the impact that this mode of access via the Internet has had on the development of sexuality and personal relationships is unknown. An

association between various profiles (compulsive, recreational, and risk) and sexual outcomes related to the well-being of adults has not been made (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2017). The widespread use of technologies among adolescents is relatively recent, approximately over the last 10 years. It is known that young people are great consumers of the Internet in its different forms (Jiménez et al., 2013), and it is common for them to easily access Internet pornography from home and on their personal mobile phones (León-Lario et al., 2019) but we do not have enough information concerning pornography consumption, hence the pattern of use of young Spaniards and its implications on different aspects of interpersonal relationships is as yet unknown (Golpe et al., 2017; Giménez et al., 2010; León-Lario et al., 2019; Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2017).

Some studies report that western youths have normalised porn consumption, especially among men, with this use giving rise to increased demand and cases of problematic use or addiction (Binnie and Reavey, 2020; D'Orlando, 2011; Reay et al., 2013). Nonetheless, some recent studies deny the addictive potential of new pornography (Ballester et al., 2020; Prause et al., 2015); while other authors argue that although consuming pornography produces adverse consequences for people, if the pornographic material is sexually explicit, it can lead to educational and relationship benefits (Rissel et al., 2017). Despite contradictory results and a lack of sociological analysis, it is necessary to study the evident change in the pattern of use and assess the possible short and long-term impacts of new pornography on the behaviour of young people and their understanding of interpersonal relationships (Baker, 2016; Ballester et al., 2021).

This knowledge is useful for directing preventive actions, which have an impact on education, social, and health services.

For this reason, the aim of this study consisted of drawing up a sociological profile based on the exploration of different dimensions and characteristics of the consumption of new pornography in adolescents and young people from Spain. This study enabled information to be collected on habits, beliefs, and perceptions that these people have regarding the use of new pornography. This survey-based study follows the Checklist for Reporting Results of Internet E-Surveys, the CHERRIES checklist, in order to improve the quality of survey report studies (Eysenbach, 2004).

Hypotheses

The main hypotheses of this study are based on the results obtained in research carried out previously (Ballester et al., 2013, 2015a, 2015b). The present

questionnaire was made based on these preliminary results in Ballester et al. (2015a). The first hypothesis, according to the relevant literature, is that greater consumption of new pornography is expected among men (Sun et al. 2016). In this sense, the age groups with a high level of Internet use are also expected to consume pornography more frequently than others (Paul and Kobach, 2014). The second hypothesis, in relation to the impact at the personal level, which is expected to be greater among men as a consumer group, is that pornography might be expected to become the main source of sex education for adolescents (Albury, 2014; Tallon-Hicks, 2016). As a result of this process of 'education' at an early age, a rise in gender-based stereotypes, women's objectification, distortion of relationships, a tendency towards sexual aggressiveness, and an influence on self-concept are expected (Malamuth, 2014; Owens et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2015, 2016). The third hypothesis concerned the interpersonal and social impact of the consumption of new pornography. As pointed out by relevant studies, such as the one by Peter and Valkenburg (2016), it is expected that consumers will be conditioned in their sexual attitudes and therefore show a greater willingness towards risk practices and to demand these practices from their sexual partners or to consume prostitution in order to carry them out.

In addition, two research angles were explored:

- (1) Derived from the second and third hypotheses, the ritualisation of sexual intercourse, based on the simplification of interpersonal relationships, ranging from strict patterns of high expectations and low-risk perception to flexible patterns in which anything goes; and
- (2) Escalation of behaviour; that is, incitement to self-satisfaction, leaving aside egalitarian, consented, pleasurable intercourse. The literature points towards two possible escalations: on the one hand the appearance of forms of violence in interpersonal relationships; and, on the other hand, incitement to the consumption of prostitution for practices not agreed on with the partner (Lim et al., 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a quantitative method with a descriptive, correlational cross-sectional design. The sample inclusion criteria were: aged between 16 and 29 years old. The sample was a random sample with control by territorial quotas, by sex, and large age groups (16-22 and 23-29), and recruitment in the universities of each territory, as well as information services for young people and other organisations. Participants first provided their

informed consent, then they confirmed their eligibility prior to completing the survey. Participation took approximately 40 min.

Participants

The study sample was made up of 2,457 young people aged between 16 and 29 years (margin of error, for global data = 2.02; 95.5% confidence level: 2 sigmas; $p = q$) with a mean age of 21.18 (SD=3.117). This is a representative probabilistic sample of the Spanish population. Participants belonged to the autonomous regions of Andalusia, Aragon, Castile and León, Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia, Galicia, and the Balearic Islands. Fifty-eight percent of participants were randomly selected, whereas 35% of participants were selected based on gender quotas. Only 7% of the sample was by self-selection (in order to balance the sample). Participants were grouped according to age: from 16 to 22 years, and from 23 to 29 years in order to cover two broad age ranges, the youngest still depending on their families and mostly dedicated to studying; the others

confronted with their emancipation and the labour market. Participants were identified through the *Red Jóvenes e Inclusión* (Young People and Inclusion Network of associations).

As can be seen in Table 1, there was a greater representation of the age group between 16 and 22 years (64.1%). In relation to gender identity, 47.8% identified as male ($n=1,174$), 50.8% identified as female ($n=1,249$), and 1.4% as other identities ($n=34$). The last group, despite being significantly smaller, was maintained in order to respect all personal response options.

As for sexual orientation, we found there was a predominance of heterosexuality with 76.7% ($n=1,885$), followed by bisexuality with 9.3% ($n=228$), and thirdly homosexuality with 3.8% ($n=93$). No statistically significant differences were found between different autonomous regions ($X^2, p>0.05$). It is worth noting that 6.3% ($n=156$) did not answer, and 1.8% left this response undefined ($n=44$).

As far as living arrangements were concerned, most lived with their parents (59.6%, $n=1,465$), followed by young people in shared flats (22.5%, $n= 552$), while 8.8% ($n=217$) of youngsters lived with their partners.

Table 1. Sample description data.

	Andalusia	Aragon	Castile and León	Castilla-La Mancha	Catalonia	Galicia	Balearic Islands	Total	
16 to 22 years	47.7%	67.7%	61.4%	81.4%	44.7%	73.2%	58.1%	64.1%	1,574
23 to 29 years	52.3%	32.3%	38.6%	18.6%	55.3%	26.8%	41.9%	35.9%	883
<i>M</i>	22.35	21.22	21.71	19.39	22.68	20.64	21.48	21.18	
<i>SD</i>	2.977	2.623	3.085	3.390	3.053	2.889	3.691	3.117	
Male	56.0%	45.2%	46.4%	50.0%	43.9%	48.0%	49.6%	47.8%	1,174
Female	43.0%	54.8%	49.8%	45.9%	53.2%	51.4%	49.9%	50.8%	1,249
Other identities	1.0%	0.0%	3.7%	4.1%	3.0%	0.5%	0.6%	1.4%	34

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Materials and instruments

The study was carried out as a web-based survey developed through the platform Survey Monkey (supplementary material). The questionnaire explains both the objectives of the study and the procedures to be followed during the study as well as the right to voluntarily withdraw from the study if so desired afterwards. All standards established by Organic Law 15/99 on Personal Data Protection were followed for data collection.

The constructs measured in the present study were sociodemographic variables, pornography use, sexual attitudes, and behaviours related to the consumption of

pornography. The survey was based on a systematic review by Peter and Valkenburg (2016) and the preliminary results of previous own studies (Ballester, Pozo and Orte, 2015a). The survey did not collect personally identifiable information; and was made up of 44 closed-answer, open-answer, or multiple-choice questions (supplementary material).

Participants had no prior information on the purpose of the survey but gave their informed consent before beginning the survey which was conducted in a closed room with professional support and access by invitation. To avoid the bias of self-selection and to control the balance of the sample, expert pollsters from the *Red Jóvenes e Inclusión* were worked with.

Procedure

The surveys were conducted simultaneously throughout the national territory during May and June 2018.

The data analysis process was carried out using SPSS statistics 25 for MacOS. To begin with, basic descriptive analyses were performed, and the hypotheses were subsequently tested using Pearson's Chi-square statistical technique (X²). In addition, an inferential analysis of the results is presented based on the previous bibliography.

RESULTS

The main results analysis of this study was conducted in a sequential format to answer the research questions.

Table 2 presents data concerning whether the respondents had received affective-sexual education; whether this information satisfied their interests, doubts, and curiosities; and how they solved their doubts in this regard. In general, it is worth highlighting that 15.5% of the sample (n=381) acknowledged never having received this affective-sexual education. Meanwhile, there were also 14.6% (n=358) who did not answer this question.

Many of those who did not answer may likely be considered young people without affective-sexual education. In relation to whether or not this education satisfactorily resolved their concerns, out of the ones who received this information, only 21.9% considered it did satisfy their interests, whereas for 42.2% it was either partly (31.1%) or not at all (11.1%) useful. Respondents were subsequently asked about the alternatives they used to clear up their doubts through an open question; notably, the most used source was friends (72.8%) followed by the Internet (69.1%). If all adult role models, parents, and teachers are taken into account, the percentage was very low (27.5%); but other adult role models, such as leisure and free time activity coordinators, sports coaches, youth informants, healthcare staff, and other community services, cleared up the doubts of 23.6% (n=495) of young people. Although Internet consultation to clear up doubts was common among young people, a differential pattern is observed as far as sexual identity is concerned: girls turned to a much larger extent to their friends (80.7% vs. 65.3%), whereas boys turned more to their parents (25.6% vs. 19.1%). In any event, there were no statistically significant differences between boys and girls.

Table 2. Opinion regarding affective-sexual education received by autonomous region.

	Andalusia	Aragon	Castile and León	Castilla-La Mancha	Catalonia	Galicia	Balearic Islands	Total	<i>n</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Have you received affective-sexual education?									
Yes	56.5	69.5	70.4	67.0	67.9	72.3	76.3	69.9	1,718
No	20.2	12.5	15.3	16.5	17.7	16.5	14.3	15.5	381
NR	23.3	18.0	14.3	16.5	14.3	11.2	9.4	14.6	358
Were your questions related to curiosity and interests?									
Yes	13.0	22.9	14.0	41.2	15.2	21.6	26.7	21.9	538
Partly	25.4	28.2	35.5	13.4	40.9	32.6	35.0	31.1	763
No	11.9	12.9	14.6	12.4	5.1	11.0	8.0	11.1	272
NR	6.2	5.5	6.2	0.0	6.8	7.1	6.6	5.9	145
NA	43.5	30.5	29.6	33.0	32.1	27.7	23.7	30.1	739
How did you clear up doubts? (open answers, possibility to answer various options)									
Parents	29.1	20.8	13.1	13.6	14.8	28.4	28.1	22.2	465
Teachers	6.1	4.5	3.5	4.9	18.7	2.2	4.2	5.3	111
Other adults	12.8	18.6	27.6	17.3	29.1	24.3	30.8	23.6	496
Friends	77.7	79.2	64.7	46.9	81.3	74.6	73.1	72.8	1,525
Books	21.6	21.6	24.4	8.6	31.0	19.9	16.9	20.8	435
Internet	73.0	74.2	74.6	55.6	69.5	70.8	59.5	68.1	1,449
Other options	4.1	5.8	3.9	7.4	3.9	4.3	4.8	4.9	102
NR	0.0	2.6	2.1	9.9	3.9	4.9	4.8	4.0	83

Note: NR= Non-Response; NA= Not Applicable.

Experiences with new pornography

In terms of pornography consumption over the last five years, we found that 70.7% (n=1,737) claimed to have seen pornographic contents; 18.2% (n=447) hadn't; and 11.1% did not answer the question. Table 3 shows the distribution according to sexual identities. It is worth noting that there is a significant difference between men and women ($X^2=41.189$; $p<0.05$) in relation to viewing pornography over the last five years. Mean starting age stands at 14.84 years ($SD=2.376$; $CV=16.01\%$) for the population as a whole. With regard to starting age according to sexual identity, boys started earlier than girls (75.8% vs. 35.5%), and this is a significant difference ($X^2=7.232$; $p<0.05$) (Table 3). That is, boys started at a mean age of 14.02 years, while girls did so at 16.14

years. Twenty-five percent of boys had already had some experience with pornography at 13 years, whereas in the case of girls, this was achieved at 15 years. The difference becomes more explicit when it can be seen how, at 14 years of age, 50% of boys had already had an experience, whereas in girls this was not reached until 16 years old (Table 3).

When asked about their reasons for consuming pornography (Table 3), 43.9% used it to masturbate and 40.4% out of curiosity. The third reason for consuming, at 25.4%, was to learn about sexual behaviour. Regarding the difference according to sexual identity, the main motivation for boys was masturbation (62.4%), whereas this reason only accounted for 25.3% of girls. Besides, in order to learn about sex, the influence of friends was greater in boys than girls.

Table 3. Data concerning pornography consumption according to sexual identity.

	Male	Female	Other identities	Total	
				%	n
In the last 5 years have you watched pornography?					
Yes	86.9%	54.8%	94.1%	70.7%	1,737
No	7.8%	28.3%	5.9%	18.2%	447
NR	5.4%	16.8%	0.0%	11.1%	273
Starting age to consume pornography¹					
<16	75.8%	35.5%	75.0%	59.7%	1,038
16 to 18 years	22.0%	48.2%	10.7%	32.3%	560
19 to 21 years	1.2%	15.1%	14.3%	7.0%	121
NR	1.0%	1.2%	0.0%	1.1%	18
Average age at which you started to consume pornography¹					
<i>M</i>	14.02	16.14	15.14	14.84	
<i>SD</i>	2.129	2.241	1.976	2.376	
Earliest age	8	8	13	8	
25 th PCTL	13	15	14	13	
50 th PCTL	14	16	15	15	
Reasons why you watch pornography					
Curiosity	45.4%	34.7%	73.5%	40.4%	992
Learn	33.1%	17.4%	55.9%	25.4%	625
Masturbate	62.4%	25.3%	88.2%	43.9%	1,078
Peer pressure	13.5%	5.0%	5.9%	9.1%	223
Other reasons	3.8%	2.9%	8.8%	3.4%	84
NR	10.1%	23.4%	0.0%	16.7%	411
NA	7.8%	28.0%	5.9%	18.0%	447

Note: *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *PCTL* = Percentile; *NR* = Non-Response; *NA* = Not Applicable

¹ This table only includes the 1,737 people who consumed pornography.

In relation to the frequency of pornography consumption, 7.8% of respondents acknowledged they consumed pornography as follows: once a day (5.8%) or several times a day (1.8%). A difference is observed between sexual identities, with men presenting more frequent consumption (32.0% weekly and 11.3% daily) than women (6.2% weekly and 0.5% daily). In this sense, it is worth noting that respondents belonging to other identities had an even more frequent use than men, especially in consumption several times a day (Table 4). When asked about whether the frequency had gone up or down over the years, we found that the trend among men was to rise, whereas in women and other identities the trend was to decrease. The main reason leading to these changes in the pattern of consumption was unknown

(48.5%) or not declared (14.5%). Having a partner was one motivation to decrease consumption (10.1%) and stop having a partner increased consumption (8.6%), while this variation was more important in boys than in girls or other identities (Table 4).

Another of the aspects the young people were asked about refers to the different modes of pornography consumption. As can be observed in Table 5, 70.7% of respondents used pornography on their own, and 69.1% in their homes. It consists therefore of individual, private consumption, mainly in the home. Mobile use was predominant in all sexual identities, with 43.1% of all respondents viewing pornographic content on computers and 50.4% on mobiles. Percentage consumption in other media was practically anecdotal (Table 5).

Table 4. Frequencies and motivations for pornography consumption according to sexual identity.

	Male	Female	Other Identities	Total	
	%	%	%	%	<i>n</i>
How you discovered pornography					
I found it on the Internet without looking	45.4	34.7	73.5	40.4	992
Looking on the Internet	33.1	17.4	55.9	25.4	625
Through friends	62.4	25.3	88.2	43.9	1,078
Other ways	13.5	5.0	5.9	9.1	223
NR	3.8	2.9	8.8	3.4	84
NA	10.1	23.4	0.0	16.7	411
Frequency of pornography consumption					
Occasionally	37.1	42.4	64.7	40.2	988
Weekly	32.0	6.2	8.8	18.6	457
Daily	11.3	0.5	11.8	5.8	143
Several times a day	3.1	0.3	8.8	1.8	43
NR	8.7	22.2	0.0	15.4	379
NA	7.8	28.3	5.9	18.2	447
Frequency over the years					
More and more	32.5	13.4	8.8	22.4	551
Less and less	18.0	20.9	47.1	19.9	488
The same	33.8	16.3	38.2	24.9	613
NR	8.0	21.1	0.0	14.6	358
NA	7.8	28.3	5.9	18.2	447
What motivated you to watch more or less pornography?					
Nothing	55.8	41.2	67.6	48.5	1,192
Not having a partner increases the frequency	11.8	5.8	0.0	8.6	212
Having a partner decreases the frequency	15.3	4.8	26.5	10.1	249
NR	9.3	19.9	0.0	14.5	357
NA	7.8	28.3	5.9	18.2	447

Note: NR = Non-Response; NA = Not Applicable.

Table 5. How pornography is consumed according to sexual identity.

	Male	Female	Other Identities	Total	
	%	%	%	%	<i>n</i>
How you watch pornography (you may answer several options)					
Alone	86.9	54.8	94.1	70.7	1,737
With male friends	10.3	3.2	32.4	7.0	172
With female friends	4.5	6.2	11.8	5.5	135
NR	5.4	16.8	0.0	11.1	273
NA	7.8	28.3	5.9	18.2	447
Where you watch pornography (you may answer several options)					
At home	85.2	53.3	94.1	69.1	1,693
School centre	3.0	0.5	0.0	1.7	41
Pubs or cybercafe	4.4	1.1	8.8	2.8	69
Workplace	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.7	16
NR	6.1	18.0	0.0	12.1	296
NA	7.8	28.4	5.9	18.2	447
On what devices or in what way do you watch pornography (you may answer several options)					
Computer	54.4	32.2	52.9	43.1	1,058
Tablet	6.3	2.2	20.6	4.4	109
Mobile	62.5	38.4	76.5	50.4	1,237
Television	2.5	2.6	2.9	2.6	63
DVD, video	1.1	0.6	0.0	0.9	21
Books, magazines	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.4	10
NR	8.7	18.5	2.9	13.6	334
NA	7.8	28.4	5.9	18.2	447

Note: NR = Non-Response; NA = Not Applicable.

Perceptions regarding the consequences of consuming new pornography

In Table 6, the perceptions of the young respondents can be observed regarding positive and negative effects, and impact on couple relationships according to sexual identity. Some of the positive effects they highlighted include pleasurable masturbation (38.6%), the possibility of satisfying their curiosity (37.9%) and learning about sex (25.3%). It is also noteworthy that for the group of other identities, pornography turned out to be a positive aspect of engaging in sexual activity with male or female friends for 32.4%.

The pattern of answers shown in Table 6 is noteworthy in that young people claimed not to perceive any positive effect (7.6%), or any negative effect either (37.2%), with respect to pornography. As for the impact of pornography on couple relationships, when asked about negative

effects, only 2.9% (n=77) claimed the use of pornography affected their relationship with their partner, whereas when they were asked about specific effects on their couple relationship, a greater percentage responded, 8.7% (n=241). As reflected in the responses, boys seem to have a greater impact on couple relationships, whether it be because their partner is upset by them watching pornography, due to boredom with their partner, or for demanding they do what they have seen (Table 6).

Respondents were also consulted about privacy and the level of knowledge among people around them, finding that a high percentage (31.7%) had a friend who knew of their use of pornography, followed by young people who believed that nobody knew of their consumption of pornography (15.1%). Concerning the possibility of considering themselves addicted to porn, a predominance of negative answers can be observed (53.7%), followed by some young people who believed

Table 6. Perceptions regarding the effects of pornography consumption according to sexual identity.

	Male	Female	Other identities	Total	
	%	%	%	%	<i>n</i>
According to your experience, what POSITIVE effects do you most appreciate? (You may mark several options)					
Satisfy curiosity	47.6	28.3	58.8	37.9	931
Learn about sex	36.3	15.1	23.5	25.3	622
Masturbate comfortably	57.1	20.2	64.7	38.6	947
Relationships with friends	7.7	2.3	32.4	5.3	130
Other effects	6.5	2.2	11.8	4.4	107
No positive effect	4.7	10.3	8.8	7.6	186
NR	6.7	20.0	5.9	13.4	330
NA	7.8	28.4	5.9	18.2	447
According to your experience, what NEGATIVE effects affected you most? (You may mark several options)					
Boredom	18.5	13.9	41.2	16.5	404
Impact on your couple relationship	5.2	0.8	0.0	2.9	71
Impact on your relationship with friends	8.0	0.8	11.8	4.4	108
Impact on your studies	3.2	0.8	0.0	1.9	47
Impact on your work	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	4
Other effects	8.4	8.2	8.8	8.3	204
No negative effect	46.6	28.2	44.1	37.2	914
NR	10.7	21.3	0.0	15.9	390
NA	7.8	28.4	5.8	18.2	447
If pornography affected your couple relationship in any way, what was it? (You may mark several various options)					
I demanded my partner do what I saw	3.0	1.0	0.0	1.9	47
I got bored with my partner	5.5	0.7	11.8	3.1	77
My partner was upset that I watched pornography	8.1	1.9	0.0	4.8	119
NR	78.1	68.1	82.4	73.1	1.796
NA	7.8	28.3	5.9	18.2	447

Note: NR = Non-Response; NA = Not Applicable.

that they could be a little addicted (11.2%). Only 4.5% of the young people surveyed claimed that they did consider they might have a problematic use. As for differences according to sexual identity, there was a notable difference between men – at least 28.7 accepted they might have a problematic relationship with pornography – and women – only 3.6%.

Table 7 shows the data concerning how pornography has affected the image they have of their own or others' sexual identity. In the total number of subjects surveyed, it can be observed that it was the women whose perception of women had changed, based on pornography, more than men; that is, 26.1% of girls said their image of women had changed, whereas it had changed for only 21.6% of men. It is also striking that it should be women whose perception of men had changed most (26.5%). Another of the elements studied was the risk of escalation in risk behaviours. Respondents were

asked about offers received while consuming pornography, and notably, 46.0% had received some. Out of this percentage, 43.4% had received offers but paid no attention; 0.6% claimed they were willing to have paid contact; and 2% (n=49) declared they had already had direct contacts, through the adverts that had reached them. This would represent a risk that especially affected boys, who consume pornography to a greater extent, but the offers were received by both males (51.2%) and females (40.2%).

Regarding the influence that may have been exerted on the rise in sexual risk behaviours, it can be observed that there was a moderate increase in risk in 43.8% of the total population surveyed, with a small number of young people in the group considering they had taken greater risks in their sexual practices (2.8%) (Table 7). Besides, a significant difference is seen depending on sexual identity ($X^2=138.140$; $p<0.05$), with the increased risk being more

Table 7. Effects of pornography on the perception of sexual identities and sexual risk behaviours according to sexual identity.

	Male	Female	Other identities	Total	
	%	%	%	%	<i>n</i>
Does pornography affect the image you have of women?					
Yes	21.6	26.1	26.5	24.0	589
No	62.3	34.5	73.5	48.3	1,187
NR	16.1	39.4	0.0	27.7	681
Does pornography affect the image you have of men?					
Yes	22.8	26.5	20.6	24.7	606
No	61.2	36.2	73.5	48.7	1,196
NR	15.9	37.3	5.9	26.7	655
Increase of risk behaviours over the last few years related to pornography					
No	32.5	28.8	20.6	30.4	748
Yes, occasionally	47.4	39.6	70.6	43.8	1,076
Yes, considerably	4.9	0.6	8.8	2.8	68
NR	15.2	31.0	0.0	23.0	565

Note: NR = Non-Response.

important in men than in women. Further, it is worth pointing out that the percentages of greatest risk belonged to the male gender (4.9%) or other sexual identities (8.8%).

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to draw a profile of pornography consumption in Spanish adolescents and emerging adults. This is an exploratory approach to beliefs and attitudes. Trends can be observed and situations confirmed when very consistent data are obtained; in other cases, when marginal differences or changes are produced, it is better to consider the results as an initial approximation.

Concerning the first hypothesis, as expected, the prevalence of consumption is greater among men, but also in other identities, and at very early ages, when youngsters are immersed in full psychosexual development (Paul and Kobach, 2014; Solano et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2016; Kar et al., 2015). The fact that boys consume pornography earlier than girls could be due to factors such as curiosity, active search for these contents, peer pressure, etc. associated with their own exploration and the normal development of sexuality (Baker, 2016; Kar et al., 2015). Gender-based differences are important in some questions and require further research in order to find out the reasons for these differences (Lewczuk et al., 2017; Scarcelli, 2015). It

would also be necessary to continue investigating the role played by the ever-younger initiation in and familiarity with new technologies and digital displays, seeing as computers and mobiles are the most frequent methods of consumption (Pornhub, 2020).

It was also possible to observe – regarding the second hypothesis concerning the personal impact new pornography has on young people – the influence has on affective-sexual education (Albury, 2014; Tallon-Hicks, 2016; Rissel et al., 2017). Even though around half of young people acknowledged receiving affective-sexual education in their environment, they point out that it was not enough to address their concerns, with consulting peers and the Internet as their most used means (Baker, 2016). This trend is consistent with the main reasons young people give for consuming pornography: masturbating, satisfying their curiosity, and as a source of learning about sex. It is thought that the fact that young people are developing their sexuality based on new pornography will in turn favour aggressiveness in their relationships (Mesch 2009; Hardy et al. 2019), gender-based distortions and stereotypes, or even concerns regarding their own identity; that is, the consumption of pornography would affect their future behaviour (Malamuth, 2014; Owens et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2015, 2016). However, some authors find an inverse relationship, arguing that sexual behaviours are predictors of subsequent consumption of pornography (Hardy et al., 2019). It was expected that men, the greater consumers (and also other identities), would have

more changes with regard to their perception of sexual identities; however, it was observed that those who appear to be more sensitive to the influence of pornography in this sense are women (Lewczuk et al., 2017). Yet there was also a greater number of women who excluded themselves from pornography consumption, or who directly did not answer. Among the possible reasons for this pattern, is the dubious social consideration that pornography consumption has had historically with respect to the female gender (Scarcelli, 2015). On a personal level, it is also relevant that young people do not especially perceive any negative effects, or any positive effects either; which leads us to wonder then what the real reasons for consumption are (Hald and Malamuth, 2008). To address this, we suggest conducting research that applies already developed questionnaires that focus on outlining the main motivations for consuming pornography and its frequency, for example, with the questionnaire validated by León-Larios et al. (2019).

In relation to the third hypothesis posed – the impact on interpersonal relationships and social level – consumption was found to be solitary, unknowingly for their close environment, and in the privacy of their home. This pattern of consumption, especially at an early age, without a critical point of view, hinders socialisation and the elaboration of sexual content. The results of this research show that the Internet and pornography are substitute educators of affective sexual education that could be improved. This situation together with a lack of alternatives to resolve sexual education issues may be a problematic matter in terms of developing healthy sexual relationships (Binnie and Reavey, 2020; Maas et al., 2019; Owens et al., 2012). Further, awareness of the impacts on interpersonal relationships is very limited, with a strong tendency to consider pornography as just one more option of consumption, confirming the difficulties some authors had already identified (Hald and Malamuth, 2008). It must be considered that, according to the young people who answered the survey, pornography consumption has not interfered in their couple relationships. However, even if the number of young people reporting problems is small, it is necessary to collect their testimony and analyse the real change in sexual and affective influence of this visualisation, given that many of them have far more complex practices than what they declare (Jiménez et al., 2013).

With the tendency to escalate, young people recognise the rise in risk behaviours and taking more risks in their sexual practices since they have been consuming pornography (Carroll et al. 2008). Likewise, they also point out that they have received advertisements while consuming pornography regarding other practices related to paid sex, inciting sexual intercourse via the Internet and prostitution. This is coupled with a low perception of

risk regarding consumption, with a large number of the young people surveyed considering they do not make a worrying use. This is precisely one of the critical points, the problematic use and potential addictiveness of new pornography (Ballester et al., 2020; Binnie and Reavey, 2020; Hardy et al., 2019; Reay et al., 2013; Young, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This study enabled us to conclude that the profile of pornography consumption is greater among men, but also in other identities, and at very early ages when youngsters are immersed in full psychosexual development. The ever-younger initiation in and familiarity with new technologies and digital displays are variables that must be investigated further, given that the most common pornography consumption methods are computers and mobile phones.

It was observed that the Internet is the medium most frequently used by youths to answer their emotional-sexual questions and that women seem to be more sensitive to the influence of pornography. According to the data obtained, the impact of pornography on young people continues to be a challenge to researchers, as sexual practices are often more complex than declared.

It is important to mention that at no time was there any intention to assess the level of addiction, but rather to explore to what extent there is an awareness that too much time is being devoted or that adverse effects are beginning to be generated. Notwithstanding, it was found that the information collected is not enough to test the fourth hypothesis posed regarding ritualisation, which represents a window for future research to find out whether this ritualisation occurs or not.

This research shows that it is reasonable to worry about the negative impacts of the habitual consumption of online pornography among young people, as already raised (Ševčíková and Daneback, 2014; Peter and Valkenburg 2016). At a critical moment in the formation of identity, emotions, and sexual imaginary, massive exposure to pornography might have negative consequences on attitudes, influencing the development of behaviours that pose a health risk (not using a condom, sexual violence, etc.) (Allen et al., 2017; Bóthe et al., 2020).

In extreme cases, the massive exposure of many adolescents to pornography can be interpreted in terms of problematic pornography consumption. This condition aggravates negative symptoms: repeated inability to resist the impulse to consume pornography; investment of an exaggerated amount of time in the consumption of pornography; abandonment of family, social, academic, and work activities to consume pornography; attention

problems; anxiety, restlessness, or irritability when unable to consume pornography; and others (Ballester et al., 2020; Efrati, 2020).

Practical and educational implications

New pornography is emerging in society as a business with unknown implications. It must be known what affective-sexual models are being promoted and the possible consequences for new generations (Baker, 2016; Ballester et al., 2021; Prause et al., 2015; Tsaliki, 2011).

Taking into account the fact that this new pornography is easily accessible, its content in some cases represents the simplification of affective-sexual relationships, in which young people are exposed to role models carrying out high-risk practices (unprotected sex, multiple sexual partners, the practice of violence, etc.) with no possibility of critical content development (Mercer and Perkins 2013; Peter and Valkenburg 2016). The consequent premature, normalised exposure favours the establishment of feelings of familiarity and availability, decreasing the perception of the negative consequences of these practices. This is the perfect scenario for escalation to problematic use and a rise in risky behaviours or prostitution as one more option of consumption (Lim et al., 2016).

There should be a commitment to building relevant sexual education that satisfies the needs of young people (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009; Gómez, 2016) and that promotes the establishment of healthy, egalitarian interpersonal relationships. The processes of affective-sexual education must show the positive, pleasant side of sex with consent (Ballester et al., 2021; Tallon-Hicks, 2016).

It is necessary to take part in education concerning sexuality that has been left in the hands of pornography, and the most relevant institutions for young people – family and school – must take responsibility for this education (Rothman et al., 2017). From our pedagogical and educational viewpoint, in terms of practical guidelines, it is not a question of prohibiting pornography, but about teaching how to critically analyse its form and content, so that this is not the only source of information (Kornblit and Sustas, 2014). It is important for the adults who are part of the life of young people – parents, teachers, activities coordinators, and other adults – to be points of reference that support and promote healthy affective-sexual development (Ballester et al., 2021; Baker, 2016; Kornblit and Sustas, 2014). Besides, the involvement of policymakers may be useful to delimit Internet access for non-legal age users and other strategies to reduce free access to this content.

With all the information obtained in this study,

education, the development of critical skills, and affective domains in adolescents and young people, as well as some legal controls in the distribution of pornography (related to sexual exploitation, violence, etc.) are current necessary interventions to deal with the negative effects of problematic pornography consumption (Ballester et al., 2021).

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APPENDICES

Survey on affective-sexual education and pornography (translate version)

I. Identification questions

1. Age

2. Sex (sexual identity)

3. Sexual orientation: 1. Homosexual; 2. Heterosexual; 3. Bisexual; 4. Other (specify); 5. Non-response.

4. Town where you currently live.....

5. Country of origin (birth)....

6. Studies completed (only the highest level): 1. Without studies; 2. Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO); 3. Professional education (FP); 4. High School; 5. University; 6. Non-response.

7. Current activity (you can answer several options): 1. Study; 2. Work; 3. Look for work; 4. Other situations (specify)...; 5. Does not answer.

8. Studies in progress: 1. Formative cycle; 2. High school; 3. University; 4. Other (specify)...

9. Employment situation: 1. Indefinite contract; 2. Temporal contract; 3. Autonomous; 4. Public worker; 5. Look for work; 6. Work in an irregular economy; 7. Does not answer.

10. Coexistence situation: 1. I live with my parents; 2. I live as a couple; 3. I live alone; 4. I live in a shared apartment; 5. Other situations...; 6. Non-response.

II. In the last 10 years...

11. Have you received affective-sexual education? 1. Yes; 2. No; 3. Does not answer.

12. If you have participated in a course, where was it? 1. In a school; 2. In neighbourhood or community services; 3. In other entities (church, youth organization, others).

13. Answered your questions, curiosity and interests? 1. Yes, completely; 2. Partly; 3. No; 4. Non-response.

14. How did you clear up doubts? (you can answer several options): 1. With my parents; 2. With my teachers; 3. With other adults; 4. With my friends; 5. With books; 6. In Internet; 7. Other options (specify)...; 8. Non-response.

15. In the last 5 years...Have you watched pornography? 1. Yes; 2. No; 3. Nonresponse.

16. a) At what age did you start watching porn?

16. b) At what age do you remember seeing the first images?

17. Why did you watch pornography? 1. To respond to curiosity; 2. To learn about sex; 3. To masturbate; 4. Because my friends did it; 5. For other reasons; 6. Non-response.

18. How did you discover pornography? 1. Looking on the internet I found it without looking for it; 2. Looking on the Internet; 3. Friendships helped me; 4. Other ways; 5. Non-response.

19. How often did you look at pornography? 1. Occasionally; 2. Weekly; 3. Daily; 4. Several times a day; 5. Non-response.

20. Over the years you looked more or less? 1. Every time I looked more; 2. Every time I looked less; 3. Almost always the same; 4. Other...; 5. Non-response.

21. Did something happen to make you look more or less? 1. No, nothing; 2. Not having a partner made me look more; 3. Having a partner made you look less; 4. Other reason...; 5. Non-response.

22. How did you watch pornography? (you can answer several options): 1. Alone; 2. With my friends' boys; 3. With my friends' girls; 4. Non-response.

23. Where did you watch it? (you can answer several options): 1. At home; 2. In the school centre; 3. In pubs or cybercafe; 4. Workplace; 5. In other places. Specify...; 6. Non-response.

24. What devices did you watch? (you can answer several options): 1. Computer; 2. Tablet; 3. Mobile; 4. In other devices. Specify...; 5. Non-response.

25. According to your experience, what positive effects do you most appreciate? (you can answer several options): 1. Satisfy curiosity; 2. Learn about sex; 3. Masturbate comfortably; 4. Interact with friends; 5. Other effects; 6. No positive effect; 7. Nonresponse.

26. According to your experience, what negative effects affected you most? (you can answer several options): 1. Boredom; 2. Affected your couple's relationship; 3. Affected your relationship with friends; 4. I spent too much time; 5. Affected your studies; 6. Affected work; 7. Other effects; 8. No negative effects; 9. Non-response.

27. If it affected your relationship as a couple, how was it? (you can answer several options): 1. I demanded my partner do what I saw; 2. I got bored with my partner; 3. My partner was upset that I watched pornography; 4. Other effects. Specify...; 5. Nonresponse.

28. Did someone know you were watching porn? (you can answer several options): 1. No, nobody; 2. Mi partner; 3. Some friend; 4. My parents; 5. My brothers or sisters; 6. Other persons, who? 7. I don't know; 8. Non-response.

29. Do you think you could consider yourself a porn addict? 1. No at all; 2. A little; 3. Yes, is possible; 4. Non-response.

III. Currently

30. Nowadays ... Do you watch pornography? 1. Yes; 2. No.

31. Why do you watch pornography? (you can answer several options): 1. To respond to curiosity; 2. To learn about sex; 3. To masturbate; 4. Because my friends did it; 5. For other reasons; 6. Non-response.

32. How often do you watch pornography? 1. Sometimes, sporadically; 2. Weekly; 3. Daily; 4. Several times a day; 5. Non-response.

33. How do you watch pornography? (you can answer several options): 1. Alone; 2. With my friends' boys; 3. With my friends' girls; 4. Non-response.

34. Where do you watch pornography? (you can answer several options): 1. At home; 2. In the school centre; 3. In pubs or cybercafe; 4. In the workplace; 5. In other places. Specify...; 6. Non-response.

35. On what devices do you watch it? (you can answer several options): 1. Computer; 2. Tablet; 3. Mobile; 4. In other devices. Specify...; 5. Non-response.

36. What positive effects do you appreciate most now? (you can answer several options): 1. Satisfy curiosity; 2. Learn about sex; 3. Masturbate comfortably; 4. Interact with friends; 5. Other effects; 6. No positive effect; 7. Non-response.

37. What negative effects affect you most now? (you can answer several options): 1. Boredom; 2. It affects the couple's relationship; 3. It affects my relationship with my friends; 4. I spend a lot of time; 5. It affects the studies; 6. It affects work; 7. Other effects; 8. No negative effects; 9. Non-response.

38. If it affects your relationships as a couple, how does it affect it? (you can answer several options): 1. I demand my partner do what I see; 2. I get bored with my partner; 3. My partner is upset that I watch pornography; 4. Other effects. Specify...; 5. Non-response.

39. Does anyone know that you watch porn?: 1. No, nobody; 2. My partner; 3. Some friend; 4. My parents; 5. My brothers or sisters; 6. Other persons, who?...; 7. I don't know; 8. Non-response.

40. Do you think you can now consider yourself addicted to porn? 1. No at all; 2. A little; 3. Yes, is possible; 4. Non-response.

41. Does pornography affect the image you have of women? 1. Yes; 2. No; 3. Non-response.

42. Does pornography affect the image you have of men? 1. Yes; 2. No; 3. Non-response.

43. Do you think you have increased risk behaviours in recent years related to pornography? 1. No; 2. Yes, occasionally; 3. Yes, considerably; 4. Non-response.

44. Have you received advertisements for sexual offers related to pornography? 1. No, never; 2. Yes, but I ignore it; 3. Yes, and maybe you have face-to-face contacts, even if you have to pay; 4. Yes, I've already had contacts thanks to the ads.; 5. Non-response.