Porn Believed to Boost Young Men's Sexual Dysfunction, Study Finds

By Erik Lief — May 15, 2017

This new study's conclusion matches what most of us would logically take to be true – that as one's exposure to pornography increases, so do behavioral issues that are tied to sex.

While on that gut, unscientific level, the results of a survey about porn's impact on sexual behavior are not completely unexpected. But at the same time they are helpful in helping us more fully understand how exposure to graphic imagery affects (1) a young man's desire to be with a sexual partner, and (2) the incidence of sexual dysfunction that occurs from that exposure.

Researchers concluded that men aged 20 to 40 who preferred pornography were more likely to be dissatisfied with actual sexual encounters, and the more porn they consumed the more desensitized they became to human interaction. In addition, they were at increasing risk of experiencing erectile dysfunction.

"There appears to be a relationship between pornography use and sexual dysfunction in men who report a preference for masturbation to pornography rather than sexual intercourse," concluded the researchers of the study titled "Survey of Sexual Function and Pornography" which was recently published in The Journal of Urology.

While we have some concerns with how the study was conducted, there's also reasons to embrace the accuracy of the findings.

"The rates of organic causes of erectile dysfunction in this age cohort are extremely low, so the
increase in erectile dysfunction that we have seen over time for this group needs to be explained," said Dr. Matthew Christman, staff urologist with the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, as quoted by HealthDay [3]. "We believe that pornography use may be one piece to that puzzle."

The study was based on data collected anonymously from a 2014 Armed Forces Health Surveillance Survey, which included questionnaire feedback from 312 active servicemen and 48 active servicewomen. Using their responses each male was then evaluated on the International Index of Erectile Function, while each woman was rated on the Female Sexual Function Index, with the lower the score indicating the greater dysfunction. What was learned was that there was a clear correlation between the two, with increased porn consumption leading to increased sexual dysfunction – and vice versa.

"When asked how they best satisfied sexual desires, 96.6% indicated intercourse (with or without pornography)," stated the study's authors about one end of the scale, "versus 3.4% who indicated masturbation to pornography" on the other. Meanwhile, the study continued, "weekly pornography use varied:

- 25.9% indicated less than weekly
- 24.6% indicated 1-2 times
- 21.3% indicated 3-5 times
- 5.0% indicated 6-10 times
- 4.3% indicated greater than 11 times."

Researchers "found that the rate of dysfunction was lowest among the 85% of respondents who reported preferring intercourse without pornography (22%)," wrote Medscape Medical News. "The
incidence of dysfunction increased in men who preferred intercourse with pornography (31%), and was highest among men who preferred masturbation with pornography (79%)." As for women, while 40% responded that they viewed porn there were "no significant correlations between pornography use and sexual dysfunction."

As for the study itself, there are two issues that present pause: Since the data was collected by survey, it's hard to be certain about its accuracy since self-reporting can always skew actual behavior. Moreover, the participant pool of just over 300 is not large enough to garner strong faith. Countervailing forces, however, include that the study's findings were derived from an anonymous survey, which can improve accuracy; and that it was a survey of military personnel, who we might reason are conditioned to following rules – which would lead to truthful responses.