The Good, the Bad, the Ugly:

Positive and Negative Effects of Pornography in Irish Males

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Higher Diploma in Psychology at Dublin Business School, School of Arts, Dublin.

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March 2018
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would firstly like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Garry Prentice, for his invaluable insight, encouragement, and support. I also want to thank Dr. Pauline Hyland for her dedication and the continuous guidance that she has provided to all students in her Research Project class. Lastly, I wish to thank all the men who graciously took part in the research, with special thanks to those who assisted me in accessing my population sample.
ABSTRACT

This quantitative study investigated the effect of pornography in the perpetuation of sexism towards women on a sample of Irish heterosexual males (N=157). It examined three variables relating to pornographic consumption: age of first exposure; frequency of usage; and type of pornography viewed by the sample. An online questionnaire was disseminated which included the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), used to measure levels of hostile and benevolent sexism. The respondent’s self-perceived effects, both positive and negative, of pornography were analysed through implementation of the Pornography Consumption Effect Scale (PCES). Results showed that while overall sexism scores did not differ significantly, higher hostile sexism scores were obtained from those who viewed pornography more frequently and those who viewed more atypical pornography over traditional pornography. Despite this, participants reported higher positive than negative effects of consumption. Results verify the impact that pornography can have on a social and on an individual level.
1. INTRODUCTION

Pornography has generated a polarisation of attitudes in the field of psychological and social research (Kohut, 2014), and ideological differences are evident in the motivation to conduct said research. There are those, for example, who conceptualise pornography as a negative and damaging construct, and conduct studies that purport to show that it increases acceptance of rape (Hald, Malamuth & Yuen, 2010), and undermines romantic relationships, among other things (Bergner & Bridges, 2002). On the other hand, some advocate the position that pornography plays a key social role, enhancing sexual self-esteem (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001), knowledge of sex (Robinson, Manthei, Scheltema, Rich, & Koznar, 1999), and aiding in the exploration of one's sexual identity (Kohut & Fischer, 2013). Thus a research consensus concerning the effects of pornography consumption remains unresolved.

In relation to the very limited research carried out in Ireland, the portrayal of pornography is negative, with parallels drawn between viewing pornography and engaging in deviant behaviour (O'Connor, 2006). The Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship 1989 (O'Connor, 2006) argues that pornography dehumanises and sexually objectifies women. In 2005, the Irish Freedom From Pornography Campaign was established to combat the availability of pornography as a facilitator of female objectification in Irish culture (Ryan, 2007; O'Connor, 2006). A clear harm-based definition of pornography has been adopted within Irish culture, a stance which is rigid in its theorising as it aims to demonise porn, and perpetuate its ‘taboo’ status, perhaps limiting further Irish research in the area.

This is similarly seen on an international stage. The literature has consistently reported that there is an increase in unwanted sexual advances towards women in various social contexts that may be attributed to pornographic exposure that typically depicts objectification of women, influencing some male willingness to engage in sexually harassing
behaviour (Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Cowan & Dunn, 1994; Stanley et al 2016; Mikorski & Szymanski, 2017). Thus, research predominantly focuses on exploring the association that pornography has with stereotypic cognitions of gender (Kjellgren, Priebe, Svedin & Langstrom, 2010).

Researchers have defined pornography as sexually explicit material that depicts engagement in sexual activities such as masturbation, oral sex, or penetrative sex, that primarily intends to elicit a sexual response in the viewer (Malamuth & Huppin, 2005; Peter & Valkenburg, 2016). Pornography ranges considerably from depictions of ‘traditional’ sexual behaviour (or normophilic), to atypical (or paraphilic) representations (Brown & L’Engle, 2009).

Persistently demonstrated throughout empirical research is the idea that pornography has the potential to influence social attitudes and generate gender stereotyping (American Psychological Association [APA], 2017; Cowan & Dunn, 1994). However, various confounding variables contribute to the strength of this association, which are addressed in this study, specifically the age of first exposure to pornographic material at a time of potential vulnerable cognitive and affective development; the pattern and frequency of pornographic consumption; and the type or genre of pornography viewed by the consumer. These variables are explored in relation to their generation of sexism. Finally, most of the literature categorises pornography consumption as having solely negative (Kingston, Malamuth, Fedoroff & Marshall, 2009) or solely positive outcomes (Löfgren-Mårtenson & Månsson, 2009) for the consumer. This study aims to explore both the negative and positive outcomes of cyber-pornographic consumption, due to its extensive availability to the public. Sexism will be explored through application of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) (Glick & Fiske, 2001) in relation to the aforementioned variables, and the effects of pornography will be addressed through the implementation of the Revised-Pornography Consumption Effect
Scale (PCES) (Hald & Malamuth, 2008) which measures the self-perceived effects of pornography on areas of the individual’s life, including their sex life and sexual knowledge.

Cultural bias is a major shortcoming with regards to the abundance of research available. In the recent systematic meta-analysis conducted by Peter and Valkenburg (2016) more than two-thirds of the studies examined came from Europe, North America, or Australia. Thus, the primary objective of this study is to consider all of the variables when drawing an association between pornography consumption and sexism, and apply them to an Irish population sample.

1.1 Gendered Pornographic Consumption

Information regarding sexuality is reluctantly provided through conventional channels, such as schools, parents, and religion, and as such, the media has become an important “agent of sexual socialisation” for society (Zillmann, 2000, p. 41). An increase in pornographic consumption has been facilitated by its accessibility, anonymity, and affordability online (Bridges, Sun, Ezzell & Johnson, 2016), which subsequently attracts a wider audience (Kühn & Gallinat, 2014). A qualitative study conducted by Rothman, Kaczmarsky, and Burke (2015) examining patterns of pornography use in young people reported that pornography consumption was an ordinary component of their daily lives. Viewed as a leisure activity by most, individuals typically engage in pornography consumption as a means of distraction from boredom, sexual exploration in aiding the emergence of sexual identities, and as a sexual release (Smith, Baker, & Attwood, 2015; McCormack & Wignall, 2017).

Gendered viewing patterns of pornography are evident. In a study carried out in Ireland, 94% of young men had reported high levels of exposure to sexually explicit material
That is not to say that consumption is limited to the male gender: a survey conducted by Amarach Research report that 56% of women had viewed pornography (Anderson, 2015). Nonetheless, engagement in viewing explicit content has been more consistently reported in males. A survey issued by the Irish Times (2015) report that 73% of female respondents aged between 17 and 24 admitted to having used pornography, compared to 99% of the male participants in that age category (Holmquist, 2015).

1.2 Pornography Consumption and Sexism

It is difficult to ignore the unequal balance in gendered relations depicted within pornography. McNally (2015) reports that a significant portion of pornographic videos accessible online includes verbal and physical aggression towards the female partner. Antevska and Gavey (2015) report that the male interest in sexual dominance is characterised by levels of detachment, and regular consumption leads to unhealthy male attitudes towards women. As such, the leading strand of research pertaining to pornographic consumption explores the negative effects paradigm of sexually explicit media (Antevska & Gavey, 2015).

The long-held traditional definition of sexism regard it as a reflection of negative attitudes towards women or men including feelings of hostility, prejudice, and stereotypic perceptions (Allport, 1954; Glick & Fisk, 1996). Yet previous research exploring the effects of pornography on sexism has relied on outdated measures. For example, The Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence, Helmrich & Strapp, 1973) is used frequently, yet as a measure of attitudes towards the female role in society, it is problematic and representative of a dated social context no longer applicable. This measure presents unsubtle and outdated sexist statements, which limits the validity of the measure. In a society that demonstrates a desire to move towards more progressive social attitudes, statements such as “It is ridiculous
for a woman to run a locomotive and for a man to darn socks” (Spence et al, 1973) are irrelevant and have the potential to generate social desirability bias in the respondent as a result of its lack of subtlety.

More recently, extensive cross-cultural research conducted by Glick and Fisk (1996) has demonstrated the multifaceted underpinnings of sexism. They propose that sexism as a encompasses two dimensions that perpetuate gender inequality: benevolent sexism and hostile sexism (Glick & Fisk, 1996). Whilst sexism can be focused towards both men and women, for the context of this study that aims to focus on men, sexism will be explored considering the female gender. Benevolent sexists, according to Glick and Fiske (1996) perceive women as dependent on men, who need protection as the nurturer of children, an attitude that supports traditional gender role views. Hostile sexism on the other hand functions on the basis of patriarchal world-views, where women are sexually objectified and perceived as inferior, and must be supervised and dominated by the males of society (Glick & Fisk, 1996). Thus sexism perpetuates conservative views, and adheres to stereotypical notions of the role of that gender (Peter & Valkenburg, 2016). Although both dimensions of sexism reported in the ASI differ in severity, they both undermine gender equality.

A content analysis by Klaassen and Peter (2014) was performed on the most-viewed heterosexual pornography videos of 2013 from popular pornography sites including Pornhub and YouPorn. In total, 400 videos were analysed with regard to the frequency of observed indicators of objectification, power, and violence against both genders (Klaassen & Peter, 2014). Through content analysis, the researchers report that women were more likely to be sexually objectified than men, with more close-ups of female body parts, and more scenes in which the sex focused on male pleasure (Klaassen & Peter, 2014). Violent acts in the context of this study constituted spanking or gagging, and women were the likely recipients.
However the researchers note that the vast majority of the women responded either neutrally or positively to these acts (Klaassen & Peter, 2014).

Sexual objectification is almost normalised in the context of pornography, for both men and women. Both are depicted in stereotypical ways, including women portrayed as babysitters, sorority girls, mothers, stepmothers, and nymphomaniacs (Pulley, 2014), reflecting and sustaining socially endorsed gender roles.

1.3 Early Exposure to Pornography

Prepubescent and adolescent development is a key stage in cognitive and affective growth and is susceptible to distorted perspectives and impressions (Piaget, 1936). It is during this period that the individual is exploring and developing their own sexual identity (Bonino, Ciairano, Rabaglietti, & Cattelino, 2006), and more importantly, developing ideas regarding relationship dynamics.

Studies have shown that children exposed to pornographic material at a young age have consistently reported feelings of embarrassment, shock, disgust, and sadness (Manning, 2006), and this early exposure encourages the fostering of distorted views of sexuality, having negative implications for personal relationships (Perry, 2016). Pornography is said to lead to the early sexualisation of children, by providing them with false narratives of human sexuality and an unequal demonstration of gender balance dynamics (Perry, 2016).

The concern surrounding the influence of pornography is deeply rooted in the idea that increasing accessibility of sexual content may lead to the development and perpetuation of stereotyping and unrealistic ideas regarding sexual behaviour (Nathan, 2007). Within the literature, sexual socialisation theory is utilised to rationalise this concern (Ward, 2003). The model dictates that frequent exposure to consistent themes regarding gender and sexual
behaviour can effect an individual’s developing sense of appropriate and inappropriate social perceptions, particularly when the individual is exposed to this material at a young age (Brown & L’Engle, 2009).

A 2017 study by the APA report that the age and nature of first exposure to pornography predicted conformity to the masculine norms of sexually promiscuous behaviour and seeking power over women (APA, 2017). Furthermore, a study reported by Jacobs (2013) suggests that people who admitted to watching regular pornography were less likely to support affirmative action for women in a subsequent managerial interview, than those who had not reported watching pornography. This suggests that pornography activates social scripts, which informs opinions and social issues, such as the perpetuation of sexist attitudes (Jacobs, 2013).

1.4 Frequency of Viewing Pornography

The frequency of pornography consumption has been shown to have a negative impact on the behaviour and social cognition of the consumer, which is said to perpetuate male sexual insensitivity towards women (Kühn & Gallinat, 2014). Bandura’s social cognitive theory posits that an individual’s beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes are likely to change in accordance with the modeled behaviour that they are exposed to (Bandura, 2001) such as exposure to attractive role models who show aggressive behaviour as sexually rewarding in the context of pornography (Vandenbosch & van Oosten, 2017). Repeated exposure to sexual media portrayals may generate new sexual scripts for the consumer (Wright, 2011), which contributes to the viewers overall stereotypical beliefs about the female role in society (Peter & Valkenburg, 2016).
Similarly, current research combines the conceptual ideas of social learning theory and script theory, suggesting that through observation of models depicted in the real world and in the media, people can create and store ‘scripts’ that can guide social behaviour (Brown & L’Engle, 2009). Perceptions towards a certain gender falls into this category of social scripts. The literature suggests that repeated exposure to pornography may influence the scripting processes of the viewer by generating new sexual scripts (Wright, 2011), which has an effect on the subsequent affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspect of the viewer’s sexuality, especially in young consumers whose sexuality is not yet well established (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Brown & L’Engle, 2009; Hald, Malamuth & Lange, 2013).

Sex in pornography is depicted as hedonistic and transactional, detached from an affective context. Brown and L’Engle (2009) argue that this persistent representation activates and exaggerates the sexual script of men wanting more sex, leading them to hold more permissive sexual norms which generates varying degrees of hostile and benevolent sexism (Brown & L’Engle, 2009), a relationship that is mediated by how realistic the participant perceives the material to be (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006).

1.5 Genres of Pornography

Previous research focuses primarily on the causal links to negative effects, without addressing the complexity of pornography consumption. Thus, very few studies on pornography have focused on genre variations (Short, Black, Smith, Wtterneck and Wells, 2011). What is considered mainstream is subjective on an individual level, but, as Paul (2009) argues, it also changes relative to the social acceptability and accessibility of the material.
Pornography has been categorised in light of two overarching genres: normophilic and non-normophilic (paraphilic) (Rosser et al., 2012). Normophilic pornography has been defined as media depicting common sexual acts between partners, including oral sex, penetrative sex, and mutual masturbation (Rosser et al., 2012). Non-normophilic interests are defined as any persistent sexual interest other than genital stimulation with physically mature and phenotypically normal consenting partners (Diagnostic and Statistical manual of Mental Disorders, [DSM], 2013). Sub-groups within paraphilic interests include sadism (inflicting humiliation, suffering, or bondage), voyeurism, and masochism (undergoing humiliation, suffering, or bondage) (Joyal, 2015). Whilst consensual engagement in the aforementioned sub-genres in reality should not be confounded with acts of sexual aggression, the typical portrayal in pornography is one of an imbalance of power between the male and female actors. Despite these fantasies being less reported by the wider population and thus being less prevalent than normophilic fantasies in research (Joyal, 2015), their normalisation and depiction in such a negative way devoid of mutual respect has the potential to influence the sexual and social scripts of the consumer. For example, Sabina, Wolak, and Finkelhor (2008) report that the degree of exposure to paraphilic sexual content before the age of 18 could be responsible for establishing a connection between pornography and sexual aggression among young men with aggressive tendencies.

1.6 Positive Effects of Pornography

Despite extensive research aiding to the notion that pornography has the potential to adversely impact gender perceptions, consumption continues to be prevalent in society. A quantitative survey conducted in Ireland report that only 4% of 5,932 men reported never watching pornography (Holmquist, 2015).
As mentioned previously, research has demonstrated that exposure to pornography effects the sexual scripts, and subsequent, sexual experiences of the viewer. However there is a branch of research that suggests that positive effects of pornography may encourage pornographic consumption (McKee, 2007). Pornography can have a constructive role in the sexual self-esteem of the viewer (Štulhofer et al., 2007), which includes feelings of confidence, satisfaction, and security, directly linked to the sexual competency of the viewer (Kvalem, Træen, Lewin & Štulhofer, 2014). Kvalem et al (2014) report the self-perceived effects of pornography, which includes discovery of sexual preferences, sexual orientation, knowledge of and interest in different sexual acts, and attitudes towards sex and the body.

With regards to the survey conducted by the Irish Times, 54% of male respondents aged between 17 and 24 reported that they view pornography as instructional (Holmquist, 2015). Some other positive outcomes include challenging some restrictive gender roles (Duggan, Hunter & Vance, 1988); therapeutic potential used, for example, as a way to overcome shame or discomfort with regards to sexual matters (Kimmel, 1990); or aiding in the identity formation for marginalised sexual communities such as homosexual men (Flood & Hamilton, 2003).

1.7 Rationale for the Current Study

The majority of mainstream pornography available to the Irish demographic seemingly conforms to traditional views of women as secondary to the role of the man (O’Connor, 2006). The robust empirical evidence outlined from European and American research demonstrates that a strong association between pornographic consumption and undesirable societal attitudes, most notably the generation of sexism, exists. Thus, concerns
regarding exposure to pornographic media are not illogical, where pornography has the potential to encourage sexism (Hald et al, 2013).

However, classifying pornography as solely negative does not aid in understanding how to address this enigmatic and loaded construct. A valuable methodological approach that is rarely used consists of examining how the consumers of pornography perceive its effects on an individual level as opposed to society as a collective. In terms of the self-perceived effects of pornography consumption, Hald and Malamuth (2008) conducted a survey assessing young Danish men and women aged between 18-30. Examining variables such as sexual knowledge and attitudes towards sex, the participants reported only small, if any, negative effects of viewing sexually explicit material (Hald & Malamuth, 2008). The report demonstrates that, contrary to the social perception of pornography as damaging, the participants, particularly the men, identify more positive than negative effects of viewing pornographic material (Hald & Malamuth, 2008).

Furthermore, there is a notable gap in the literature pertaining to the Irish male demographic. Building upon existing international evidence is an important tool to gain an insight into the social implications of pornography, but cultural differences provide grounds for dubious interpretation of these results as they may not be representative and applicable to the Irish population. As a way in which to rectify this issue, this research study will examine patterns of pornographic consumption and its impact on gender attitudes for an exclusively Irish male sample, and will not just limit study to one particular age group of men which is common in previous literature, but will rather encompass a wide age range of participants.

Due to the sensitive nature of pornography consumption, the conduction of interviews might be problematic as participants may be influenced by social desirability, or embarrassment at disclosing such sensitive information due to the loaded nature of pornography. Consequently, this study will rely on the administration of an anonymous
survey as a means of data collection. Item nonresponse in the context of pornography study is lower when the questionnaire is self-administered than when an interviewer administers the questionnaire (Peter & Valkenburg, 2016).

In light of this, the following hypotheses will address the relationship between those confounding variables relative to pornographic consumption and its association with sexism:

**H1:** It is hypothesised that the age of first exposure to pornographic media will prove to be an influential variable for the generation of high levels of sexism (hostile and/or benevolent) towards the female gender.

**H2:** It is predicted that those who view pornography frequently will hold more sexist views (hostile and/or benevolent) towards the female gender than those who watch it infrequently.

**H3:** The men who frequently view paraphilic pornography will demonstrate higher levels of sexism (hostile and/or benevolent) than those who frequently view normophilic pornography.

**H4:** Despite the negative perception of pornography by society, it is predicted that, on an individual level, men will report higher positive than negative effects of pornography consumption.
2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

The intended sample was comprised of Irish males aged between 18 and 50. Considering analysis of sexism towards women in the sexual context of pornography is such a major component of this study, individuals who did not identify as exclusively heterosexual were excluded. An initial total of 180 responses were obtained, with 27 participants being excluded from the final analysis due to failure to meet the required criteria. Twenty respondents did not identify as exclusively heterosexual and 7 respondents did not identify as male. This resulted in a final sample of 153 respondents who fit the inclusion criteria, with a mean age range of 21-29. Of the 153 respondents, 31.1% were aged between 18-20, 61.4% between 21-29, 20.3% between 30-39, and 5.2% between 40-50.

This was an online survey whereby digital questionnaires were distributed through a link via Kwiksurvey. The sample was composed using a mixture of purposive sampling and snowball sampling: purposive sampling was conducted on online forums, including Boards.ie, Moodle, and Reddit, while the snowball sampling was conducted on the social media platforms of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

2.2 Design

This study is a quantitative, questionnaire-based study of cross-sectional design in which data was gathered from the use of a comprehensive survey issued online which includes two psychological measures.
For the cross-sectional analysis of H1, H2, and H3, the independent variables (IV) were the age of first exposure to pornographic media, the frequency of viewing pornography, and the viewing of paraphilic over normophilic pornography, while the dependent variable (DV) was sexism (overall ambivalent sexism, hostile sexism, and/or benevolent sexism). The respondents for this analysis were categorised according to naturally occurring groups for each hypothesis as per the response options: (H1) those who were first exposed to pornography under the age of 8, 8-12, 13-18, and over the age of 18; (H2) those who view pornography less than once a week, 1-2 times a week, 3-5 times a week, everyday, and more than once a day; and (H3) those who view normophilic pornography, paraphilic pornography, or both. All of the aforementioned IV were analysed against the DV of sexism (ASI levels of sexism, hostile sexism, and/or benevolent sexism).

With respect to H4, the self-perceived effects of pornography consumption, both positive and negative effects were analysed in accordance with the Pornography Consumption Effect Scale (PCES) (Hald & Malamuth, 2008). All of the above hypotheses were two-tailed in nature. It was expected that high levels of pornography consumption would predict high levels of sexism and positive self-perceived effects, informed by previous research outlined in the Introduction.

2.3 Materials

The online survey was delivered using Kwiksurvey (see Appendices 1, 2, and 3). Prior to commencement of the questions, the participants were asked to consent to the study (Appendix 1). Demographics were gathered by asking questions relating to gender, age range, and sexuality. Those who did not adhere to the inclusion criteria were immediately redirected to the end of the survey and thanked for their participation (Appendix 3).
Following on from the demographic questions, participants were asked if they engaged in pornographic consumption, the age they were when they were first exposed to pornography, their frequency of viewing per week, and the type of pornography that they prefer, either normophilic, paraphilic, or both. These questions totaled 8 and were chosen with the intention to be analysed against the corresponding psychometric measures: The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and the Pornography Consumption Effect Scale PCES (Hald & Malamuth, 2008). Appendix 2 consists of the survey and includes copies of these measures.

2.3.1 Levels of sexism

The ASI, a self-reported measure devised by Glick and Fiske (1996), was used to examine levels of sexism in men, which incorporates two dimensions: Hostile Sexism (HS) and Benevolent Sexism (BS) which may be independently calculated to measure each individual sub-scale or may be averaged for an overall combined sexism score. The measure is comprised of 22-items, containing 11 HS items and 11 BS items. Participants were asked to respond to each item, indicating the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 6 (Agree Strongly). Example items include “Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash” (HS), and “Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess” (BS). The ASI is composed of three subcomponents that are said to make up HS and BS: Paternalism (dominant and protective), Gender Differentiation (competitive and complimentary), and Heterosexuality (hostile and intimate). Scoring is used to calculate the HS score, BS score, or an average of both HS and BS to given an overall sexism score. Reliability scores for the scale are positive, with an overall Cronbach’s alpha of .90 for the
complete 22-item scale, an alpha of .89 for the 11-item subscale of HS and an alpha of .86 for the 11-item subscale of BS, indicating a high internal consistency (Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2013). Total subscale scores for each item range from 0 to 5, with higher overall scores indicating higher levels of sexism. Overall, the ASI score of the participant is the average of the HS and BS score.

2.3.2 Self-perceived effects of pornography

The second measure on the survey was the revised 47-item Pornography Consumption Effect Scale (PCES) (Hald & Malamuth, 2008) which measures the participant’s self-perceived effects of pornography consumption. The measure incorporates the use of two effect scales: a Positive Effect Dimension (PED) and a Negative Effect Dimension (NED), with nine subscales: Sex Life (SL) (5 items for PED; 8 items for NED), Attitudes Towards Sex (ATS) (5 items for PED; 5 items for NED), Sexual Knowledge (SK) (9 items, PED only), Life in General (LG) (4 items for PED; 3 items for NED), and Perception and Attitudes Toward the Opposite Gender (PATOG) (4 items for PED; 3 items for NED). (Hald & Malamuth, 2008). The scales of the PED and NED are not significantly correlated, $r = .07$, which indicates that both scales reflect two separate dimensions (Hald & Malamuth, 2008). An overall positive effect score is obtained by averaging the 27-items relating to the positive dimension, and an overall negative effect score is obtained by averaging 20-items relating to the negative dimension.

For each item, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived various effects of consumption using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (to an extremely large extent). Items include “Has made you less sexually liberal?” (ATS, NED), and “Has improved your quality of life?” (LG, PED). The reliability of the two effect
dimensions and nine constructs were investigated using Cronbach’s alpha, with a high internal consistency reported by Hald and Malamuth (2008): reliability for the Positive Effect Dimension was .91 (SL=. 91; SK= .90; ATS= .90; DL= .87; and PATOG= .73). Reliability for the Negative Effect Dimension was .82 (DL= .83; ATS= .81; SL= .79; and PATOG= .72) (Hald & Malamuth, 2007, pg. 619). Higher scores on all scales indicate higher perceived negative or positive effects.

2.4 Procedure

This study was provided with ethical approval by the Ethics Board of Dublin Business School and conducted in adherence with the Psychological Society of Ireland Code of Ethics. Access to the survey was gained via a digital link submitted on Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, and Twitter. This link was shared and sent on by participants within these social media platforms. The link was also submitted to the ‘r/SampleSize’ subreddit on Reddit.com, on the Irish online forum Boards.ie, and on the DBS Moodle page, to reach as many Irish men as possible.

On clicking the link, participants were directed to the cover page of the survey (Appendix 1) and were provided with a statement informing that the purpose of the study was to explore attitudes to pornography and women, and trends in the viewing of pornographic material in heterosexual Irish men, aged between 18 and 50. A definition of pornography by Malamuth and Huppin (2005) was presented to the participants. The cover letter did not explicitly use the word ‘sexism’ or say that the purpose of the study was to explore any association between pornography and sexism to prevent any form of participant bias that may inform their responses to the questions. Informed consent was sought and obtained by all participants prior to the commencement of the survey, as well as assuring participants that
any answers given would be completely anonymous and that there was no obligation to take part. The letter also informed participants that the questions were sensitive in nature, and that the relevant support contact details would be provided at the end of the survey (Appendix 3), as well as responses being stored on a password-protected computer.

The survey (Appendix 2) began with an obligatory question to confirm that the participant had read the cover letter and had consented to taking part. They advanced to the next section upon selecting ‘yes’. If the participants had selected ‘no’, they were redirected to the end of the survey and thanked for their time (Appendix 3). The respondents were then asked ‘Do you identify as male?’ their age range with response options, and ‘Do you identify as exclusively heterosexual?’ All three questions were obligatory, and if they did not fit the inclusion criteria, they were redirected to the end of the survey. The next section pertained to pornography consumption, beginning with the required question of ‘Do you engage in viewing pornographic material?’ The subsequent three questions asked, if yes, what age range they were when they were first exposed to the material, how frequently per week they engage in viewing the material, and finally, what type of pornography do they typically view. Section 3 and 4 were composed of the ASI and the PCES questionnaires respectively. Answering of the ASI was compulsory, but the PCES was not, in the event that the participant did not engage in pornographic consumption.

The final page of the survey (Appendix 3) thanked the respondents for their participation and contribution to an important psychological field of research. They were debriefed and informed that the study “Aims to examine the self-perceived effects of pornography use and the relationship between pornography use and sexism” (Appendix 3). It provided participants with relevant support lines if any of the questions had caused some feelings of distress, including the Rutland Centre for Sex and Pornography Addiction, and the Samaritans. Full completion of the survey took approximately 8-10 minutes.
3. RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to establish the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations across both the dependent and independent variables in the study. Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of the scale variables, including mean scores of the Positive Effect Dimension and Negative Effect Dimension of the Perceived Consumption Effect Scale (PCES) (Hald & Malamuth, 2008), and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory ASI (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Measure</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Effect Dimension</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>43.16</td>
<td>16.24</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>263.625</td>
<td>.466</td>
<td>-.238</td>
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<td>PCES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative Effect Dimension</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>16.81</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65.947</td>
<td>2.254</td>
<td>5.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASI</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>19.75</td>
<td>10.89</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>118.666</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>-.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile Sexism ASI</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45.229</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>-.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolent Sexism ASI</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30.206</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>-.105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants initially numbered 180. Out of those participants, 7 were excluded on the basis that they did not identify as male, and a further 20 participants were excluded as they did not identify as exclusively heterosexual. From the total number of valid participants (n = 153) who met the inclusion criteria, 20 (13.1%) were aged between 18-20; 94 (61.4%) were aged between 21-29; 31 (20.3%) were aged between 30-39; and 8 (5.23%) were aged between 40-50 years old, as illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Bar chart showing the age ranges of the sample](image)

Descriptive statistics were performed to establish how many participants viewed pornographic material (N=146) and to determine their patterns of consumption. Figure 2 provides an overview of the age of first exposure to pornographic material that pertains to Hypothesis 1. It was found that of the 146 participants (missing = 7) who reported that they viewed pornography, the majority of participants (n = 73) were first exposed to sexually
explicit content between 8-12 years (50%), with a distribution of the remaining participants (n = 73) across the other age groups.

![Pie chart showing breakdown of age of exposure of the participant to pornographic material](image)

**Figure. 2: Pie chart showing breakdown of age of exposure of the participant to pornographic material**

Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of pornographic consumption by the 146 participants (missing = 7) who reported having viewed pornography, the IV in Hypothesis 2. The majority of respondents (N = 60) viewed pornography 3-5 times a week, with a relatively even spread of participants across the remaining time categories.
Finally, Figure 4 illustrates the type of pornography viewed by the participants (N = 146; missing = 7), with an even spread of participants consuming either normophilic pornography (46.6%), or normophilic and paraphilic pornography (43.8%).

Figure 3: *Bar chart showing the frequency of viewing pornographic material per week by the participants*

Figure 4: *Pie chart showing the breakdown of the type of pornographic material consumed.*
3. 2 Inferential Statistics

The main objective of this study was to investigate whether variables of pornography consumption (age of first exposure, frequency of usage, and type of pornography viewed) in Irish males generated levels of sexism (overall sexism and/or benevolent and/or hostile sexism) towards the female gender. Furthermore, the study sought to outline and discuss the self-perceived effects of pornography usage as a way in which to understand its prevalence in society. To determine this, a number of inferential statistic analyses were conducted to analyse the hypotheses, including independent t-tests, one-way analyses of variance, and dependent sample t-tests.

_Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesised that the age of first exposure to pornographic media will prove to be an influential variable for the generation of high levels of sexism (hostile and/or benevolent) towards the female gender._

Exposure to pornography was grouped according to four categories; those who were exposed pornography under the age of 8, between 8-12, 13-18, and over the age of 18. To establish an understanding into levels of sexism of those exposed at a younger age and those exposed at an older age, the four groups were regrouped into two: those exposed to pornography at 12 years of age or younger, and those exposed to pornography at 13 years of age or older.
As illustrated in Table 2, three independent sample t-tests were carried out to determine whether or not there were differences in the ASI, hostile, and benevolent sexism scores of the two age groups of exposure to pornography. All three found that there were no statistically significant difference in mean scores between men exposed to pornography at the age of 12 or under and men exposed at the age of 13 or older. In terms of ASI mean scores, there were no differences in scores between men exposed to pornography at the age of 12 or under (M = 21.49, SD = 10.29) and men who were exposed to pornography at 13 or older (M = 18.72, SD = 10.64) (t (142) = 1.56, p = .12, CI (95%) -.74 → 6.27).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Variable</th>
<th>Age of exposure</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>95% CI Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total ASI scores</td>
<td>12 years of age or younger</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>21.49</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.74</td>
<td>6.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile Sexism Score</td>
<td>13 years of age or older</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18.72</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ASI scores</td>
<td>12 years of age or younger</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolent Sexism Score</td>
<td>13 years of age or older</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ASI scores</td>
<td>12 years of age or younger</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.97</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>-1.03</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolent Sexism Score</td>
<td>13 years of age or older</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>-1.03</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hostile sexism mean scores also did not differ significantly between men exposed to pornography at the age of 12 years or under (M=12.42, SD=6.61) and men who were exposed at 13 years or older (M=10.50, SD=6.41) (t(142) = 1.73, p = .09, CI (95%) -.27 \rightarrow 4.11). Finally, there was no statistical difference in benevolent mean scores between men exposed to pornography at 12 years or under (M = 8.97, SD=5.56) and those at 13 years or under (M=8.22, SD=4.95) (t(144) = .83, p=.41, CI(95%) -1.03 \rightarrow 2.53).

Hypothesis 2: It is predicted that those who view pornography frequently will hold more sexist views (hostile and/or benevolent) towards the female gender than those who watch it infrequently.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of the frequency of viewing pornography on levels of overall sexism, as measured by the ASI. Participants were divided into five groups (Group 1: Less than once a week; Group 2: 1-2 times a week; Group 3: 3-5 times a week; Group 4: Everyday; Group 5: More than once a day). There was not a statistically significant difference at the < .05 level in ASI scores for the five groups: (F (4, 139) = 1.1, p = .36). With a small effect size calculated as .03 using eta squared, the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

A one-way ANOVA showed that there was not a significant difference in benevolent sexism scores between the five groups (F(4, 141) = .54, p = .70), with a small effect size of .02, calculated using eta squared.

However, a further one-way ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference in hostile sexism scores between the five groups (F(4, 139) = 2.5, p = .05). The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .07. Therefore the difference in mean scores is of medium effect. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score of
Group 1 (Less than once a week) (M=8.18, SD=7.46) was significantly different from Group 3 (Everyday) (M=11.51, SD=5.97). This indicates that the hostile sexism scores between those who watch pornography less than once a week, and those who watch pornography everyday differ significantly, with those watching pornography everyday demonstrating higher levels of hostile sexism.

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicate that although there was no statistically significant difference in ASI mean scores, hostile sexism scores did differ significantly: those who view pornography more frequently demonstrated higher hostile sexism scores than those who view pornography infrequently. Thus the hypothesis is partially proven.

*Hypothesis 3: The men who frequently view paraphilic pornography will demonstrate higher levels of sexism (hostile and/or benevolent) than those who frequently view normophilic pornography.*

The three categories of pornography type were regrouped into two due to unequal distribution of participants. The groups became normophilic, and normophilic and/or paraphilic. An independent samples t-test found that there was not a statistically significant difference between ASI scores of men who watched normophilic pornography frequently (M = 18.90, SD = 10.10) and men who viewed normophilic and/or paraphilic pornography frequently (M = 21.66, SD = 10.70) (t (142) = -1.58, p = .116, CI (95%) -6.20 → 6.9.

Two further independent samples t-tests were carried out to identify any significant differences in relation to hostile sexism scores and benevolent sexism scores across the two groups. One of the tests found that there was a statistically significant difference between Hostile Sexism scores of men who watched normophilic pornography frequently (M = 10.22, SD=5.97) and those who watched normophilic and/or paraphilic frequently (M = 12.88, SD =
Despite the significant result, the magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -2.66, 95% CI: -4.79 \rightarrow -.53) was small (eta squared = .04).

However, an independent samples t-test indicated that there was no difference in benevolent sexism scores between normophilic (M=8.61, SD=5.65) and normophilic and/or paraphilic (M=8.73, SD=5.06) (t (144) = -.14, p = .89, CI(95%) -1.87 \rightarrow 1.63.

The results of the independent sample t-tests carried out indicate that although there was no statistically significant difference in ASI scores, hostile sexism scores did differ: those who view normophilic and/or paraphilic demonstrated higher levels of hostile sexism, than those who viewed normophilic alone. Thus the hypothesis is partially proven.

_Hypothesis 4: Despite the negative perception of pornography by society, it is predicted that, on an individual level, men will report higher positive than negative effects of pornography consumption._

As part of the survey, participants answered questions relating to their self-perceived effects of pornography consumption. Each participant who answered these questions were assigned two scores corresponding to the two dimensions of the PCES: the Positive Effect Dimension, and the Negative Effect Dimension. The higher the score, the higher the positive or negative effect felt by the respondent.

A paired samples t-test was conducted to identify any differences in means of both dimensions across the participant sample. The analysis found that there was a significant difference in Positive Effect Dimension scores of the PCES (M = 43.46, SD = 16.60) and the Negative Effect Dimension scores of the PCES (M = 16.69, SD = 7.74) (t(107) = 15.09, p < .001, CI (95%) 23.26 \rightarrow 30.29). The eta-squared statistic (.68) indicated a large effect size.
Therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected, as participants reported higher positive than negative self-perceived effects of their pornography use.

In terms of the mean difference between the PED and NED nine subscales, a paired samples t-test indicated that there was a significant difference between all subscales illustrated in Table 3. All of the mean scores for each positive effect dimension subscales were higher than the negative effect dimension subscales, indicating higher perceived positive than negative effects of pornography consumption across areas such as sex life of the participant, life in general, attitude towards sex, and perception of an attitude towards the female gender.
Table 3: A Paired Samples T-test table displaying the differences in mean and standard deviation of scores for the eight subscales of Positive Effect Dimension and Negative Effect Dimension in the PCES.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Effect on Sex Life</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Effect on Sex Life</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Effect on Life in General</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Effect on Life in General</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Effect on Attitude to Sex</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Effect on Attitude to Sex</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>9.84</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Effect on Perception of and Attitudes Towards the Opposite Gender</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Effect on Perception of and Attitudes Towards the Opposite Gender</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Analysis

Inferential statistics were conducted to highlight any further differences in mean scores that may be of interest to the current study.
**Self-perceived effects of pornography use (DV) and age of participants (IV)**

A one-way ANOVA showed that the mean scores of the Positive Effect Dimension with regards to the self-perceived positive effects of pornography consumption differed significantly between the four age categories ($F(3, 111) = 2.96$, $p = .035$), with medium effect size ($\eta^2$ calculated at .07). Despite this, there were no significant post hoc results to report.

**Self-perceived effects of pornography use (DV) and type of pornography viewed by the participant (IV)**

An independent samples t-test revealed that those who view normophilic pornography ($M=14.94, \ SD=5.72$) and those who view normophilic and/or paraphilic pornography ($M=18.77, \ SD=9.63$) ($t(109)= -2.54, \ p = .012$, CI(95%), -6.82 $\rightarrow$ -6.85) differed significantly in terms of their reported negative effect score, with the $\eta^2$-squared statistic (.06) indicating a moderate effect size. Thus, analysis indicated that those who viewed normophilic and/or paraphilic reported higher negative effects of pornography use than those who just viewed normophilic alone.
4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Aim of Research

This study evaluated the positive and negative effects of pornography consumption on an Irish sample of heterosexual males. Whilst international research in the study of pornography and sexism is abundant, there are cultural bias concerns as the majority of studies have been conducted with American, Australian, and Scandinavian samples, with very little emphasis placed on other geographical areas. Consequently, it was important for this study to examine variables of pornographic consumption in Ireland and its generation of sexism through implementation of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Despite the repeatedly reported association of sexism and pornography, the use of sexually explicit media continues to be a prevalent activity in contemporary society. Thus, this study also aimed to highlight the positive self-perceived effects that pornography has on the consumer in order to understand its popularity amongst the general population. Through the implementation of the Pornography Consumption Effect Scale (PCES) (Hald & Malamuth, 2008), negative self-perceived effects are also reported, and as such a full-bodied understanding of the effects of pornography on an individual level has been ascertained.

4.2 Summary of Findings

H1: It is hypothesised that the age of first exposure to pornographic media will prove to be an influential variable for the generation of high levels of sexism (hostile and/or benevolent) towards the female gender.
This study found that there were no significantly different mean scores in overall sexism between those who were exposed to pornography below the age of 12, and those exposed over the age of 13. These findings would suggest that early exposure to sexually explicit media is not a determining factor for the generation of levels of sexism, which contradicts previously reported research (e.g. Perry, 2016; Brown & L’Engle, 2009; American Psychological Association [APA], 2017).

The early stages of cognitive and affective growth in children are vulnerable to distorted information, particularly ones that are fostered by the media (Perry, 2016). Consequently, one would assume that early exposure to pornographic material, which is defined by its primary role of eliciting a sexual response in the viewer (Malamuth & Huppin, 2005), would provide the individual with false narratives regarding sexual relationships and gender dynamics. However interestingly, this is not represented in the population sample utilised for this current study. This could be explained in terms of other confounding variables that could be more influential in informing gender views in Ireland, such as peer group, familial ideals, and religious morals in a Catholic majority country.

H2: It is predicted that those who view pornography frequently will hold more sexist views (hostile and/or benevolent) towards the female gender than those who watch it infrequently.

The study also found that there was no significant difference in overall sexism scores between those who viewed pornography frequently and those who viewed it infrequently. However, H2 is partially supported, as there were significant differences in hostile sexism scores between participants. As defined in the introduction of this study, hostile sexism refers to overtly negative evaluations that men have towards the female gender (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Previous studies have reported the harmful impact that frequent indulgence in
pornographic content that depicts unequal gender dynamics can have on the generation of less progressive gender views (e.g. Brown & L’Engle, 2009). In the present study, it was reported that men who viewed pornography everyday demonstrated significantly higher levels of hostile sexism than men who viewed pornography less than once a week. This result is supported by the literature, and facilitated by the application of Bandura’s social cognitive theory which dictates that repeated exposure to sexual media can generate new sexual scripts for the viewer which has a profound influence over their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour (Bandura 2001; Wright, 2011).

**H3: The men who frequently view paraphilic pornography will demonstrate higher levels of sexism (hostile and/or benevolent) than those who frequently view normophilic pornography.**

Similar to H2, the results for H3 indicate that while no difference in overall sexism scores were reported between those who view normophilic and those who view normophilic and/or paraphilic pornography, a difference in levels of hostile sexism was shown. Thus, the hypothesis is partially supported. Paraphilic pornography is defined as atypical pornography that goes beyond ‘traditional’ sexual contact between two physically mature and consenting adults (DSM, 2013), including sadism (inflicting humiliation, suffering, or bondage), voyeurism, and masochism (undergoing humiliation, suffering, or bondage) (Joyal, 2015). Previous research pertaining to this type of pornography has reported that it often depicts the normalisation of an imbalance of power between males and females (Joyal, 2015), which, similar to H2, has the potential to inform the sexual and social scripts of the consumer.
H4: Despite the negative perception of pornography by society, it is predicted that, on an individual level, men will report higher positive than negative effects of pornography consumption.

Generally, the men in the study reported more positive than negative effects of pornography consumption. Ranked in order of most popular, the positive self-perceived effects include: informing sexual knowledge; fostering a positive attitude towards sex; having a positive effect on the participant’s sex life; having a positive effect on their life in general; and finally, having a positive effect on their perception and attitude towards the opposite gender. These positive self-perceived effects in part explain the prevalence of pornography in society. As supported by the evidence presented in the introduction of the present study (Hald & Malamuth, 2008), the negative effects of pornography are minimised, while the positive effects are emphasised.

Additional findings

Post-hypothesis analyses reported that the age of the participants and type of pornography preferred by the consumer had an impact on self-perceived effects of pornography use. Interestingly, those participants aged between 30 and 39 reported the highest level of perceived positive effects of pornographic consumption. Conversely, participants who ranged between 40 and 50 years old reported the lowest levels of positive effects. Generational differences pertaining to pornography consumption are rarely assessed in the literature, and these secondary results demonstrate that in the context of the current study on an Irish demographic, pornography can have different self-perceived effects on consumers of varying ages. Thus further study is warranted.
Furthermore, those who viewed normophilic and/or paraphilic pornography over those who exclusively watched normophilic pornography reported higher levels of self-perceived negative effects of consumption, including effect on sex life and effect on attitude towards sex. Results such as these do highlight the harmful effects that sexually explicit media can have on various areas of the individual’s life. It also shows that despite the overall sample reporting higher positive than negative effects, they are still acutely aware of the impact that consumption of pornography can have on their personal life.

4.3 Limitations and Weaknesses of the Current Study

One key area of the current study that would benefit from development is the gathering of any additional information that pertains to the demographic, such as relationship status, religion, education level, and sexual history, as a way in which to control for other variables that may impact on levels of sexism. Other probing questions relating to the IVs would also be beneficial in order to provide more robust data. For example, the question of the age of first exposure to pornography was limiting and could benefit from the addition of an exploratory question regarding the nature of that exposure and how the exposure made the participant feel.

Furthermore, the age range of the current study are limiting. Participants under the age of 18 and over the age of 50 are not represented in this demographic sample. Thus the data gathered is not wholly representative of the Irish male population in its entirety.

The implementation of the PCES (Hald & Malamuth, 2008) provides the current study with information regarding the perceived effects of pornography. However an additional qualitative question at the end of the survey would have provided the study with a more individualised insight into perceptions of pornography use in an Irish sample. An
example of a potential qualitative question includes: “Are there any other positive or negative effects regarding pornography that you feel has not been addressed in this survey? Please expand”.

A further limitation to this present study is the sample size. In total, 153 respondents were analysed, yet a larger sample would have been preferable. The biggest disparity between this study and previous literature is the sample size. Previous studies have reported the use of much larger samples, with the average size of 1,498 and a standard deviation of 1,930 from pornography studies between 1995 and 2015 (Peter & Valkenburg, 2016). A larger population sample would provide more data and a greater insight into the effects of pornography.

While this study provides an interesting insight into pornographic consumption and sexism in an Irish sample, the design has its limitations. Whilst results have demonstrated that there is a difference in hostile sexism levels of individuals who view pornography more frequently than those who do not, and higher levels in those who view non-normophilic pornography or both, it does not provide an insight into the nature of this relationship.

There are other issues associated with the interpretation of the results. For example, a man who watches pornographic videos that typically normalises unequal gender relations (paraphilic pornography) could be influenced by the content, which could alter his sexual and social scripts, as mentioned in the introduction of this study. Thus he is more likely to have higher levels of hostile sexism than those who watch more traditional pornography. However, another explanation for this result could be that the viewer themselves are sexist and as such are more likely to watch material that fits in to their own worldview. In this second interpretation, it is not the porn that generated sexism, but rather other confounding variables not identified.
4.4 Strengths of the Current Study

Despite its shortcomings, the strengths of the present study are significant. The key strength is that the research aimed to examine a loaded and controversial topic within an Irish context. The study contributes to an important field of psychological research and provides a baseline of knowledge and data that allows for future national research to expand upon.

Bias is a major issue for a study of this type. Previous research can and has been heavily influenced by cultural bias, as well as participants being influenced by social desirability. The current study attempted to control for this through the implementation of an anonymous online survey to reduce contact with the researcher.

Moreover, the survey included new and up-to-date psychological measures that were relevant to the study of pornographic consumption and sexism. Despite the survey being short, it still collected complete and useful data, and its ease of completion meant that there was minimum drop-off of participants: of the 180 responses, only 27 were excluded due to failure to meet the inclusion criteria, rather than incomplete answers. Furthermore, due to the stigmatised nature of pornography in a social setting, the way in which the questions were asked to the participants meant that answers could not be attributed to any one participant, which was emphasised to the sample prior to commencement of the survey. Even questions relating to the age of the participant were further anonymised by the use of age categories rather than a definitive age number.

As mentioned in the Introduction, some previous research has not provided a balanced view regarding the effects of pornography, and as such, is influenced by researcher bias. Despite the negative effects of pornography use that is extensively reported in the literature, the current study also presents an insight into its positive effects on the individual, which highlights the complexity and persistence of pornography in society.
4.5 Implications/Applications

The results generated from the data have real-world implications. The Irish population sample has demonstrated levels of hostile sexism towards the female gender, which is dependent upon different pornographic variables. However, in spite of this, they have reported higher positive effects of pornography use which aids in the justification of their pornography consumption. Providing younger generations with other channels of sexual education could reduce frequency of pornographic consumption, as one of the most positive self-perceived effects was pornography’s facilitation of sexual knowledge to the consumer.

This current study highlights the complexity of pornography as a social construct: despite having negative effects, its positive effects are more strongly perceived by the consumers. Consequently, it is naive to assume that production and consumption will decrease. However, this current study and past research has demonstrated that pornography influences the sexual and social scripts of the consumer. As such, the production, distribution, and consumption of pornography that depicts gender equality between consenting sexual partners has the potential to influence the gender perceptions of the individual viewing the content, reducing the negative effect of sexism, yet maintaining the positive effects perceived by the consumer.

4.6 Future Research Recommendations

Now that the basics of pornography consumption have been addressed in this current study, future research would benefit from replicating this study with a more heterogeneous sample, including both men and women of varying sexual identities and ages, to account for individual differences in levels of sexism towards both genders as portrayed in pornography.
Moreover, a content analysis of pornographic material available to the Irish population would also prove to be fruitful, providing researchers with a background framework for the understanding of pornography in Ireland. Ideally, the same future research could compare an Irish and an international sample, to highlight differences and similarities in levels of sexism, which could also illustrate the importance of culture in impacting social values and perceptions.

Although previous literature has focused on the effects of the consumption of pornography on adults, future research would benefit highly from examining this in relation to a younger population sample. Sexism has damaging effects on society, and investigating its potential causes with a sample of adolescents or younger could provide a more complete insight into the effects of pornography, rather than using a sample of adults who have already been exposed to pornography for a large portion of their lives. Longitudinal studies and experiments as research designs would provide researchers with a baseline level of sexism prior to exposure to pornography, thus generating a deeper understanding into the effects of pornography use on the wider population.

While this could raise ethical concerns regarding the use of younger samples particularly concerning research into sexuality and pornography, as this study has demonstrated a good proportion of the population were first exposed to pornographic content under the age of 12. Rather than studying its effects retrospectively, a younger population sample could provide future research with a greater understanding into the nature of the relationship between pornography and sexism.
4.7 Conclusion

Differences in expected results and gathered results highlights the importance of being aware of the difficulties of applying internationally researched data to another cultural and social sample of individuals. Thus while some of the results contradict the research previously mentioned, the current study has shown that there is an association between sexism and pornography in an Irish male sample.

The present study demonstrates that pornography on its own does not generate sexism. Instead, various confounding variables impact on this association: whilst age of exposure to pornography does not facilitate the generation of sexism, the frequency of consumption, and the type of pornography consumed does facilitate sexism to an extent. Furthermore, despite its negatively perceived status by society, individuals who engage in its consumption perceive more positive effects beyond the simple elicitation of sexual release. Thus this study demonstrates the multifaceted underpinnings of pornography, its consumption, and its effects on an Irish sample.
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doi:10.1080/00224499.2016.1143441


doi:10.1080/00926239908403983

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Appendix 1 – Information Sheet and Informed Consent

My name is Hannadi Al Hassan and I am conducting research in the Department of Psychology of Dublin Business School that explores attitudes to pornography and women, and trends in the viewing of pornographic material in heterosexual Irish men. This research is being conducted as part of my studies and will be submitted for examination. For the purpose of this study, pornography has been defined as any form of sexually explicit media that is primarily intended to sexually arouse the viewer (Malamuth & Huppin, 2005), and in order to partake in this research you must be a heterosexual Irish man aged between 18 and 50.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves completing the attached anonymous survey. While the survey asks some questions that might cause some minor negative feelings, it has been used widely in research. If any of the questions raise any issues for you, contact information for support services are included on the final page.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. You can withdraw from participation up until the point in which the questionnaire is submitted.

Participation is ANONYMOUS, thus responses cannot be attributed to any one participant.

The questionnaires will be securely stored on a password-protected computer.
The questionnaire is comprised of four sections, and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

It is important that you understand that by submitting the questionnaire you are consenting to participate in the study.

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact

Hannadi Al Hassan, xxxxxxxx@mydbs.ie

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Clicking on the “agree” button indicates that you have read the above information and that you voluntarily agree to participate:

Agree  Disagree
Appendix 2 – Survey including measures

Section 1: Basic Information

Demographic questions: Please answer each question

1. Do you identify as male
   Yes
   No

2. What age are you?
   18-20
   21-29
   30-39
   40-50

3. Do you identify as exclusively heterosexual?
   Yes
   No

Section 3: Pornography Use

Please answer each question truthfully.

4. Do you engage in viewing pornographic material?
Yes
No

5. If yes, what age were you when you first viewed pornographic material?
Under the age of 8
8-12
13-18
Over the age of 18

6. How frequently do you watch pornographic material per week?
Less than once a week
1-2 times a week
3-5 times a week
Everyday
More than once a day

7. What type of pornographic material do you typically view more than the other?
Normophilic (depictions of 'traditional' sexual behaviour between physically mature, consenting partners)
Paraphilic (depictions of sexual behaviour that deviate from traditional/atypical behaviour including, but not limited to, fetishism, masochism, rape fantasy)
Both

Section 3:
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale:

1 = Disagree strongly
2 = Disagree somewhat
3 = Disagree slightly
4 = Agree slightly
5 = Agree somewhat
6 = Agree strongly

Please answer truthfully, as it is completely your own opinion:

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. Many women are actually seeking special favours, such as hiring policies that favour them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
3. In a disaster, women ought to be rescued before men.
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
5. Women are too easily offended.
6. People are not often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
7. Feminists are seeking for women to have more power than men.
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.

12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.

13. Men are not complete without women.

14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.

15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.

16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.

17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.

18. Many women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.

19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.

20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.

21. Feminists are making entirely unreasonable demands of men.

22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

Section 4: What do YOU think of pornography?

Below is a series of questions relating to the self-perceived effects of pornography use. Please indicate your answer to each question using the following scale:

1 = Not at all

2 = To a very small extent

3 = To a small extent
4 = To a moderate extent
5 = To a large extent
6 = To a very large extent
7 = To an extremely large extent

Please answer truthfully as it is completely your own opinion.

If you do not engage in viewing pornographic material, click Finish Survey.

1. Taught you new sexual techniques?
2. Made you less tolerant towards sex?
3. Influenced positively your outlook on sex?
4. Adversely affected your views of the opposite gender?
5. Overall, has had a harmful effect on your life?
6. Overall, has been a negative supplement to your sex life?
7. Led you to view the opposite gender more stereotypically?
8. Added to your knowledge of vaginal sexual intercourse?
9. Taught you something new about your sexual desires?
10. Made you less satisfied with your life?
11. Overall, has made a valuable contribution to your life?
12. Overall, has improved your sex life?
13. Has reduced your sexual activities?
14. Added to your knowledge of anal sex?
15. Has positively affected your view of the opposite gender?
16. Added to your knowledge of sexual foreplay?
17. Added to your knowledge of sexual foreplay?
18. Made your life more problematic?
19. Made you more tolerant in relation to sex?
20. Has made you less sexually liberal?
21. Has made you more respectful towards the opposite gender?
22. Has made you experiment more in your sex life?
23. Overall, has made your sex life worse?
24. Added to your knowledge of masturbation?
25. Has made you more content with your life?
26. Has reduced your quality of life?
27. Has had a negative influence on your attitudes toward sex?
28. Has increased your sexual activity?
29. Overall, has been a positive supplement to your sex life?
30. Has improved your knowledge of sex?
31. Has improved your quality of life?
32. Has had a positive influence on your attitudes toward sex?
33. Adversely affected your outlook on sex?
34. Added something positive to your sex life?
35. Made you experiment less in your sex life?
36. Made you less respectful towards the opposite gender?
37. Made you friendlier towards the opposite gender?
38. Has adversely influenced your opinions of sex?
39. Has led you to view the opposite gender less stereotypically?
40. Improved your knowledge of oral sex?
41. Led to problems in your sex life?
42. Has given you more insight into your sexual fantasies?
43. Has made your life less problematic?

44. Has positively influenced your opinions of sex?

45. Has added something negative to your sex life?

46. Made you more sexually liberal?

47. Generally, has given you performance anxiety when you are sexually active on your own (e.g., during masturbation)?

48. Generally, has given you performance anxiety when you are sexually active with others (e.g., during intercourse, oral sex, etc.)?
Appendix 3 – Closing Sheet and Contact Information

Thank you for taking part in this study and contributing to an important psychological field of research that aims to examine the self-perceived effects of pornography use and the relationship between pornography use and sexism.

Should you have any further queries or would like to know the results when they are available, you can contact me, Hannadi Al Hassan, via email: 10351507@mydbs.ie

If any distress has been caused as a result of the questions, please contact these support lines:

The Rutland Centre for Sex and Pornography Addiction: (01) 494 6358; www.rutlandcentre.ie

The Samaritans (Dublin Branch): 116 123; www.samaritans.org