

# Deviant Pornography Use: The Role of Early-Onset Adult Pornography Use and Individual Differences

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## ABSTRACT

Personality differences exist between consumers and non-consumers of Internet pornography, but limited attention has been given to the differences in nondeviant (adult-only) consumers and deviant (adult + deviant) pornography users. A recent study found individuals who consumed both adult + deviant pornography reported a significantly younger “age of onset” for adult pornography use compared to adult-only users. The current study investigated whether age of onset for adult pornography use and individual differences discriminated between adult-only and adult + deviant pornography use. 272 respondents completed an anonymous Internet-based survey; 46 respondents were non-pornography users, 165 respondents were adult-only pornography users, and 61 respondents were adult + deviant pornography users. Results indicated that adult + deviant pornography users scored significantly higher on openness to experience and reported a significantly younger age of onset for adult pornography use compared to adult-only pornography users.

## KEYWORDS

Adult Pornography, Age of Onset, Child Pornography, Individual Differences, Personality

## INTRODUCTION

The globalization of technology, specifically the Internet, has raised debates on the effects of exposure to pornography. In particular, the relationship between pornography and sexual aggression, marital satisfaction, and risky sexual behaviors has been debated in the literature for decades (see Beech, Elliott, Birgen, & Findlater, 2008; Malamuth, Addison, & Kross, 2000; Seto, Maric, Barbaree, 2001). In addition, previous research discusses the impact of exposure to Internet pornography on children and adolescents (see Flood, 2009; Flood & Hamilton, 2003; Owens, Behun, Manning, Reid, 2012). However, Internet pornography includes a wide range of sexually explicit materials, both deviant<sup>1</sup> and nondeviant. Deviant and nondeviant pornography are readily available on the Internet, yet few empirical studies analyze the relationship between nondeviant (e.g., adult pornography) and deviant (bestiality, child) pornography use.

Interviews with child pornography users suggest some offenders experience a level of desensitization to mainstream pornography which results in a need to collect more extreme pornographic materials (see Quayle & Taylor, 2002; Quayle & Taylor, 2003). In addition, child pornography users may collect sexual images of children, not because of an underlying paraphilia or sexual interest in children, but because the images are easily accessible via the Internet (Basbaum, 2010). Finally, Endrass et al. (2009) studied the pornography collections of 231 men charged with

child pornography possession; the results indicated the collections included a wide range of sexually explicit materials, including other deviant forms of pornography, such as bestiality. Overall, there may be a relationship between desensitization to nondeviant pornography and the need to compulsively collect deviant pornography for some child pornography consumers. The question, then, becomes what factors put someone at risk for transitioning from a nondeviant pornography user to a deviant pornography user (see Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2013)?

Empirical research is slowly uncovering the factors related to people's decisions to consume various genres of Internet pornography. The majority of the research has focused on a small number of personality traits while employing an overall measure of general pornography use or self-reported exposure. Some research suggests individuals exhibiting psychopathic (Barnes, Malamuth, & Check, 1984; Paul, 2009; Williams, Cooper, Howell, Yuille, & Paulhus, 2009), antisocial (Fisher & Barak, 2001; Shim, Lee, & Paul, 2007), or sensation-seeking dispositions (Hald, Kuyper, Adam, & de Wit, 2013; Weisskirch & Murphy, 2004) may be more likely to consume pornographic materials. Personality characteristics are also predictive of Internet child pornography consumption. Bogaert (2001) found that men who prefer sexualized images of children are more likely to possess aggressive and dominant personality traits, and Seigfried, Lovely, and Rogers (2008) found Internet child pornography users were more manipulative, dishonest, and less likely to make decisions based on personal moral values compared to non-users of child pornography.

Personality differences exist between consumers and non-consumers of Internet pornography, but limited attention has been given to the differences in nondeviant ("adult-only") consumers and deviant ("adult + deviant") pornography users – that is to say, a consumer of both nondeviant (adult-only) and deviant (either animal and/or child) pornography. A recent study by Seigfried-Spellar and Rogers (2013) found individuals who consumed both "adult + deviant" pornography reported a significantly younger "age of onset" for adult pornography use compared to adult-only users. In other words, adult and animal/child pornography users reported intentionally searching for and accessing adult pornography at a younger age than individuals who only consumed adult pornography (adult-only). In addition, no one reported the *sole* consumption of child pornography (Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2013); these findings suggested that deviant pornography use follows a Guttman-like progression (see Hollinger, 1988).

Previous research (Williams, Howell, Cooper, Yuille, & Paulhus, 2004; 2009; Seigfried, 2007; Seigfried-Spellar, Lovely, & Rogers, 2011) suggests Bandura's (1977) theory of reciprocal determinism may explain why some people intentionally consume pornography when others do not. According to Bandura (1977), the theory of reciprocal determinism states behavioral (B), psychological and cognitive (P), and environmental (E) factors all interact and exert bidirectional influences on human nature. The strength and influence of each factor varies and depends on different situations and settings. In addition, people are not only influenced by their environment but are active participants in their surroundings, as well (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1994).

According to Bandura (1986), "when situational constraints are weak, personal factors serve as the predominant influence in the regulatory system" (p. 35). There is a disconnect between the social and environmental constraints of Internet pornography (see Seigfried-Spellar et al., 2011). Deviant and nondeviant sexually explicit materials have always existed; however, the regulations of such materials are inconsistent (Akdeniz, 2008). For example, the possession of Internet child pornography is legal in some countries (e.g., Russia) and illegal in others (e.g., United States; see International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, 2010). Although the production, distribution, and possession of child pornography are illegal in the United States, the Internet has created an environment with "weak constraints" because child pornography is accessible, affordable, and anonymous (Cooper,

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