

# Does online pornography influence the sexuality of adolescents during COVID-19?

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Recently, there was an outbreak of a new disease called Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) in Wuhan, China, which spread rapidly to other regions in China and around the world. This pandemic is impacting the entire population, including adolescents, in physical, intellectual, emotional, and sexual activities.<sup>1</sup>

We are aware that during the pandemic, when emotions are intense, and adolescents are more socially isolated than ever, online pornography can increase.

Online pornography is a relatively recent phenomenon and, therefore, studies on this subject are limited. It is known that the effects of the pornography in society imply deep problems concerning emotional aspects and relationships of this generation.<sup>2</sup> The sexual content currently available ranges from partial nudity to violent sexual activities or images of abuse.<sup>3</sup>

Online pornography differs from past pornography because online content is active and portable, allowing quick and easy access from a variety of electronic devices. Participation in it is private and anonymous, which allows adolescents to seek materials that would

not be available in traditional media such as television. In addition, it is difficult for parents to monitor online media, such as smartphones.<sup>4</sup>

With the pandemic and schools closed for weeks or more, adolescents are no longer under the watchful eyes of their teachers, community, and family due to a forced change of priorities. In this scenario, exposure to the sexual content freely available on the internet and in videogames contributes to the early development of beliefs and sexual attitudes in adolescents.<sup>4</sup>

A study has shown that the consumption of pornography by adolescents exerts a negative influence on sexuality.<sup>5</sup> Although most adolescents during this cognitive and volitive stage may not suffer consequences, in some cases there may be a reduction in desire, an increase in masturbation practices and a reduced interest in sex, due to the distance between what is possible and what is fantasized.<sup>5</sup>

Access containment measures for such practices should be studied since we still require moderators of effect and assessments on the extent to which the use

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of the content available on these medium affects the beliefs and sexual behaviors of adolescents.<sup>4</sup>

The extent to which access to digital pornography changes attitudes and sexual practices is still unknown. It is possible that online pornography normalizes eccentric practices. The industry is harming contemporary culture, and online pornography is likely to be replacing the conventional ways of learning about sex and relationships since adolescents are presented with distorted and unhealthy versions of masculinity and sexual identity.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, while we face these challenges, parents and caregivers can help reduce the use of pornography in several ways, such as encouraging live video chats among friends, relatives, and teachers, collaborating with adolescents during the pandemic.

Thus, researchers point out the need to educate adolescents about the safe and responsible use of the Internet and its contents on smartphones, showing them that pornography is a potential health problem in terms of dependence, paraphilia, and sexual disorders.<sup>5</sup>

## Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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