

Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Approaching Pornography from Equality and Social Justice

Educación Integral en Sexualidad: Abordar la Pornografía desde la Igualdad y la Justicia Social

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ABSTRACT:

Pornography has occupied the center of social debate in Spain, especially in relation to youth learning about sexuality. This article has the objective to identify the possible consumption of pornography in the researched university community in Southern Spain, as well as their opinions on the consumption of pornography in current digital society, and their educational proposals to address the consumption of pornography from the perspective of equality and social justice. To cover this objective, the data analyzed come from a mixed methodology consisting of 4 discussion groups and a survey with all the members of the university community. The results show a tendency to consume pornography at younger ages, with gendered consequences for younger generations. Men consume more pornography. The script continues to be designed under the “hegemonic masculinity” that underlies gender violence in mainstream pornography. A quarter of participants point to pornography as the main source for learning about sexuality and those in couples use pornography to learn about their own bodies. Based on these results, the article concludes with the participants’ demand to incorporate comprehensive sexuality education from elementary school to university, since it promotes equality, social justice and sexual and intimate citizenship which, in turn, strengthens democracy.

DESCRIPTORES:

Pornografía
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Género
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RESUMEN:

La pornografía ha ocupado el centro del debate social en España, especialmente en relación con el aprendizaje de la sexualidad por parte de jóvenes. Este artículo tiene como objetivo identificar los posibles consumos de pornografía en la comunidad universitaria investigada en el sur de España, así como sus opiniones sobre el consumo de pornografía en la sociedad digital actual, y sus propuestas educativas para abordar el consumo de pornografía desde la perspectiva de la igualdad y la justicia social. Para cubrir este objetivo, los datos analizados proceden de una metodología mixta consistente en 4 grupos de discusión y una encuesta con todos los miembros de la comunidad universitaria. Los resultados muestran una tendencia a consumir pornografía a edades más tempranas, con consecuencias de género para las generaciones más jóvenes. Los hombres consumen más pornografía. El guion se sigue diseñando bajo la “masculinidad hegemónica” que subyace a la violencia de género en la pornografía dominante. Una cuarta parte de participantes señala la pornografía como la principal fuente para aprender sobre sexualidad y quienes están en pareja utilizan la pornografía para aprender sobre su propio cuerpo. A partir de estos resultados, el artículo concluye con la demanda de los sujetos participantes de incorporar la educación sexual integral desde la escuela primaria hasta la universidad, para promover la igualdad, la justicia social y la ciudadanía sexual e íntima que, a su vez, fortalecen la democracia.

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1. Pornography, the Digital Society and Gender Biases

Pornography is at the center of the social debate in Spain. It is the principal source of information about sexuality, mainly amongst young people (Kanuga & Rosenfeld, 2004; Rothman et al., 2015), since adolescents don't have access to serious sexuality education (Ballester et al., 2019; Duru-Bellat, 2017). In Spain, comprehensive sexuality education is the main gap in the school curriculum (Ceberio, 2018; Pérez-Bryan, 2018; Valdés, 2019; Venegas, 2022, 2024). Yet, sexuality education based on equality has been proved to be of relevance to promote social justice (Fernández Hawrylak et al., 2022; Morgade, 2017; Venegas, 2017a).

Pornography refers to:

Media used or intended to increase sexual arousal. Such material generally portrays images of nudity and depictions of sexual behaviors. Researchers have labeled this class of media using terms such as sexually explicit materials (Goodson, McCormick, & Evans, 2001), erotica (Zillmann, 1994), and online sexual activity (Cooper et al., 2000). (Carroll et al., 2008, p. 8)

The objective of this article is to identify the possible consumption of pornography in the researched university community, as well as their opinions on the consumption of pornography in current digital society, and their educational proposals to address the consumption of pornography from the perspective of equality and social justice. Unlike most studies on pornography located in the university (that investigate students only), this study focuses on the university community as a whole: undergraduate students, postgraduate students, administrative and services staff (PAS, Spanish acronymous), as well as teaching and research staff (PDI, Spanish acronymous).

Based on the results, the article concludes with the community demand to incorporate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) from elementary school to university, since CSE promotes equality, social justice, and sexual and intimate citizenship (Plummer, 2001; Richardson, 2017; Weeks, 1998) to reinforce democracy in society (Venegas, 2017a).

1.1. Pornography in the Digital Society

The internet facilitates access to sexually explicit material (Baker, 2016). The “triple-A engine” -Accessibility, Affordability, and Anonymity- fuels the consumption of pornography (Cooper et al., 2000, in Carroll et al., 2008). The internet lets adolescents search for sexuality issues without feeling embarrassed (Kanuga & Rosenfeld, 2004). Adolescents search for information about the body and how to have sex (Daneback et al., 2012). Yet, this entails an involuntary exposure to pornography (Kanuga & Rosenfeld, 2004). Research show that a high number of adolescents consume pornography regularly (Ballester et al., 2019; Carroll et al., 2008; Daneback et al., 2012; Kanuga & Rosenfeld, 2004; Romito & Beltramini, 2015; Rothman et al., 2015; Sanjuán, 2020; Weber et al., 2012).

Sexual information is searched online more by LGB youth and youth with more sexual knowledge, professional sexual content reaches more women than men, youth who seek it have more experience and sexual problems, and sex is talked about more with friends than with parents (Nikkelen et al., 2020). The peer group appears to be of special relevance (Weber et al., 2012). It is the main source of access (51.2%), followed by movies or television, then advertisements; girls find pornography on accident almost 7% more than boys; an active search is the most frequently mentioned by boys,

but not before 11 years of age; in the previous 30 days, the number of boys who had consumed porn doubled the number of girls (81.6% and 40.4% respectively) (Sanjuán, 2020).

Five factors have been identified since 2008 that explain easier, generalized adolescents' access to pornography (Ballester et al., 2019):

1. the extension of cellphone technologies;
2. it generalizes adolescents' access to 'new online pornography';
3. changes in prostitution, from the streets to digital images of pornographic content;
4. changes in pornography itself, from paper to virtuality;
5. changes in adolescents' relationships.

Virtuality is now intrinsic to adolescents' lives. It has many advantages. Yet, it reproduces the same problems as pre-digital society, like gender inequality or gender-based violence (Sanjuán, 2020).

Accessibility explains the decrease of the initial age of pornography consumption in recent years in Spain. Some studies found the age of 8 years old, and more than 90% of youth from 9 to 24 years old has been involved with this content somehow (Ballester et al., 2019). Save the Children found that, in Spain, 62.5% of adolescents between 13 and 17 years old have watched pornography at some point in their life and 8.7% had accessed porno before being 10 years old, being 12 years old the average age (Sanjuán, 2020, p.21).

Doornwaard et al. (2017) found that the use of the internet to search for sex-related topics seems to become generalized, even though adolescents recognized negative consequences and risks derived from online sexuality, especially pornography, since it creates unrealistic expectations about sex (see also Biota et al., 2022) and sexual attraction. Yet, some studies show that adolescents miss the maturity to understand that porn is unreal (Peter & Valkenburg, 2010), while some others find right the contrary (Baker, 2016; Flood, 2009; Goldstein, 2020; Healy-Cullen et al., 2022; Litsou et al., 2021; Rothman et al., 2015; Saucier, 2018; Unis & Sällström, 2020).

1.2. Pornography in the Digital Society from a Gender Perspective

Together with digitalization, gender biases is a defining aspect of pornography in most of the studies available. In their research, Weber et al. (2012) observed that the only sociodemographic variable that shows any association with the respondents' habits of consumption of pornography is gender.

Rothman et al. (2015) identified the promotion of hypermasculinity, male domination and the prioritization of male sexual pleasure as the norm. Romito and Beltramin (2015) found that half of the students that participated in their research had watched materials containing violent or degrading acts towards women. Students interpreted that female actresses often seemed to enjoy subordination and violence, which is the main script of pornography. They remind that 'watching violent or demeaning pornographic material is associated with greater objectification of women, more tolerant attitudes toward sexual violence, and more aggressive behavior' (p. 284). According to Flood (2009, in Stanley et al., 2018), pornography is damaging for young people because the content is sexist and hostile towards women.

Women objectification is pointed by some research. Dawson et al. (2022) emphasize that unequal sexual roles are typical in pornography, men are represented in positions of dominance more frequently than women, being women much more objectified. Fritz and Paul (2017) found that female objectification is more common in mainstream pornography than in feminist pornography or pornography considered 'for women'.

Some studies connect pornography and prostitution. Ballester et al. (2019) point out that the development of mobile technology and its popularization made it possible to move from face-to-face prostitution, in the street or in clubs, facilitated by advertisements in the press, to contacts established on the internet, making it less visible and more diffuse, and including contacts based on pornographic images. A Swedish study with adolescents from 15 to 18 years old who had watched porn found that they were more likely to affirm that prostitution, pornography and sex without love are 'good' (Johansson & Hammarén, 2007, in Flood, 2009). Häggström-Nordin et al. (2006) found connections between pornography and prostitution in their research about adolescents in youth centers, with examples like white pedophilic men who travel to Asia.

The high presence of violence in pornography is seen as a consequence of the 'erotization of violence against women' (Alario, 2018, in Biota et al., 2022). There is a 'pornification of culture', in which sex industries such as porn play a key role (Biota et al., 2022). For critical feminism, this is a 'rape culture' (Mendes et al., 2018) as porn eroticizes gender-based violence.

In the study by Save the Children in Spain, adolescent gays had a higher incidence of watching pornography than adolescent lesbians though they watched it in a similar way as heterosexual adolescent boys. Lesbian girls accessed porn more than heterosexual girls (Sanjuán, 2020).

1.3. Comprehensive sexuality education vs. pornography to promote equality and social justice

Comprehensive sexuality education combats the sexual taboos that persist in our society (Ballester et al., 2019; Sanjuán, 2020). There is consensus on this need (Herat et al., 2018; Morgade, 2017; UNESCO, 2021; UNESCO & Guttmacher Institute, 2019; United Nations Population Fund, 2021), even in adulthood (Daneback et al., 2012).

Now, as Weber et al. (2012) conclude, "For most adolescents, pornography is the only accessible source of depictions of sexual behavior. Pornography might thus be used by adolescents not only for sexual arousal, but also to discover sexual behavior and explore their own sexual preferences" (pp. 410-411). So porn substitutes comprehensive sexuality education in learning about the body and sexuality (Daneback et al., 2012).

Rothman et al. (2015) found that youth in their research watched pornography for several reasons, but almost every participant did it to learn how to have sex. Moreover, pornography, including extreme forms, is found to be an ordinary facet of youth daily life. They conclude that the ubiquity of pornography on the internet together with the proliferation of websites where to post amateur videos, may stimulate adolescents to create sexually explicit material, exploit sexual partners, disseminate sexually explicit images of minors, and pressure their dating partners to engage in sexual acts that could be harmful.

Thus, there is a demand in the specialized literature to reinforce the sexuality education policy by introducing pornography among its topics (Crabbe & Flood, 2021). Baker

(2016) examines the effects of pornography on young people from their view and that of teaching professionals. She finds that young people perceive the negative effects of viewing pornography, especially at young ages. The participants in her research claim for schools to teach about the risks associated with online pornography viewing, this is to introduce pornography into the sexuality education policies. 'These include safer sex practices, body image and self-esteem, behavior and attitudes towards the opposite sex, respect and empowering young people to make informed decisions about engaging in sexual activities' (p. 226). Crabbe and Flood (2021) depict a frame for school-based pornography education based on a comprehensive view of the school, sexuality education as the curricular foundation for pornography education, and a participatory teaching-learning methodology.

The body of knowledge on the consumption of pornography in the digital society has been widely developed from a critical gender approach, but what does the Spanish university community studied think about the current consumption of pornography, especially in adolescence? This question originates the objective of research that gives rise to this article, whose methodology is detailed below.

2. Methodology

As previously said, the objective of this article is to identify the possible consumption of pornography in the studied university community, as well as their opinions on the consumption of pornography in current digital society, and their educational proposals to address the consumption of pornography from the perspective of equality and social justice.

To cover this objective of research, this article uses data from a broader study on love and sexuality in the university¹ based on a mixed methodology consisting of two techniques: one quantitative, the survey, and one qualitative, the discussion group. Mixed methodology has the advantage to achieve a greater degree of methodological complementarity at the quantitative and qualitative level (Hernández et al., 2014). The data analyzed in this article come from the discussion group technique, since the article seeks to delve into the collective imaginary of the three groups of the community university, name: undergraduate and postgraduate students, administrative and services staff (PAS), and teaching and research staff (PDI). However, some descriptive data from the survey are also analyzed to delimit the phenomenon in the researched University in the south of Spain. Data collection took place between April and December 2021.

2.1. The Survey

The survey (quantitative) was implemented in the first stage. Data analyzed below correspond to the section dedicated to pornography, with a total of 11 questions. All the questionnaires were implemented through the internet (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) with the use of Lime Survey software. The university had 61,700 members in total in 2021. The sample size is of 503 members, surveyed through a simple, random sampling. The external validity of the questionnaire was verified

¹ The project is 'Love and Sexuality in the University. A sociological study through a Gender Perspective, considering the impact of COVID-19'. Financing entity: Vice Rectorate of Equality, Inclusion and Sustainability, corresponding to the Research & Transference Plan at the University of Granada, 2020. Duration: Nov. 13th, 2020 - February 13th, 2022. Main Researcher: Mar Venegas.

regarding the validation from different browsers, as well as different screens and devices (Díaz de Rada et al., 2019). The internal validity of the questionnaire has been assured through the verification of the final database (in SPSS) of the filters, leaps, alerts, and controls that have been established in the questionnaire itself. To verify the control and quality of the methodological tool, a pretest was conducted to a total of 293 members of the university community at the UGR, which had an exploratory purpose. Anonymity was guaranteed to all participants in the survey, as it was announced at the beginning of the survey. Table 1 show the technical information of the survey.

Table 1

Technical data sheet of the surveys to the university community

Survey to Students, PDI & PAS	
University population	61.700
Sample type	Purposive or convenience sampling
Error margin	4,5%
Confidence Level	95%
Universe variance	P=Q=0,50
Sample size	503* (in the simple random sampling assumption)
Survey type	Online (Lime Survey) based on the members' email lists

Note. Elaborated by the research team.

2.2. The Discussion Groups

The qualitative stage of the research gives voice to the participants. It represents a much more profound vision of their beliefs on pornography. The discussion group seeks to reproduce, at a micro social scale, the discourse that is produced at a macro level, under relatively controlled conditions with the smallest amount of conditioning (Duro, 2009). 5 discussion groups were carried out in the Qualitative Analysis Laboratory of a Faculty (see table 2). All the sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. The data was codified with the qualitative analysis software Nudist NVivo Release. In the open codification process, various categories and subcategories were identified through a pragmatic discourse analysis (Martín-Criado, 2014).

The research team has maintained an ethical commitment to the subjects and the object of study compatible with the three fundamental requirements of research (Mason, 1996): validity (measuring what is intended to be measured); reliability (precision in the methods and techniques used); and generalizability (scope of the conclusions). In the selection of the subjects, to make their voices visible, the construction of the empirical instruments has considered sexual, bodily and gender diversity. Intersectionality has defined the approach of this study. Equality and social justice in the research and its social effects have been two guiding principles of the research.

Members were recruited with the help of the Vice Rectorate of Equality, Inclusion and Sustainability, which sent an email to the university community inviting members to participate. The participants decided to participate in 'motu proprio'. They were representative of the three sectors of the university community. Table 2 show their profiles.

The protocol of questions was designed to cover the research objectives, starting from the results of the survey, to deepen them. Participants were asked about their views on the media and social networks in relation to porn, as well as the role of education. Participants filled in a form to access certain socio-demographic data, as well as

informed consent to participate in the discussion group and to have their voices recorded.

Table 2
Profile of participants in discussion groups

Nickname	Gender expression	Sexual orientation	Age	Area of knowledge	Social class perceived
PNBBCSJ	Non-binary person	Bisexual	30	Social sciences and law	Middle
HCBCSJ	Cisgender man	Bisexual	21	Social sciences and law	Low-Middle
MBCSJ	Woman	Bisexual	17	Social sciences and law	High-Middle
HHECSJ	Man	Heterosexual	29	Social sciences and law	Low-Middle
MHE1CSJ	Woman	Heterosexual	20	Social sciences and law	Middle
MHE2CSJ	Woman	Heterosexual	19	Social sciences and law	Middle
HCHOCC	Cisgender man	Homosexual	19	Experimental Sciences	Low-Middle
MB1CC	Woman	Bisexual	18	Engineering & Arch.	Middle
MB2CC	Woman	No answer	21	Experimental Sciences	Middle
MH1pdi	Woman	Heterosexual	49	Experimental Sciences	High-Middle
HH1pdi	Man	Heterosexual	57	Experimental Sciences	High-Middle
MB1pdi	Woman	Bisexual	23	Health Sciences	Middle
HG2pdi	Cisgender man	Homosexual	46	Health Sciences	Middle
MH2pdi	Woman	Heterosexual	68	Health Sciences	Middle
MH3pdi	Woman	Heterosexual	44	Social sciences and law	Low-Middle
HG1pdi	Man	Homosexual	57	Arts and Humanities	Middle
PNBpdi	Non-binary person	Queer	54	Social sciences and law	Low-Middle
VH1RS	Man	Heterosexual	45	Health Sciences	Low-Middle
VH2SM	Man	No answer	48	No answer	High-Middle
MH1VI	Woman	Heterosexual	44	Social sciences and law	Middle
MH2SH	Woman	No answer	34	Social sciences and law	Middle

Note. Elaborated by the research team.

2.3. The Participants

The participants in this research correspond to the participants in the two techniques used.

The participants in the survey can be described by the sociodemographic data included in the survey. The survey has been filled out by 503 community members at the UGR: 38% undergraduate students; 10.3% postgraduate students; 34.2% PDI; 17.5% PAS. The age varied between 17 (undergraduate students) and 73 years old (emeritus professors). The majority (66.8%) identified as being politically left-wing; 23.7% moderate; 9.5% right-wing.

Almost two thirds (62.4%) responded that they were in a relationship and 95% claimed to have a happy/very happy love life. The most common situation was nuclear families (28%); couples (20.1%); living with partner and child(ren) (18.7%); and living alone (15.7%). Most participants had the civil status of single (44.6%), followed by in a relationship (25.1%) and married (22.9%). The vast majority do not have children (71.2%); 25.2% have 1 or 2 children.

Most of the participants were women (58.8% women and 39.7% men); 1.2% non-binary; 0.4% pangender; 0.2% trans. The most predominant sexual orientation was heterosexual (73.6%), followed by bisexual (14.1%), homosexual (9.5%), pansexual

(1.2%) and asexual (0.4%). 39% of the participants identified as atheist; 32.4% Christian; 21.9% agnostic; 5.6% other beliefs; 1.2% Muslim.

In the discussion groups, the description of the participants was made possible thanks to a short sociodemographic questionnaire that was provided to each member of the groups in order to elaborate the classification sheet used in the NVivo project for the analysis and categorization of the information. This sheet corresponds to Table 1, above, according to which there were 21 participants: 3 participants identified as cisgendered men; 5 as men; 11 as women and 2 as non-binary; 5 participants identified as bisexual (4 students and 1 professor), 9 as heterosexuals, 3 as homosexual, 1 as queer and 3 did not respond. The age of the participants ranged from 17 to 68 years old. There were 4 members of the PAS, 8 members of the PDI (including postgraduate students doing PhD, who belong to this category), and 9 undergraduate students. Regarding the area of knowledge, 1 person reported being from Art and Humanities, 1 from Engineering and Architecture, 4 from Experimental Sciences, 4 from Health Sciences, 10 from Social and Legal Sciences, and 1 person did not answer.

3. Analysis of Results

In this section, results are analyzed to cover the objective of the research.

3.1. The Consumption of Pornography

3.1.1. Consumption, Motivations and Effects

This first section covers the objective to identify the possible consumption of pornography in the researched university community. Participants say to have discovered pornography on the internet mainly (34.1%), followed by friends (26.4%). Data show that younger participants are much more likely to discover pornography through the internet when compared to the older generation. According to the data, heterosexual participants and men discover pornography mainly through friends, while women report mostly the internet.

The research data show a tendency to consume pornography at a younger stage: the average age to start the consumption of pornography is 15.31 years old for undergraduate and postgraduate students; 19.9 for PDI; and 20.3 for PAS. Not a single woman says to watch pornography daily, while more than 10% of men respond affirmatively.

Regarding motivations, 'to enjoy oneself while masturbating' and 'to satisfy curiosity' were the most common answers amongst the positive motives. The least common answer was 'to improve love relationships'. It is remarkable that 11% of the participants recognize to have learned about sex through pornography and 13% have learned about their body. This means that *pornography is the main source of sexuality education for one quarter of participants* of the study (24%). Likewise, 85.7% of the participants who have a couple responded affirmatively to the use of pornography to get to know one's own body better (76.7% of those who do not have a couple). Regarding the motives, the data show that the most relevant were to masturbate (51%), to satisfy curiosity (31%), and to learn about sex (14%).

3.1.2. The Digital Redefinition of Porn

The data show that the internet is the main source to discover pornography. In our study, the discussion group comprised of PAS talked about the social media platform

OnlyFans², where people can upload their personal material, and third parties bid money to access it. This brought a reflection on how social networks redefine the older access to pornography through magazine, television or erotic telephone hotlines. The impact of the quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic also emerged:

VH1RS: That reminds me of those erotic hotlines.

VH2SM: Those hotlines that used to exist. But they've been readapted to social media now. (...)

VH2SM: Has that platform been on the market for long? Maybe it started during the pandemic since people couldn't leave their homes... I mean, before, people could go to the homes of prostitutes or look for prostitution services, but since they couldn't leave the house, because we weren't allowed to... maybe this started to flourish because of that.

The group of Science students condemned open access to pornography because anyone, even at very young ages, can naively discover porn without seeking it out. The result, according to these students, is to normalize the model of sexuality that porn represents. The participants also point to the romanticization of sexuality that pornography produces. These students denounce the mixture that occurs between violent expressions of sexuality and very defined gender roles, where the man is the dominant figure and the woman the submissive one. This fosters, according to these participants, the rape culture (see below), along with other cultural references that contribute to the romanticization of love:

MB2CC: The first time that I accessed something like that was simply in a normal book app, reading a normal story, and then all of a sudden there was... I was thirteen years old. And the first time it was a rape scene. (...)

So many situations are romanticized in pornography that shouldn't be romanticized. Because I was thirteen years old and it's not okay to see a rape scene like that. (...) You find that stuff without even as much as looking for it.

3.2. Opinions on Pornography

This second section covers the objective to know the researched university community opinions on the consumption of pornography in current digital society. These opinions have been mainly about young people.

3.2.1. Heteronormativity

The group of students from Social Science Degrees discussed the nature and orientation of the sexual practices that appear in mainstream pornography. They denounce a predominant heteronormative sexual model that erases sexual diversity:

² OnlyFans is a trending platform since 2021 and it has been converted into the primary source of income for some people. From October 1st, 2021, explicit sex was made illegal on the platform (Onda Cero, 2021). According to the news announcement on Onda Cero (2021), OnlyFans was started in 2016 in London, and it has more than 130 million users and has generated more than 3 billion dollars. It is a platform that hosts exclusive and explicit sexual content, with profiles that one can pay to follow. It is a new phenomenon regarding the exchange of sexual content, and for some people that have participated in this study, is seen definitively as a form of pornography whose border with prostitution is very blurry.

MBCSJ: They assume that absolutely all of us are carbon copies of each other (...) As if all guys liked the same thing, or as if all girls liked the same thing. Because, besides, not all bodies are the same, so...

These students also denounce sexual reductionism and excessive attention to genitalia, especially as it relates to men and their genitalia, desire and sexual potency:

PNBBCSJ: We talk a lot about people with vulvas, but I think that the lack of sexuality education also really affects people with penises. Like the idea that they have to have a very hard erection during the entire encounter...

HHECSJ: And that you have to last a certain amount of time, because if not...

PNBBCSJ: And that they always have to be horny.

HHECSJ: And if not...

PNBBCSJ: You know? As if they always wanted sex and that women and feminized people with vulvas didn't want it as much as them...

These participants also noted that pornography tends to be oriented primarily to a heterosexual, male audience. No visibility is given to other sexual options and, when it does, it tends to target a heterosexual and male audience as well:

HHECSJ: For me on the topic of pornography, to wrap up a bit, I was going to say that its target audience is very, very, very clear. I'm not going to say it's 100%, to not put my foot in my mouth, but 99% of the audiovisual productions made for porn, on the internet or anywhere else, are made for heterosexual men. I mean, there's not even a...well, there's also a big market for homosexual porn, but it's always made for men. Even the lesbian porn is geared towards a heterosexual male audience...

3.2.2. Objectification, Dehumanization

The undergraduate students in the research are very critical of pornography. They consider the images in pornography to be far removed from reality. Pornography, they point out, is created as a product to be consumed. It is aimed at a very specific audience. They conclude that porn should not serve as a sexual reference for anyone, under any circumstance:

HCHOCC: It's just like TV shows, they make everything so commercial. Everything they represent is all really unreal, they're situations so unreal that if you look at them through a critical perspective, you'd say to yourself 'No, no, no. This is something that you're inventing so that it'll reach a very specific audience, because you know that they're going to consume this product.'

Undergraduate students denounce the sexual objectification of bodies, which are represented as inert, emotionless objects:

MBCSJ: They show them as if they were... basically, they objectify everything to such an extreme degree that it's impossible. I mean, people laugh, people cry, people sweat, people... you know what I mean? They don't show all that.

The result is the dehumanization of the people involved in pornography who, deprived of their humanity, appear as bodies that are objects of consumption in a sexuality that is shown as an artifact:

MBCSJ: It tries to dehumanize us, in the sense in that it doesn't show us as people with feelings, with lived experiences, with traumas... And we are, all of us.

3.2.3. Taboos

For the group of Science students and the PDI, everything related to sexuality is taboo. For the students, it is this taboo that prevents open education about sexuality. This educational vacuum, they point out, is pernicious because it allows pornography to take the place of comprehensive sex education, more important the younger people are:

MB2CC: The biggest problem is that it's almost a taboo subject. (...) The people that really need that education — the kids and adolescents — they barely speak of these topics to them. Maybe they get the 'birds and bees' talk once in their life... maybe twice, and that's it. So, the only thing that those people are going to find, and the only thing they're going to learn is the first thing they find. If they're lucky maybe they'll have a good role model, great, and if not, they're going to read any old nonsense and since no one is there for them, they won't even learn the basics (...) they're going to grow up with those as their reference points.

The PDI notes that, even though sex is taboo, it is used as a lure for the media, transforming it into a big industry. This has given rise to the 'pornification' of society:

HH1pdi: It would maybe be more intelligent to sell sex with sex, instead of trying to sell cars with sex, shampoo with sex, like they're trying to do to us.

MB1pdi: Yeah, I have a friend who wrote her thesis on porn. The 'pornification' of society, right? It's like...sex is taboo, but sex is everywhere.

3.2.4. Pornography as Prostitution

PDI understands pornography as a type of prostitution. They analyze the OnlyFans platform. According to them, a person who produces sexual content for erotic purposes is selling his or her body as is done in prostitution:

MB1pdi: It's a webpage, a phone application, in which people can upload photos, videos, erotic material and it's the only page that isn't persecuted. So, people get monthly subscriptions, and they pay for that erotic content. And that's been used a lot by people my age that I know, simply because I know more people my age than others. (Laughs) And that's another form of prostitution. (...)

it's a type of prostitution, selling erotic material, even if there's no physical contact.

3.2.5. Rape Culture

Although rape culture is the category with the most references, only undergraduate students referred to it. According to them, pornography reflects a cultural model based on gender violence, not always physical, but strongly symbolic, which produces, reinforces and legitimizes rape culture:

HCHOCC: Rape culture is another intense debate we could have. But pornography, on one hand, romanticizes, mainly for the woman, the submissive role, to be submitted to the man. And then, rape culture in pornography...well, it's the base of pornography.

According to the students, in this cultural model, rape is normalized as a consensual sexual relationship, even though there is an absolute lack of consent in the images it projects, which young people internalize:

PNBBCSJ: Right. And in pornography...we don't see that there's any consent there, it's implied...I hope there is consent, but you don't see it. Most of the time the sex that's had in porn is very forced.

3.2.6. Porn as Sex Ed

The third section of the article covers the objective to know the researched university community educational proposals to address the consumption of pornography from the perspective of equality and social justice. The data analyzed seem to confirm that pornography is becoming the main agent of sex education for youth.

The Social Sciences students and the PDI groups agree that porn is a cultural reference that educates – socializes – the sexuality of young people, with special emphasis on the body:

HCBCSJ: Actually, it's culture that educates us, since we don't have any other reference points...

For these students, the unrealistic nature of porn poses a serious problem of misinformation about sexuality for young people, since pornography distorts reality:

MB1CC: Sometimes it's also very unreal, so much so that sometimes it even creates misinformation about a sexual topic within young people that really shouldn't have those references.

For the PDI, the presence of pornography in our society is remarkable, to the point of becoming one of the main agents of sexual socialization. This, they say, is due to the lack of cultural references to get informed about sexuality. However, they continue, the model that pornography represents legitimizes gender violence, since men appear in a dominant position and women seem to assume a subordinate position:

HH1pdi: If it catches you too young and you're not able to distinguish between one thing and another, because what porn is selling you is not sex... (...) it's not real sex. (...) the youth grow up thinking that this is the norm. That the norm is, for example, that a guy shows up doing a series of sexual practices with a woman, for example, and using violence or using submission, using...

The analysis of violence, including sexual violence, is also pointed out by the science students. They reaffirmed the need to educate sexuality and couple relationships, to dismantle this ‘internalization of gender violence and the submissive role given to women as something normalized in society when they become sexual subjects, which refers to rape culture:

MB1CC: If it's true about the subjugation of women, (...) at a certain point rape comes with it, and so it's like... Because we've seen it in movies, because we've always seen it portrayed that way. (...) it all comes from the education we have received.

Aware of the policies to promote gender equality in education since the 1970s, the PDI point to the educational challenges that persist in the Spanish society:

MH3pdi: Now we're trying to visualize the problem, we try to talk in different ways about violence, and we teach about that form of violence. How is it possible that amongst the youth it's not working? That would be my question. (...)

But that means that the educational policies that are being implemented... (...)

PNBpdi: Or they don't receive it, or it doesn't reach them.

Hence the defense of equality education that truly contributes to the formation of a healthy, responsible, egalitarian and pleasure-oriented sexuality, as illustrated by the words of one student:

MB1CC: If they had information on the subject, they would see that it's not a good reference to use, and that's it. Just having information on the subject would be super ideal.

Undergraduate students in this research advocate for comprehensive sexuality education policies aimed at young people who are in the process of constructing their (sexual) citizenship. These participants mobilize a strong argument, the family gaps that some adolescents may find at home:

MB1CC: To try to implement that, from elementary school... to give this kind of education. (...) That they can reach those people that, from their own households, like in my case, wouldn't ever become very educated in this field.

The PDI spent the most time discussing the importance of educating young people about love, sexuality and relationships from a gender perspective, defending the need for comprehensive sexuality education policies to reach society:

MH1VI: Love and sexuality education in general, with ourselves, with everyone else. (...) Good days, bad days, anxiety, depression, how you are able to regulate your emotions, your ability to deal with frustration... (...). Sexuality, I think, is part of an emotional education. Love and sexual aspects have to do with everything. (...) But in Spain we still have a long way to go. And besides, it's not just for girls, boys and non-binary kids. It's for us too. We should all have comprehensive sexuality education.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The data above show that pornography is at the center of a social debate about the sexual socialization of youth in the digital society, since pornography has become the main source of information about sexuality, especially for adolescents. This is the result of a historical lack of rigorous, scientific and comprehensive sexuality education policies in Spain (Venegas, 2022). Given the social relevance of this phenomenon, this article has tackled the objective of identifying the possible consumption of pornography in the researched university community, as well as their opinions on the consumption of pornography in the current digital society, and their educational proposals to address the consumption of pornography from the perspective of equality and social justice.

Since the post-World War II period, Western societies have undergone profound social changes brought about by feminism, both at the macro level of social structures and at the micro level of love, sexuality, and relationships (Venegas & Lozano, 2017). More recently, the digitization of society has intensified the pace of social change (Baker, 2016; Ballester et al., 2019). The “new online pornography” (Ballester et al., 2020, p. 15) is easily accessible and is a central agent in the sexual socialization of adolescents (Kanuga & Rosenfeld, 2004; Rothman et al., 2015) and the 18-25 age range (Ballester et al., 2019; Ballester et al., 2020).

This virtual world reproduces the problems of the pre-digital society, such as gender inequality, violence, etc. (Sanjuán, 2020). In line with Foucault's repressive hypothesis (1977), the data analyzed in our research show that despite the historical repression of sexuality, sex is still everywhere; the digitalization of culture has exponentially multiplied sex. This evidence confirms Attwood's (2016) thesis about the pornification of culture (Biota et al., 2022), as our data also show.

Consistent with previous research, our data show that the Internet and friends are the two main sources of pornography discovery for the university community studied. The

age of onset of pornography use is younger among undergraduate and graduate students compared to PDI and PAS. This evidence is consistent with data from previous studies that show a tendency to consume pornography at increasingly younger ages (Ballester et al., 2019, 2020; Sanjuán, 2020).

About one in four people in the study confirmed that pornography was the main source from which they learned about sexuality (see also Ballester et al., 2019; Carroll et al., 2008b; Daneback et al., 2012b; Duru-Bellat, 2017; Kanuga & Rosenfeld, 2004; Romito & Beltramini, 2015; Rothman et al., 2015; Sanjuán, 2020; Weber et al., 2012). In our study, people in a relationship use pornography to learn about their own bodies. For their part, Ballester et al. (2019) found two types of sexual practices that may result from pornography consumption: some forms of interpersonal violence in relationships and access to prostitution in order to be able to engage in sexual practices that would otherwise not be consensual in their sexual relationships. The link between pornography consumption and prostitution is also mentioned by some of the participants in our study, as also found in some previous studies (Alario, 2018, in Biota et al., 20-22; Johansson & Hammarén, 2007, in Flood, 2009; Häggström-Nordin et al., 2006).

Among the reasons for consuming pornography, our data show that the enjoyment of masturbation comes first, followed by curiosity about pornography and learning about one's body (see also Daneback et al., 2012). Similarly, Sanjuán (2020) found that “while boys consume pornography that is designed for them, through which they satisfy ‘instinctive needs’, girls immerse themselves in pornography as a method of ‘learning’ what is expected of them (gestures, positions, etc.)” (p.25), so the adolescents in her study consume pornography to learn about sex, to look for cues, and for pleasure. Again, sexuality learning is at the heart of pornography consumption.

From a gender perspective, the data in our study show that when the sex assigned at birth is crossed with the frequency of pornography use, men are much more likely to use pornography than women, who use pornography sporadically (see also Giménez García et al., 2010, cited in Ballester et al., 2020; Sanjuán, 2020). The data in our study demonstrated that, as Sanjuán (2020) identified, “the mass consumption of pornography is mainly created to satisfy the desires of heterosexual men” (p. 36). Ballester et al. (2019) found that, despite the diversity of men and women in pornography, the way they relate to each other is consistent with the patriarchal model (see also Dawson et al., 2022; Romito & Beltramini, 2015; Rothman et al.) They conclude that only feminist, alternative pornography addresses women's pleasure and equal relationships (see also Fritz & Paul, 2017).

The model of pornography identified in the data analyzed corresponds to the model of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 1987), which underlies rape culture (Mendes et al., 2018). This is one of the manifestations of gender violence in mainstream pornography, mainly symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2005). Rothman et al. (2015) analyzed sexist and rape culture in porn and found two consequences: 1) the promotion of hypermasculinity, male dominance, and the prioritization of male pleasure as the norm; and 2) the recreation of sexual scenes in porn that are physically uncomfortable, harmful, or unrealistic. In their study, Romito & Beltramini (2015) found that half of their students had viewed pornography that was violent or degrading to women; violence appeared to be the primary script of pornography. Pornography appears to be harmful to adolescents because its content is sexist and hostile to women (Flood, 2009, as cited in Stanley et al., 2018). Ballester et al. (2020) show that violent pornography can promote aggressive sexual behavior. Sanjuán (2020) also found that

many adolescents recognized that pornography is sometimes violent. Therefore, it can be concluded that gender-based violence is prevalent in mainstream pornography.

As in previous studies (Rothman et al., 2015; Weber et al., 2012), the pornographic imaginary acts as the main source of information about sexuality. Sanjuán (2020) denounces the lack of comprehensive sexuality education in Spain. For 30% of the adolescents in her study, pornography is the only source of information about sexuality.

Evidence from both our study and previous ones shows the urgency of promoting comprehensive sexuality education policies that address pornography consumption and its gendered consequences for the younger generations (Crabbe & Flood, 2021), whose sexual citizenship is still “becoming” (Venegas, 2017b). This is particularly true in the case of the school curriculum, from primary school to university. It should also be included in initial teacher training in Spain (Fernández Fernández et al., 2023). The data found in our study highlight the taboos that still exist around pornography and sexuality in our society, including adulthood (Daneback et al., 2012; Venegas, 2022). The data analyzed here, as well as previous research, highlight the need for an open, scientific and comprehensive sexuality education policy (Baker, 2016; Crabbe & Flood, 2021; Herat et al., 2018; Morgade, 2017; UNESCO, 2021; UNESCO & Guttmacher Institute, 2019; United Nations Population Fund, 2021; Venegas, 2022) that is capable of addressing issues related to sexuality, overcoming taboos and approaching pornography (Ballester et al., 2019; Sanjuán, 2020).

Comprehensiveness here means a commitment to an educational model that promotes equality and social justice as principles in the construction of love and sexual relationships,

viewing sexuality as an important aspect of identity from the early years and throughout one's life; and as being critical in the development of a healthy life. This approach incorporates the provision of learning experiences based upon accurate, factual, research-based information related to a broad range of issues, such as bodies and sexual development, pregnancy, contraception (including abstinence), relationships, interpersonal skills, ethical and respectful relationships, sexual pleasure and desire, sexual and gender expression, sexual orientation, sexual health (e.g. STI's, HIV), family planning, and values, society and culture. Sexuality education is both formal (e.g. schooling curricula, health professionals) and informal (e.g. parents/caregivers, other family members, the Internet, peers). (Robinson et al., 2017, p. 338)

Yet, comprehensiveness is a challenge in the Spanish digital society. This is our feminist engagement with equality, social justice and democracy, from a commitment to develop sexual and intimate citizenship (Venegas, 2022).

Some limitations can be identified in this study though. First, this is a study located in a university in southern Spain, whose institutional culture is not necessarily representative of public universities, even if they are Spanish. Therefore, the size of the sample, the representativeness of the subjects and self-report bias must be taken into account when considering the scope of the results. There is also a temporal limitation of the results given the speed of digital change in our society. Nevertheless, the study may be meaningful for Spanish universities with similar historical, cultural, and political characteristics, and with a similar size and composition of their educational community. Yet, in research with an exploratory vocation, whose qualitative work is of special significance for understanding the object of study, the identification of issues that are accompanied and illustrated with quantitative data is

understood to be of greater interest than its generalizability, as is the case of this research.

Regarding future lines of research, the study this article comes from has been followed by two R&D+i studies of regional (Andalusian) scope recently completed, and another one, ongoing, an R&D+i project of the National Plan achieved in the last call (2022), and which has awarded a Research Staff Training grant (FPI). From these 3 projects, 2 ongoing doctoral theses derive. They focus on the study of pornography in the framework of “Youth Romance Culture” (Venegas, 2018). The progress of these projects can be consulted on the web <https://sexoafectivate.es>. They analyze the relationship between pornography and sexual and gender-based violence, the construction of body, love and sexuality imaginaries through pornography consumption, and the impact of all this on the construction of school trajectories from an intersectional approach. From the regional projects, a doctoral thesis is being carried out focusing on it, at the Andalusian level, regarding Compulsory Secondary Education and Basic and Intermediate Vocational Training. From the national project, a doctoral thesis is being implemented at the state level, regarding Compulsory Secondary Education. The richness of these projects, and these two thesis derived from them, are seen as a good opportunity to discuss and broaden the knowledge about pornography and its relation with youth in our changeable society, and the role comprehensive sexuality education should undertake in relation to it.

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The author reports there are no competing interests to declare

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