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## Exposure to Pornography Among Young Eritreans: An Exploratory Study

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## **Exposure to Pornography Among Young Eritreans: An Exploratory Study**

By Fikresus (Fikrejesus) Amahazion<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

The pornography industry is a multibillion-dollar global industry, and it has been normalized in many aspects of popular culture. Pornography use and exposure are increasingly becoming common and widespread, particularly with the rapid growth and spread of the Internet, smartphones, and social media. In many countries around the world, pornography is widely available, easily accessible, and consumed by large segments of the general population. While many studies have been conducted on the use and impacts of pornography, exploring the topic within various contexts around the world, empirical studies from developing countries, particularly in Africa, are sparse. The present study is the first to explore the topic of pornography within Eritrea. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, as well as a survey of undergraduate students (N = 317), the present study conducted in 2019 explores exposure to pornography among young Eritreans, identifies related factors, and also investigates the possible impact of viewing pornography on general attitudes toward women. Significantly, the study helps establish a baseline of exposure to and consumption of pornography in the country, helps reveal linked factors and identify possible influences, and ultimately contributes to and supplements existing literature. The study found that exposure to and use of pornography in Eritrea is not uncommon. Results suggest that the majority of young people have been exposed to pornography in their lifetimes, and that a large percentage of young men accessed pornography during the previous year. Notably, young males were significantly more likely than young females to have ever viewed pornography or to have viewed pornography within the past year. As well, results show that nearly all of the respondents know of others, especially peers and classmates, who use pornography. Pornography is used for a variety of reasons, including as a sex education tool and as a source of entertainment. One-way ANOVA results reveal that there is a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward women between respondents that had viewed pornography during the previous year and respondents that had not. Specifically, respondents that had viewed pornography during the previous year held more negative, less egalitarian attitudes toward women.

*Keywords:* Africa, Eritrea, Gender, Internet, Porn, Pornography, Sexual health, Sexuality, Eritrean women.

### **Introduction**

Today, the pornography industry is a multibillion-dollar global industry, and it has been normalized in many aspects of popular culture (McNair 2013; Philaretou, Mahfouz, and Allen

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2005: 150; Sarikakis and Shaukat 2008; Smith 2010). Pornography use and exposure are increasingly becoming common and widespread, particularly with the rapid growth and spread of the Internet, smartphones and social media (Day 2014; Freeman-Longo 2000; Hald and Malamuth 2008; McKee 2010). In many countries around the world pornography is widely available, easily accessible, and consumed by large segments of the general population (Braun-Courville and Rojas 2009; Day 2014; Horvath, Alys, Massey, Pina, Scally, and Adler 2013; Lawrence and Herold 1988; Rosser, Grey, and Wilkerson 2012).

While many studies have been conducted on the use and impacts of pornography, exploring the topic within various contexts around the world, only a small number of studies have investigated the topic in relation to Africa (Cheney, Kamusiime, and Yimer 2017: 81; Day 2014; Peter and Valkenburg 2016). To date, no research has been conducted on the topic in Eritrea. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, as well as a survey of undergraduate students (N = 317), the present study explores exposure to pornography among young Eritreans, identifies related factors and also investigates the possible impact of viewing pornography on general attitudes toward women. Significantly, the study helps establish a baseline of exposure to and consumption of pornography in the country, helps reveal linked factors and identify possible influences and ultimately contributes to and supplements existing literature.

The outline of the paper is as follows: The next section reviews the literature while the one following outlines the methods. Subsequently, the results and discussion are presented. The final section concludes.

## **Literature Review**

Today, the pornography industry is a multibillion-dollar, global industry, and it has been normalized in many aspects of popular culture (McNair 2013; Philaretou et al.: 150; Sarikakis and Shaukat 2008; Smith 2010). Pornography use and exposure is increasingly becoming common and widespread, particularly with the rapid growth and spread of the Internet, smartphones, and social media (Freeman-Longo 2000; Hald and Malamuth 2008; McKee 2010). In many countries around the world, pornography is widely available, easily accessible and consumed by large segments of the general population (Braun-Courville and Rojas 2009; Horvath et al. 2013; Lawrence and Herold 1988; Rosser et al. 2012).

A broad body of literature and empirical research has explored the possible effects of viewing pornography. For example, viewing pornography has been associated with sexist attitudes and perceptions of women as sex objects (MacKinnon 1984, 1989; Peter and Valkenburg 2007; Peter and Valkenburg 2009; Tylka and Van Diest 2015). In a recent experimental study of male undergraduates, Skorska, Hodson and Hoffart (2018) found that exposure to “degrading” pornography generated strongly hostile sexist beliefs and objectification toward women.

As well, pornography exposure, regardless of genre, has been associated with attitudes and beliefs supportive of sexual aggression and violence toward women (Bowen 1987; Flood 2010; Kingston, Malamuth, Fedoroff, and Marshall 2009: 220; Wright and Tokunaga 2016). Garcia (1984) found that the more men were exposed to pornography, the more negative their attitudes were toward women and the more positive their attitudes were towards acts of sexual aggression, while in a longitudinal study of adolescents regarding sexual harassment as a manifestation of sexual aggression, Brown and L’Engle (2009) found that 76% of adolescent male respondents acknowledged having committed some form of sexual harassment and having used pornography. Similarly, Mesch’s (2009) study of Israeli youths found a statistically significant relationship

between pornography consumption and aggressiveness in school, with higher degrees of consumption related to higher levels of aggressiveness.

Greater levels of pornography consumption have also been associated with other significant issues, including: addiction, which may interfere with some areas of functioning (Duffy, Dawson, and Nair 2016; Wetterneck, Burgess, Short, Smith, and Cervantes 2012); mental health disorders, including anxiety (Levin, Lillis, and Hayes 2012; Morrison, Harriman, Morrison, Bearden, and Ellis 2004); lower genital esteem (Morrison, Ellis, Morrison, Bearden, and Harriman 2007); dissatisfaction with body image (Tylka 2015); and depression (Schneider 2000; Svedin, Akerman, and Priebe 2011; Ybarra and Mitchell 2005).

Much work has explored pornography's impact on sexual activity and behavior. Krauss and Russell (2008) found that early exposure to pornography greatly increases the chance of earlier onset of sexual contact. Similarly, Peter and Valkenburg's study (2006) found that the majority of participants had their first sexual encounter within a year of first exposure to Internet pornography and that exposure to pornography is related to more recreational attitudes about sex. In a systematic review of studies involving adult consumers, Harkness, Mullan and Blaszczynski (2015) found links between pornography consumption and unsafe sexual practices and higher numbers of partners. Other studies have documented how exposure to pornography is associated with a range of risky sexual activities or behaviors (Braithwaite, Aaron, Dowdle, Spjut, and Fincham 2015; Braun-Courville and Rojas 2009).

Pornography's effect on relationships and marriage has also been explored. For example, Bridges, Bergner, and Hesson-Mcinnis (2003) found that women experience a negative view of themselves, their partner and their relationship once they learn of their partner's pornography use, while pornography has been linked to lower marital quality, marital dissatisfaction, divorce, negative beliefs about monogamy and other challenges or stresses on the family system (Bergner and Bridges 2002; Rasmussen 2016; Reid, Carpenter, Draper, and Manning 2010; Perry and Schleifer 2018; Schneider 2003; Wright 2011; Wright, Tokunaga, and Bae 2014).

In addition to the substantial body of research exploring negative effects of pornography, there is a significant amount of literature that has explored other impacts and effects of pornography. Some have argued pornography may be sexually empowering for women and is a celebration of the human body (Baron 1990). Furthermore, it has been argued that pornography, at least in some instances, may be regarded as an example of women's agency that has allowed women to learn from each other, given women a voice in the sexual liberation movement, and contributed to the de-medicalization of female sexuality, which has positively affected women, particularly in the US (Orlowski 2012).

Studies have also found that pornography may be an important source of information that individuals can learn sexual health, practices and behaviors from (Albury 2014; Haggstrom-Nordin, Tyden, Hanson, and Larsson 2009; Hunter, Figueredo, and Malamuth 2010; Lavoie, Robitaille, and Herbert 2000; McCormack and Wignall 2017; Rothman, Kaczmarzsky, Burke, Jansen, and Baughman 2015; Svedin et al. 2011). Pornography use may also offer an avenue for exploration of one's sexuality or support sexual identity formation, including for marginalized sexual communities (Arrington-Sanders, Harper, Morgan, Ogunbajo, Trent, and Fortenberry 2015; Flood and Hamilton 2003: 24; Philaretou et al. 2005).

### *Africa*

Although numerous studies have explored exposure to and effects of pornography within many countries around the world, studies exploring pornography in developing countries,

particularly in Africa, are extremely sparse (Cheney et al. 2007: 81; Day 2014; Peter and Valkenburg 2016). This dearth of research is slightly surprising, given that access to the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICT), which can provide relatively cheap, easy, and anonymous access to pornography (Cooper, Delmonico, and Burg 2000; Cooper, Scherer, Boies, and Gordon 1999; Flood 2007), have grown considerably in Africa and the developing world in recent years (Broadband Commission 2019; GSMA 2019; Zamfir 2016: 18).<sup>2</sup> To date, the few studies conducted in Africa have explored a number of topics, mainly focused on both male and female adolescents, and used a variety of methods.

In a mixed-method study of young people's exposure to pornography in Ethiopia and Uganda, participants said they turned to pornography because they lacked adequate sex education. Findings also indicated that violent and misogynist hardcore pornography was widespread in urban and rural project areas in both countries. Notably, both male and female study participants in both countries roundly considered pornography to be a greater influence on their sexual attitudes and identity development than either sex education or local culture (Cheney et al. 2017). Similarly, in a study examining factors affecting young peoples' sexual and reproductive health in Sierra Leone, respondents identified pornography as an influential factor, detailing its newfound accessibility driven by improved access to ICT in the country. Respondents also outlined several ways in which pornography impacts young peoples' decisions about sexual health (Day 2014).

As well, in a cross-sectional study of premarital sexual practices and its predictors among youths in Ethiopia, researchers found that over half of the participants viewed pornographic movies or magazines. Moreover, watching pornographic movies, among other factors, was significantly associated with premarital sexual practices (Bogale and Semester 2014). Additionally, in a separate cross-sectional study focusing on female secondary school students in Eastern Ethiopia, Bekele, Van Aken, and Dubas (2011) found that sexual victimization was related to pornography use. Specifically, a statistically strong association was found between female students' frequent use of pornographic films and their sexual violence victimization. This association was also significant for the various subscales of the overall sexual violence victimization index (i.e., becoming the victim of a sexual offense, sexual assault, sexual coercion, and sexual aggression).

Finally, in a qualitative study exploring the relationship between risk situations and the high HIV prevalence among youth in Kisumu, Kenya, Njue, Voeten and Remes (2011) found that many young people were exposed to pornography in video halls, which seemed to increase their risky sexual behaviors and encourage liberal sexual attitudes.

Overall, while many studies have explored the topic of pornography within various contexts around the world, only a small number of studies have investigated the topic in relation to Africa. The present study is the first conducted on the topic in Eritrea, a low-income, developing country located within the Horn of Africa.

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<sup>2</sup>An important factor in the recent growth in Internet penetration across Africa has been the proliferation of undersea cables reaching African shores over the past few years.

## Methods

This study relied on a variety of methods.<sup>3</sup> Using anonymous survey questionnaires, data was collected from 317 undergraduate students (mean age 21.64, SD 3.68) from several colleges and institutions of higher education in Eritrea. Students were selected randomly from enrolment lists provided by the institutions and written consent was obtained from all respondents. Inter-alia, the questionnaire covered demographic characteristics, exposure to and consumption of pornography, as well as attitudes toward women, using the 15-item *Attitudes Toward Women Scale* (AWS) (Spence and Helmreich 1978).

The AWS is the most widely used instrument to assess attitudes about women's rights and roles in society, and it has previously been used within research in many countries (Byrne, Felker, Vacha-Haase, and Rickard 2011; Chia, Allred, and Jerzak 1997; Delevi and Bugay 2013; King, Phillips, Walker, and O'Toole 2014). Previous work has suggested that viewing pornography may be associated with sexist and negative attitudes toward women (Bowen 1987; Brown and L'Engle 2009; Flood 2010; MacKinnon 1984, 1989; Peter and Valkenburg 2007; Peter and Valkenburg 2009; Skorska et al. 2018; Tylka and Van Diest 2015). In the present study, the AWS was utilized to help explore the potential relationship between viewing pornography and users' attitudes toward women.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to surveys, between August 2018 and March 2019, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants from across Eritrea. Key informants, selected through convenience and snowball sampling techniques, were from educational institutions, national ministries, and several entertainment video retail outlets and Internet cafes. The wide array of sources helps provide a diversity of views and perspectives, ultimately broadening and enriching understanding of the topic.

Interviews were open-ended and semi-structured (Hammer and Wildavsky 1989), a particularly useful format since the study retained many exploratory features. Furthermore, open-ended questions offered respondents an opportunity to organize responses within their own framework, thus potentially increasing the validity of responses. While the interviews and questions were semi-structured, they involved a range of follow-up queries and creative locutions (e.g., "why" and "what else") in order to further probe issues of merit or pursue clarity (Hammer and Wildavsky 1989).

All interviews were conducted in person, generally lasted between thirty minutes and two hours, were conducted in either Tigrinya or English (two of Eritrea's three working languages) and began after obtaining consent. During all interviews, hand-written notes were taken, with transcription occurring shortly afterward in order to minimize errors and ensure a high degree of accuracy and detail (Newing 2011: 113-14).

Additionally, the paper is guided by numerous informal conversations and several focus group discussions. Focus groups are practical and effective as they can reveal "how several people work out a common view, or the range of views, about some topic" (Fielding 1993: 141). Moreover, the utilization of focus groups helps to stimulate fruitful discussion and bring to the surface responses and perspectives about pornography in Eritrea that otherwise might lay dormant.

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<sup>3</sup>The study was approved by the College of Arts and Social Sciences Research Committee, and the Department of Sociology and Social Work Research Committee, both located in Adi Keih, Eritrea. All ethical requirements were followed in accordance with appropriate local and international procedures.

<sup>4</sup>Each item on the AWS uses a four-point Likert Scale with anchors from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Total scores on the scale can range from 0-45, with higher scores indicating a more positive, egalitarian attitude toward women. Scores for items that were negatively worded are reordered.

For example, participants, on the basis of engaging with others, may be able to articulate more clearly their thoughts or views than they otherwise might if alone (Babbie 2007: 308).

Data analysis is based on data triangulation: obtaining, comparing and contrasting evidence from a wide range of data sources (Bieri 2010; Creswell and Miller 2000: 126; Yin 2003). Relying on multiple sources of data allows for the convergence of various lines of inquiry and strengthens validity (Creswell and Miller 2000: 126 ff.; Yin 2003), and is important in gaining cumulative insights and acquiring a broader, richer perspective of pornography in the context of Eritrea. In addition, descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures are utilized to report survey results, explore associations between different variables and determine possible differences in attitudes toward women between respondents that viewed pornography and those who did not.

## Results

### *Eritrea General Background*

Eritrea is a young, low-income country located within the Horn of Africa. After waging one of Africa's longest liberation wars of the 1900s, it eventually gained independence in 1991. Eritrea has an area of approximately 124,000 square kilometers, and is divided into six main political administrative regions. The country has a population of approximately 3.5 million people, which is distributed between nine separate ethno-linguistic groups, and its per-capita GDP is approximately \$US 780. The population of Eritrea is split almost evenly between Christianity and Islam, with each representing nearly half of the population (EPHS 2010; IMF 2016; World Bank 2018).

Eritrea has made commendable progress within the health sector: life expectancy has increased; maternal, infant and child mortality rates have reduced dramatically; immunization coverage has rocketed; malaria mortality and morbidity have plummeted; and HIV prevalence has decreased considerably (Eritrea MDG 2014; Pose and Samuels 2011; UNDP 2014; WHO 2014). Although these developments reflect considerable progress, the country continues to face a variety of significant issues, including regional conflict and instability, poverty reduction, socio-political challenges, erratic rainfall and the potential for severe drought, infrastructure development, food security, a shortage of skilled labor and macroeconomic imbalances (AfDB 2016; EPHS 2010; Eritrea MDG 2014; IMF 2003; Pose and Samuels 2011; World Bank 2018).

### *Pornography in Eritrea*

In Eritrea, pornography is illegal and punishable by law (Penal Code 2015).<sup>5</sup> The government-owned national telecommunications provider blocks pornographic websites, while Internet cafes frequently post signs to remind customers that viewing pornographic websites is not allowed.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, with Eritrea being a highly religious, conservative, tradition-bound country, pornography is a taboo issue. As put by several informants, sex is a "sensitive subject," and "it is

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<sup>5</sup>According to Article 313 ("Obscene or Indecent Publications") of the *Penal Code of the State of Eritrea*, "A person who publicly distributes, displays or traffics in writings, images, posters, films, objects or other communications that are obscene or grossly indecent, is guilty of obscenity, a Class 1 petty offence, punishable with a definite term of imprisonment of not less than 6 months and not more than 12 months, or a fine of 20,001-50,000 Nakfas, to be set in intervals of 2,500 Nakfas" (Penal Code of the State of Eritrea 2015). Note that 15 Nakfa is equal to approximately 1USD.

<sup>6</sup>Similarly, in many other countries across Africa and throughout the surrounding region, pornography is illegal (e.g., the vast majority of the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Ethiopia, Uganda, and many others).



not openly discussed,” while pornography “is totally unacceptable and against the religious and socio-cultural values of our country.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite prohibitive legislation and conservative socio-cultural norms, however, pornography, which is sometimes referred to as “*chum-chum*” in local youth terminology or slang, is still available and relatively easily accessible. According to one young man, “pretty much any time that you want it, you can get it...you just have to know where or from who.” In numerous discussions, both young male and female respondents described how classmates, peers, and others that they knew had collections of pornographic clips, images, and videos, and that these were regularly distributed materials via mobile phones and computers. A number of respondents also explained how they kept collections of images and videos on flash drives or external hard disks and that they frequently exchanged materials with others.

In Eritrea, especially within the capital, Asmara, and other large urban centers, there are a number of small entertainment and electronics shops that, in addition to selling local and international music and videos, discreetly sell pornographic materials for a very small fee. Additionally, although many pornographic websites are blocked and Internet cafes employ filters, some Internet users utilize virtual private networks to access pornographic materials.

### *Survey results*

Using anonymous survey questionnaires, data was collected from 317 undergraduate students (mean age 21.47, SD 3.65) from several colleges and institutions of higher education in Eritrea. Results, reported in Table 1, show that 69.09% of respondents have ever viewed pornography, with the average age at first exposure being 16.9. In terms of gender breakdown, 78.03% of male respondents have ever viewed pornography, while 58.33% of female respondents ever viewed pornography. When focusing only on the previous 12 months, 46.37% of survey participants reported that they have viewed pornography. Regarding gender, male respondents reported higher frequency of pornography viewing than female participants. Specifically, 58.96% of male respondents viewed pornography within the last 12 months, while 31.25% of female respondents viewed pornography within the last 12 months. As well, 81.39% of respondents declared that they knew of others who consumed or viewed pornography. Generally, these mainly included friends, classmates, and neighbors.

Results illustrate that pornography is viewed through various ways. Most respondents (42.90%) view pornography on a mobile phone, although laptops were also a relatively common medium for viewing (35.02%). Just under a quarter view pornography on a desktop computer (22.08%). No respondents reported viewing pornography in adult magazines, books, or comics, which is unsurprising since these materials are generally unavailable in the country. In terms of the popularity of laptops and mobile phones, in recent years, access to and use of ICT and mobile phones has increased considerably across Eritrea. This growth appears to be an important factor in accessing and sharing of pornography. For example, greater exposure to the Internet allows easier access to pornography, while many young people who own smartphones can easily download material to view themselves or share with others. Additionally, since many respondents reside within campus dormitories, parental supervision or monitoring is reduced, thus providing more opportunity to privately view pornography.

According to interviews as well as survey results, young people view pornography for a variety of reasons. Some respondents turned to pornography for entertainment purposes. For

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<sup>7</sup>Years ago, the United Nations Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) became notorious for the involvement of an international peacekeeper in making pornographic movies with a local woman in Eritrea (BBC 2004).

example, a group of young males explained that they often viewed pornography with friends in their dormitories, “for fun,” and when they were “bored.” As well, however, many young people turn to pornography for learning and information purposes or to answer questions about sex, a finding that corroborates research findings from other settings (Cheney et al. 2017; Hald 2006). In Eritrea, people are highly reticent to openly talk about sex, while health education and life skills programs in schools often quickly cover the topic.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, young people are left with many unanswered questions, leading them to turn to peers or pornography, which can easily and quickly fill the information gap. According to many respondents, “you can’t really talk about it with parents or your teachers...no way,” so “pornography can provide answers, whether right or wrong, where others are not there.” As well, a number of respondents explained, “some friends, classmates, and other people that I know have used it to gather information or to answer questions about sex.”

Interestingly, some respondents explained that they had not intentionally searched for pornography materials, instead unwittingly or accidentally coming across it when browsing the Internet. For example, some noted how they had been searching for other information and were then directed to pornographic sites through unwanted “pop ups” and “mouse trapping”. Others noted that they were exposed to pornographic material in e-mails and instant messages through “cat fishing.” One young female respondent explained, “I was just randomly browsing the Internet for materials to complete some homework and it just suddenly popped up after I clicked some link. More and more pages just kept popping up...I couldn’t close them fast enough. I was so embarrassed...I just shut off the computer.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Respondents noted how these courses and programs mainly cover anatomy and the dangers of sexually transmitted infections and diseases or pregnancy. Pornography is not addressed as part of the courses or programs.

<sup>9</sup>Many students, particularly those originally from rural areas, often have little experience with computers or the Internet, thus lacking the risk attenuation or media literacy required to properly identify or deal with online dangers and content. As noted above, life skills or health education courses and programs in schools do not include content about the Internet, pornography, or general online safety.

**Table 1: Exposure to Pornography Among Eritrean Undergraduate Students**

Overall N	317
	Males: 173 (54.57%)
	Females: 144 (45.43%)
Age	Mean: 21.48 SD: 3.65
Ever viewed	219 (69.09%)
	Males: 135 (78.03%)
	Females: 84 (58.33%)
Viewed in past year	147 (46.37%)
	Males: 102 (58.96%)
	Females: 45 (31.25%)
Age at first exposure	Mean: 16.9
Know others who view	258 (81.39%)
Viewed through	Mobile phone: 136 (42.90%) Laptop: 111 (35.02%) Desktop computer: 70 (22.08%) Magazines, books, or comics: 0 (0)
Reasons	Wanted information about sex: 51 (34.69%) Wanted entertainment: 38 (25.85%) Curious: 35 (23.81%) With friends: 32 (21.79%) Unintentional: 23 (15.65%)

Table 2 presents results from Pearson’s chi square tests of association. Results show that there is a statistically significant association between gender and having ever viewed pornography, as well as between gender and having viewed pornography within the past year. Specifically, males are significantly more likely than females both to have ever viewed pornography and to have viewed pornography within the past year. Generally, these results are consistent with a substantial amount of previous work within different international contexts which has found that males are more likely to view pornography or view it with more frequency (Carroll, Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Olson, Barry, and Madsen 2008; Lim, Agius, Carrotte, Vella, and Hellard 2017; Hald 2006; Hald and Stulhofer 2016; Sabina, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008). Although in Eritrea there are conservative socio-cultural norms surrounding the topic of sex, which means it is often not openly or actively discussed, there also exists a sexual double standard.<sup>10</sup> This double standard sees women and men held to different standards of sexual behavior and it promotes a general belief that men are naturally oriented toward sex and sexual behavior, whereas women are not. Consequently,

<sup>10</sup>Previous work has revealed much evidence of a double standard in other African countries and societies (Njikam-Savage and Tchombe 1994).

this may contribute to pornography use among women, who are socially expected to have more subdued sexual behavior, being more socially unacceptable than it is for men.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, results from the chi square tests show that there is a statistically significant association between having ever viewed pornography and knowing others who view pornography, as well as between viewing pornography within the past year and knowing others who view pornography.

**Table 2: Results of Chi Square Tests of Association**

	N (%)	Gender		$\chi^2$ value	P-value
		Male	Female		
Ever viewed	219 (69.09%)	135 (78.03%)	84 (58.33%)	14.28	1.57E-04***
Viewed in past year	147 (46.37%)	102 (58.96%)	45 (31.25%)	24.26	8.40E-07***
		Know others			
		Yes	No		
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	$\chi^2$ value	P-value
Ever viewed	219 (69.09%)	197 (89.95%)	22 (10.05%)	34.32	4.68E-09***
Viewed in past year	147 (46.37%)	140 (95.24%)	7 (4.76%)	34.71	3.82E-09***

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Previous empirical work has suggested that viewing pornography may be associated with negative attitudes toward women and less progressive gender role beliefs. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the potential impact of consuming pornography on viewers' attitudes toward women. Specifically, the ANOVA helps to determine possible differences in attitudes toward women between participants that had viewed pornography and those that had not. The first analysis explored possible differences in attitudes between those that had ever viewed pornography and those that had not ever viewed it. There was no statistically significant difference in attitudes toward women between the two groups ( $F = 2.359, p = 0.126$ ). In the second analysis, differences in attitudes toward women between those that had viewed pornography within the previous year and those that had not were explored. Results show that there was a statistically significant difference in attitudes between the two groups. Specifically, those that had consumed pornography within the past year held significantly less egalitarian, more negative attitudes toward women than those who did not consume pornography within the past year ( $F = 7.838, p = 0.005$ ).

Although it cannot be definitely concluded or inferred that pornography use led to these outcomes, these results indicate that those who consume pornography hold different attitudes toward women than those who do not consume pornography. One possibility is that young people that repeatedly view pornography are frequently being exposed to the overt degradation and objectification of women that is reflected within it (Bergner and Bridges 2002; Bridges, Wosnitzer,

<sup>11</sup>For example, the sexual double standard involves differing social judgments toward men and women when it comes to premarital sex, casual sex, having multiple partners, and style of dress – with women often being more stigmatized, derogated, and judged harshly.

Scharrer, Sun, and Liberman 2010; Klaassen and Peter 2015). In turn, this may be influential in shaping their understandings or perspectives about gender roles and contribute to them developing more negative, less egalitarian attitudes toward women.

**Table 3: One-Way Analysis of Variance Results**

	Ever viewed			
	Ever viewed	Never viewed	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i> -value
Attitudes Toward Women Scale <sup>‡</sup>	Mean: 29.511	Mean: 30.520	2.359	0.126
	Viewed in past year			
	Viewed in past year	Did not view	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i> -value
Attitudes Toward Women Scale <sup>‡</sup>	Mean: 28.925	Mean: 30.612	7.838	0.005***

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

<sup>‡</sup>Scores on the AWS ranged from 15 (minimum) to 45 (maximum), with a mean score of 29.83. The AWS was a reliable measure (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.79$ ).

### Conclusion

The pornography industry is a multibillion-dollar, global industry, and it has been normalized in many aspects of popular, mainstream culture (McNair 2013; Philaretou et al. 2005: 150; Sarikakis and Shaukat 2008; Smith 2010). Around the world, pornography use and exposure are increasingly becoming common and widespread, particularly with the rapid growth and spread of the Internet, smartphones, and social media (Day 2014; Freeman-Longo 2000; Hald and Malamuth 2008; McKee 2010).

Although numerous studies have explored exposure to and effects of pornography within developed countries, empirical studies from developing countries, particularly in Africa, are sparse. The present study is the first to explore the topic of pornography within Eritrea. Utilizing a variety of methods, the study examines exposure to and use of pornography among young Eritreans, identifies related factors, and also investigates the possible impact of viewing pornography on general attitudes toward women. Significantly, the present study helps establish an important baseline of exposure to and consumption of pornography in the country and also broadens awareness and understanding about the topic.

Overall, it was found that exposure to and use of pornography in Eritrea is not uncommon. Results suggest that the majority of young people have been exposed to pornography in their lifetimes, and that a large percentage of young men accessed pornography during the previous year. Notably, males were significantly more likely than females both to have ever viewed pornography and to have viewed pornography within the past year. As well, the results show that nearly all of the respondents know of others, especially peers and classmates, who use pornography. Pornography is used for a variety of reasons, including as a sex education tool and as a source of entertainment. As well, one-way ANOVA results show that there was a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward women between respondents that had viewed pornography during the previous year and respondents that had not. Specifically, respondents that had viewed pornography during the previous year held more negative, less egalitarian attitudes toward women.

While this study provides noteworthy findings, several limitations may be noted. First, despite assurances of anonymity and confidentiality, research participants may have underreported or provided inaccurate accounts of their pornography use. Not only is pornography illegal in Eritrea, there are strong conservative socio-cultural norms frowning upon it, which may have led to a fear of stigma among respondents and a social desirability bias in responses. Second, survey results are from a sample of college and higher education institute students. Thus, the sample is not representative of the general population, and it may also imply a cohort effect. With the Internet and ICT often being used more frequently by young people, pornography may be more accessible for this group than for others. Finally, the causal direction of the association between pornography and attitudes toward women cannot be definitely confirmed, while details on the type or genre of pornography viewed were not collected.

Moving forward, there are many areas and a plethora of topics deserving of empirical research and investigation. For example, future work may explore exposure to pornography among the general population or investigate how pornography use impacts viewers' well-being and self-esteem. Additionally, researchers may examine the possible relationship between pornography use and sexual health or behaviors (e.g., early sexual debut or high-risk sexual practices).

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