

PORNOGRAPHY USE AND ITS EFFECT ON MARITAL QUALITY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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### **Abstract**

Statistics have shown that married couples who start watching pornography double their chances of divorcing within two years following the pornography use. Statistics also report that every year for the past decade there have been roughly one million divorces in the United States, and the current divorce rate is 2.9 per population of 1000, with 45 reporting states, including Washington, DC. However, these statistics do not provide a breakdown of how many of these divorces were due to pornography use. Research suggests that the negative relationship between pornography use and marital well-being has grown stronger over time, during a period in which pornography has become both more explicit and more easily available. The main focus of this study is 1) to determine if there is a negative effect when husbands and wives view pornography together as opposed to if they view it individually; 2) to determine if there is a bi-directional effect between pornography use and marital quality, and 3) to test if the negative effect of pornography use on marital quality affects wives as well as husbands. The research design used in this study will be quantitative and the method used to obtain the findings will be a self-reported questionnaire. The questionnaire will be designed to assess marital quality, sexual intimacy, pornography use, and pornography's effect on both marriage and divorce. Respondents will answer each item on a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents will read the questions and respond to them by themselves and without interference.

*Keywords:* pornography, pornography use, marital quality, sexual quality, gender, marriage, divorce

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 *Dedicated to Clara White, Anthony White, Kecia White, and Jessica Rogers* 

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**List of Abbreviations**

Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM)

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32; CSI-4)

Cyber Pornography Use Index (CPUI)

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

General Social Survey (GSS)

Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS)

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS)

Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT)

Portraits of American Life Study (PALS)

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

The National Council for Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity (NCSAC)

The National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLSL)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

Literature has revealed several studies focusing on pornography use and its effects on marriages (Doran & Price, 2014; Kleponis, 2010; Perry & Schleifer, 2018). As pornography use has become more pervasive with each advance in media technology over the past few decades, researchers have sought to understand its potential for both positive and negative effects on relationships and marriages (Doran & Price, 2014). Today, pornography is cheaper, more easily accessible, more diverse, and more popular than ever before (Egan & Parmar, 2013), and couples are increasingly exposed to pornography through a variety of media including television, movies, print, CDs, DVDs, and the internet (Doran & Price, 2014). Internet search engines make almost any kind of pornographic content easily accessible and acquirable for pornography seekers without subjecting them to the shame, embarrassment, or persecution that once hindered them (Egan & Parmar, 2013). The background information provided in this research review will include some of the aforementioned studies and discuss the results of those and other studies represented.

### **Background**

One important component that contributes to a happy marriage is sexual satisfaction (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005). The frequency and quality of sex within a marriage is a strong predictor of marital quality (Doran & Price, 2014). Sexual relations are one of several factors that can affect marital quality; other factors may include a lack of trust, poor communication, stress, financial issues, and religion (Doran & Price, 2014). One other factor that has become an issue affecting marital quality is pornography use, especially since pornography use, along with

an increase in availability, has become a normative and accepted part of modern culture (Willoughby et al., 2016).

A study by Doran and Price (2014) contributed to previous research by examining the verifiable relationship between pornography use and its effects on marital well-being. They used data from the General Social Survey (GSS) (Doran & Price, 2014; GSS, 2020), which includes questions about pornography use from nearly every year since 1972. The data allowed them to conduct their analysis on a nationally representative sample, the scope of which has improved upon past studies (Doran & Price, 2014). The GSS provided a variety of measures of marital well-being, including marital happiness, infidelity, and divorce (Doran & Price, 2014). The available background information retrieved from the GSS ensured that their results were robust, included controls for mediating variables, studied how the relationship between pornography and marital well-being differed by gender and religiosity and discussed whether the relationship changed with the emergence of the internet (Doran & Price, 2014). Further, the information about the frequency of sex allowed Doran and Price to examine a significant channel through which pornography use affected marital well-being.

Willoughby et al. (2016) conducted a study that utilized a sample of 1,755 adult couples in heterosexual romantic relationships to examine how different patterns of pornography use between romantic partners may be associated with relationship outcomes. Willoughby and associates (2016) sought to explore how different patterns of pornography use may be associated with outcomes among adult romantic couples, including overall satisfaction and stability, as well as positive communication, relational aggression, and sexual desires. Results from the study suggest that pornography use may be associated with relationship problems and well-being for some couples (Willoughby et al., 2016).

A similar study conducted by Perry (2016a) drew from the nationally representative longitudinal data in the 2006-2012 Portraits of American Life Study (PALS). PALS is a nationally representative panel survey containing questions that focus on topics, such as networks of social interactions and personal relationships, moral and political beliefs, and religious values (Perry, 2017). Perry's (2016a) study was designed to test whether more frequent pornography use could influence marital quality futuristically and whether this effect could be moderated by gender. Overall findings suggest that wives have higher marital quality when viewing pornography, but for husbands, it strongly and negatively affects marital quality over time for both the sex life and marital decision-making processes (Perry, 2016a).

Additionally, a study published by Husain and Qureshi (2016) aimed at exploring the preferred sexual practices of married men and women; its intent was to assess the nature and intensity of the interest of married men and women in pornography. A specific questionnaire was developed to collect data for the study. A pilot study was conducted on 10 participants, which included a focus group discussion with five psychologists, to obtain information regarding possible sexual practices in local context (Husain & Qureshi, 2016). Based on 11 possible choices, the questionnaire requested respondents to rank sexual activities in accordance with their personal interests (Husain & Qureshi, 2016). The findings of this study revealed that while both men and women were equally interested in pornography, the consumption of pornography after marriage increased among females and decreased among males (Husain & Qureshi, 2016).

Other smaller studies also used nationally representative samples. For example, Maddox et al. (2011) performed a study with a sample of 1,291 unmarried adults in the United States to assess the association between sexually explicit material and relationship functioning. Maddox et al. found that the respondents who reported viewing sexually explicit material also reported

lower dedication to their partner, lower sexual satisfaction, and list ohigher rates of infidelity. Additionally, the results indicated that higher relationship dedication was positive when partners viewed sexually explicit material together because it decreased the trust issue; however, the results did not suggest that this was a benefit of viewing sexually explicit material together (Maddox et al., 2009). Lastly, the results indicated that more men than women view sexually explicit material alone, and for those who did not view sexually explicit material at all, was due to the fact that they were religious (Maddox et al., 2011).

In another example, Yucel and Gasanov (2010) conducted a study that included a sample of 433 married couples in the United States, which used frameworks of the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) and the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS). Both models call attention to the joint nature of the marital relationship (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). The purpose of the study was to consider how infidelity, pornography consumption, marital satisfaction, sexual frequency, premarital sex, and cohabitation were associated with married couples' sexual satisfaction (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). The research demonstrated how sexual satisfaction is interactive between partners, as each spouse's sexual satisfaction is dependent on his or her own characteristics, and also through inputs from his or her partner (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). The study also found that pornography use acts as a costly exchange (i.e., seen as a negative, such as reducing sexual satisfaction) in married couples' sexual relationships specifically when it is used by only one spouse (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). While similar research is ongoing, previous studies have documented that pornography use, especially habitual use or early exposure to pornography, is associated with several individual outcomes (Willoughby et al., 2016). Those outcomes include but are not limited to,

relationship aggression, negative relationship satisfaction, instability, and poor communication (Willoughby et al., 2016).

This current study will examine the relationship between pornography use and marital quality when husbands and wives view pornography together. Part of the challenge of conducting research in this area is that there is not currently any assessment tool that includes both marital quality and pornography use in a single instrument. Further, much of the early research about pornography use and marriage has been based on information gathered from partners of individuals who were addicted to pornography (Doran & Price, 2014). A person that is addicted to pornography is described as displaying such symptoms as 1) using pornography in great amounts over long periods of time; 2) being unable to stop using pornography even though it has caused shame, guilt, and depression; 3) having difficulty controlling the use of pornography, which would include using it during work hours or social gatherings; 4) continuing to use pornography despite negative effects on work or relationships, and 5) keeping pornography use secret from one's partner. With pornography addiction, the behavior is compulsive and can take priority over all other functions and responsibilities in someone's life (Alarcón et al., 2019).

Pornography use is less invasive than pornography addiction. People typically use pornography as a way to induce sexual excitement and gratification, and it can also be a way for individuals to enhance the experience of sexual pleasure (Janssen, 2002). Many couples may view pornography together to improve their sexual relationship and better communicate sexual desires (Janssen, 2002). This current study is seeking heterosexual married or previously married individuals who used pornography during the time of the marriage. The type of pornography this current study will focus on is pornographic movies such as DVDs, CDs, streaming videos (i.e.,

Netflix, etc.), and the internet, but also where at least one spouse would not be considered addicted to pornography. The focus will also be on how much time was spent viewing pornography individually and as a couple.

### **Problem Statement**

Pornography use has been identified as one of the main causes of divorce (Perry & Schleifer, 2018). However, it has not been determined if the effects of pornography use on marital quality are due to the types of pornography consumed by husbands and wives (Perry, 2016a). Further, research has not been conducted to identify if there is a negative effect when husbands and wives view pornography together (Doran & Price, 2014; Maddox et al., 2011). Finally, it has not been determined if there is a bi-directional effect; (if pornography use causes problems in a marriage or if problems in a marriage lead to pornography use) between pornography use and marital quality (Perry, 2016a). I propose to investigate the results of pornography use when husbands and wives view it together. It is also intended that the results of the investigation will determine if negative marital quality caused the pornography use or vice versa. The research will be conducted through a combination of previously self-reported questionnaires that have been proven to be valid and reliable. Also included in the questionnaire will be a few additional questions regarding husbands and wives viewing pornography together. The results will then be analyzed via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (IBM, n.d.).

### **Purpose Statement**

While several studies have been conducted on the negative effects of pornography use on a marriage when partners view it on an individual basis, not many have been conducted to obtain results of the positive effects of pornography use when couples view it together. The main

purpose of this study is to satisfy the question of whether pornography use diminishes marital quality and contributes to divorce when husbands and wives view it together. A secondary purpose is to determine if pornography use caused problems in the marriage when one spouse uses it alone. Finally, a third purpose of this study is to determine if there is a bi-directional (functions in two directions) relationship, or if reverse causality exists between pornography use and marital quality.

### **Significance of Study**

Although cohabitation has become an increasingly acceptable alternative to marriage, there are still many couples who look forward to marriage. With this in mind, it is important for couples to understand there is a significant likelihood that their partner will view or has viewed pornography, according to a study performed by Traeen and Nilson (2006). The study showed that for men ages 30-39, 97% reported exposure to pornographic films; for women, 80% of those aged 18-29 reported having seen pornographic films (Traeen & Nilson, 2006). While divorce attorneys report that internet pornography plays a significant role in divorces, it is not certain that every couple who watches internet pornography will end up divorced (Marshall, 2017). This current study will expound on past research by assessing the effects on marital relationships when couples used pornography together. The Cyber Pornography Use Index (CPUI) self-report survey and the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-4) will be combined into one survey. In addition, there will be a few questions regarding the use of pornography among married couples. The instrument will be used to assess marital quality, sexual intimacy, pornography use, and pornography's effect on both marriage and divorce. Respondents will answer each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from a great deal to not at all, strongly agree to strongly disagree, always to never, very easy to very difficult, very satisfied to very dissatisfied, very good to very

bad, very likely to very unlikely, and much better to much worse. The questions will be rated from 5 being the greatest to 1 being the least.

The CPUI, as mentioned above, was designed to assess internet pornography use that could be effectively used in religious sectors among married couples (Grubbs et al., 2010). The instrument also measured an initial analysis of the feelings of guilt and distress experienced as a result of internet pornography use (Grubbs et al., 2010). However, it does not currently measure pornography use before or after marriage quality has diminished, nor does it assess a couple's marriage quality when viewing pornography together. The CSI-4 is a reduced version of the CSI-32, which was designed to measure a person's marital satisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The CSI-32 has 32 questions and likewise, the CSI-4 has four questions. While these surveys measure marital quality, they do not, however, measure marital quality when pornography has been introduced and used within the marriage. This current survey will gather data that is inclusive of marital quality and pornography use by married couples and/or persons who were previously married and used pornography during the time of their marriage. The importance of studying the impact of pornography on marital quality has intensified as the internet has dramatically increased the accessibility, anonymity, and affordability of pornography (Doran & Price, 2014). This current study represents a first attempt to collect current data that can be used to assess whether using pornography influences marital quality before and/or after pornography use and how it affects marital quality when spouses use it together.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: Will married couples who view pornography together have a lower quality of marriage than those who do not?

RQ2: Did pornography use cause problems in a marriage or did problems in the marriage lead to pornography use?

RQ3: Were there pre-existing problems in the marriage that led to pornography use?

### **Definitions**

1. Human sexual behavior - Human sexual behavior is any activity that could induce sexual arousal and is considered a means to experience and express oneself as a sexual being (Husain & Qureshi, 2016).
2. Marital quality – Marital quality refers to positive feelings that a spouse derives from marriage, including happiness, enjoyment, pleasure, and contentment (Marital Quality, 2019).
3. Marital well-being – Marital well-being refers to marital happiness (Doran & Price, 2014).
4. Pornography - Pornography is any printed or visual material that contains an exhibition of, or activities with, sexual organs and intends to stimulate sexual excitement (Husain & Qureshi, 2016).
5. Perceived addiction to internet pornography - This refers to the propensity of individuals to report feeling addicted or compulsive in their behaviors, regardless of the veracity of this self-perception (Grubbs et al., 2015).
6. Pornographic material – Pornographic material is any film, DVD, movie, or internet resource that depicts any possible form of sexual practice, ranging from conventional intercourse to anal sex, lesbianism, group sex, oral-genital contact, and/or visible ejaculation (Husain & Qureshi, 2016).
7. Pornography Use – Pornography use is defined as any viewing of or participating in pornography.

### Chapter Summary

As previously mentioned, pornography use has become a normal and accepted part of today's culture (Willoughby et al., 2016). It is inexpensive, easily accessible, and very diverse (Egan & Parmar, 2013). Internet search engines make almost any kind of pornographic content easily accessible and acquirable while keeping the identities of the seekers anonymous (Egan & Parmar, 2013). Pornography use is something that rarely stays at the same level; people tend to seek out variations of pornographic material, moving from softer pornography to harder pornography to violence and other depictions over time (Sells & Yarhouse, 2011). This study will survey married couples or individuals who were previously married and were sexually dissatisfied in their marriages and used pornography during that time. Concurrently, the study will evaluate marital quality based on the use of pornography within the marriage, including whether or not the couple viewed pornography together. Some think that pornography is an acceptable way for couples to enhance their love life (Brown et al., 2016). With this in mind, another purpose of the study will be to determine whether pornography use was the cause of sexual dissatisfaction and poor marital quality. While there are a number of forces threatening the quality and stability of family life today, one of the major hazards to well-being is the widespread availability, accessibility, and use of pornography (Perry, 2017). Because some research has linked regular pornography use to sexual attitudes and behaviors that can be harmful to long-term, intimate relationships (Perry, 2017), this study will seek to affirm or deny this. It will focus on the issue of pornography use in marriages to determine if it has a negative effect on marital quality, and, if so, to what conclusion. This study will also attempt to determine if pornography use created the problem, or if there were pre-existing problems that led to the use of pornography in the marriage.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

Britannica's online dictionary defines pornography as "the representation of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writings) intended to cause sexual excitement" (Jenkins, 2021). In today's society, pornography includes more than pictures or writings. Campbell and Kohut (2017) defined pornography as written, pictorial, or audio-visual representations depicting nudity or sexual behavior. According to compiled numbers from respected news and research organizations, \$3,075.64 is spent every second on pornography (Brown, 2014). Further, 28,258 individual internet users view pornography every second (Brown, 2014). In that same second, 372 internet users are typing adult search terms into search engines, and every 39 minutes, a new pornographic video is being created in the United States (Brown, 2014). Pornography is more than individual behavior; but, rather, it is best viewed as a relationship phenomenon (Brown, 2014).

The statistical differences between pornography use by men and women are considerably high. Carroll and Willoughby (2017) provided the following statistics on pornography use by men and women who reported that they never used pornography. The statistics are broken down into commitment categories:

- 57% of casually dating women vs. 25% casually dating men
- 60% of seriously dating women vs. 25% of seriously dating men
- 61% of engaged women vs. 38% of engaged men
- 65% of married women vs. 37% of married men (Carroll & Willoughby, 2017).

Perry (2016a) speculated that the difference in the effects of pornography use on marital quality between women and men is due to the types of pornography being consumed by either partner.

Perry's (2016a) study was not able to determine whether married participants were viewing pornography alone or together. Conversely, while it was not measured in their study, Doran and Price (2014) suggested that joint pornography usage can create fewer problems for couples than when one spouse uses it alone.

The review of research presented in this chapter will discuss current trends in pornography consumption, as well as attempt to identify gaps where additional research is needed to determine if pornography use has a significant negative impact on marital quality. This review of the literature will also explore positive and negative relationships between pornography use and marital quality. Included in this information will be an evaluation of the different types of pornography and what happens when marital partners use it alone and when they use it together.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The pleasure neurotransmitter in the brain is known as dopamine (GoodTherapy, 2019). Surges of dopamine are released during pleasurable situations and stimulate the brain to seek out activities that are even more enjoyable (e.g., the Coolidge Effect) (GoodTherapy, 2019). Dopamine is released in the brain when one views pornography (Negash et al., 2015). Historically, the person viewing pornography would not want their partner to know; openness would not allow for secrecy and consequently, the viewer would feel ashamed (Feurman, 2020). However, the internet has allowed its viewers easy accessibility, anonymity, and affordability (referred to as the Triple-A Engine) (Negash et al., 2015), and pornography use has rapidly increased over the past few decades (Negash et al., 2015). Sexual rewards are the primary reason why many individuals view pornography (Negash et al., 2015). When a person regularly spends time online viewing pornography, they become comfortable, which caused them to believe that

expressing themselves in this manner sexually is natural (Byers et al., 2004). One other reward that pornography consumption provides is that of immediate sexual gratification, although this can have negative costs/implications, such as addiction and financial difficulties, which can also have a negative effect on a marriage (Negash et al., 2015). Internet pornography use can often escalate and integrate with real-world sexual activity, which can cost the user thousands of dollars (Smith, 2021). While large parts of the internet are dedicated to the provision of free pornography, when this free pornography is no longer satisfying, viewers begin to pay for internet pornography websites; this can escalate into addiction and become very expensive and difficult to control (Smith, 2021). Those with addictions to sex and pornography may quickly find that they need more, and with the average escort costing hundreds of dollars, many find themselves spending their savings, salaries, and borrowing money because they can no longer afford to support their addiction (Smith, 2021).

Online pornography technologically captures, reproduces, and mediates images of human beings having sex (Suni, 2013), which has allowed pornography to grow and flourish. *Technoethics* is a term that originated in 1974 by Mario Bunge, an Argentinian-Canadian philosopher (Suni, 2013). It is a research area concerned with the continuously changing relationship between technology, such as webcams, e-commerce, and the internet, with human beings (Suni, 2013). The mission of technoethics is to address the side of technology that lies within the minds and bodies of individuals that are affected by technology on a personal level (Suni, 2013), wherein lies pornography. In this model, consumers use their money to purchase products (pornography), which promise to enrich their sexual experience (Waskul & Plante, 2010). Without technology, pornography would be less accessible, less available, and the consumer would not be anonymous (Suni, 2013). Also attributed to technology is the assumption

that consumers have become emotionally dependent on pornography and believe they need it for their sexual happiness; consumers have been convinced that they can obtain the best sexual satisfaction by using pornography (Suni, 2013). Therefore, sexual arousal is the goal of interacting with online pornography (Keilty, 2015). Sexual activity in the virtual age has transformed in regard to human interaction in the mechanical age (Ross, 2005). The internet has become a new form of expression of the self and has replaced the traditional experience of humans in the sexual setting (Ross, 2005). A person's sexual preference has become a form of social construction, where it is being shaped by such social interactions as pornography (Waskul & Plante, 2010), which means that pornography can influence a person's sexual choice.

One theoretical perspective regarding human interaction is the symbolic interaction perspective, also called symbolic interactionism (Crossman, 2018). This viewpoint relies on the symbolic meanings that people develop, grow up with, and build upon during the process of social interaction (Crossman, 2018). The American philosopher George Herbert Mead introduced this perspective to American sociology in the 1920s (Crossman, 2018). The symbolic interaction theory states that people live in both the natural and symbolic environments (Aksan et al., 2009). It analyzes society by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviors (Crossman, 2018). For example, the color white symbolizes purity and a thumbs up symbolizes all is well. It is a type of communication where meaning is exchanged through language and symbols; however, objects, conditions, and events do not feature an intrinsic meaning - meaning is attributed to these elements by human interaction (Aksan et al., 2009), and humans form meaning as a result of their own experiences (Crossman, 2018). Symbolic interaction is a process that includes the interpretation of individual actions because symbolic meaning is formed differently for every person (Aksan et al., 2009). Based

upon three basic propositions, symbolic meaning suggests that a) people develop their attitudes towards things according to the meanings that the things suggest to them; b) meanings are inferred from the interaction between the person and the thing; and c) people attach meanings to things through an interpretive process (Aksan et al., 2009).

Through symbolic meaning comes social and sexual experiences. People derive social experiences through interpersonal scripts, which facilitate the occurrence of a sexual act (Poulsen et al., 2013). According to Simon and Gagnon (1986), the scripting of behavior is examined on three levels:

1. cultural scenarios – the sharing of knowledge, beliefs, experiences, and behaviors such as with family, friends, and in the community;
2. interpersonal scripts – the application of cultural scenarios by an individual in a social environment; and
3. intra-psychic scripts – the management of desires as experienced by an individual.

These concepts of behavioral scripting are then applied to sexual behavior. Interpersonal scripts are seen as the ordering of representations of self and others that facilitate the occurrence of a sexual act, and intra-psychic scripts represent the ordering of images and desires that elicit and sustain sexual arousal (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Scripts are learned through a process called socialization, which teaches people to behave according to unwritten societal rules.

*Socialization* refers to the process where one adopts from society the standards and values that are needed for social interaction (Potts, 2015). Sexual drives, impulses, and instincts are socially acquired characteristics of the environment, and sexual characteristics are culturally produced, shared, and reinforced norms that serve as the sexual guide and gendered behavior (Waskul & Plante, 2010). One example of socialization is the influence that parents have on

young people regarding marriage. Young people learn from their parents through observation, direct teaching, and interaction (Bergner & Bridges, 2002). They model their parents' couple relationships, levels of conflict, and ways of resolving problems as well as how they teach about gender roles and values (Bergner & Bridges, 2002). From a theoretical perspective, environmental cues trigger metacognitions, which is the understanding of one's own thought processes, and this thought process directly influences desire thinking, resulting in the escalation of negative cravings, such as the desire to view internet pornography (Allen et al., 2017). This "desire thinking" can lead to addictions to such things as alcohol, drugs, and sex (Tarver, 2010) because a person has a desire to indulge in these activities. This is all-important when one is trying to understand the sexual behavior of another person and what drives them to use pornography to stimulate their sexual excitement. Systematically, it is possible to direct the desire thinking of young adults through parental communication; conversely, if parents were more open with communicating with their children about sex, it could help young people develop healthy ideas about marriage, and it is possible that pornography use would not be so prevalent (Bergner & Bridges, 2002).

Another theoretical approach used to assist in determining which aspects of a relationship influence sexual satisfaction in a marriage is the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS) (Byers, 1999). The IEMSS takes into account the interpersonal context in which sexual activity within a relationship occurs, as well as the level of sexual rewards, level of sexual costs, comparison levels for sexual rewards and sexual costs, and the perceived equality of sexual rewards and sexual costs (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Rewards are defined as exchanges that are pleasurable and gratifying to a person, while costs are exchanges that demand physical or mental effort or cause pain, embarrassment, or anxiety (Byers, 1999). Rewards and costs include

goods and services, but they can also include expression of affection, sharing of interests, and communication (Byers, 1999). Exchange models predict that the more one's rewards exceed one's costs, the more satisfying the relationship will be (Byers, 1999).

The IEMSS identifies four distinct aspects of relationships that influence sexual satisfaction (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). First, the IEMSS proposes that satisfaction with the sexual relationship will be greater to the extent that relationship satisfaction is greater (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Second, sexual satisfaction is expected to be greater to the extent that the level of rewards incurred in the sexual relationship exceeds the level of sexual costs (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Third, sexual satisfaction is expected to be greater to the extent that the level of rewards and the level of costs that one experiences in the sexual relationship compare favorably (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Finally, greater sexual satisfaction is expected to be related to greater perceived equality between one's own and one's partner's level of rewards, as well as one's own and one's partner's level of costs in the sexual relationship (Lawrance & Byers, 1995).

The IEMSS has been demonstrated to provide a valid and useful conceptual model of sexual satisfaction within relationships (Lawrance & Byers, 1995); it also provides factors that affect a couple's level of satisfaction (Byers, 1999). By utilizing IEMSS, one can discern how infidelity, pornography use, sexual frequency, and marital satisfaction are associated with married couples' levels of sexual satisfaction (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). The information provided by IEMSS would be important to this current study because one of the purposes of this study is to determine if viewing pornography would be a reward or cost in regard to marital quality. Some evidence suggests that pornography use is costly for both partners' sexual satisfaction, especially when only one spouse is using pornography (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010).

### **Related Literature**

This review of the literature will explore the use of pornography in marriages and its effects on marital quality. Areas reviewed include the pros and cons of viewing pornography in a marriage, identifying conflicts in marital quality, and recognizing gender differences in viewing pornography. There is no doubt that studies have furthered the understanding of how one spouse's pornography use can negatively impact the other spouse and sometimes lead to divorce; however, the goal of this study is to determine if there can be a positive effect if husbands and wives view pornography together.

### **Pornography**

Pornography can be defined as sexually explicit material aimed at producing sexual arousal (Husain & Qureshi, 2014). As commonly defined in various sources, pornography refers to any printed or visual material that contains an exhibition of sexual organs or activities and intends to stimulate sexual excitement (Husain & Qureshi, 2014). According to Anderson (2003), pornography can be broken down into at least five categories:

- One type of pornography is adult magazines, primarily directed toward the adult male audience, such as *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Hustler*, and *Men Only*.
- A second type of pornography is adult movies, which would include videos, webcams, and the internet.
- A third type of pornography is adult motion pictures; many of these are R-rated or X-rated films.
- A fourth type of pornography is television, as in movies that are shown on cable television.

- A fifth type of pornography is audio porn, which would include the transmission of sexually explicit messages via telephone calls.

The number of people viewing pornography, as well as the amount of money spent on pornography, indicates that the development and distribution of pornographic material has become a sizeable business (Hull, 2020). For the purposes of this current study, the focus will be on heterosexual married or previously married individuals and their viewing of pornography, which will include movies, webcams, videos (such as VHS and DVDs), streaming videos (Netflix, etc.), and the internet. The focus will also be on how much time is/was spent viewing pornography individually and as a couple.

Pornography is a booming multi-billion-dollar industry and has been found to lead to addictive behavior (Bond, 2019). Further, according to an article posted in the *Huffington Post* ("Porn Sites Get More Visitors," 2013), 30% of all internet data is related to pornography, and pornography sites receive more visitors than Amazon, Netflix, and Twitter combined. These numbers are concerning, as pornography addiction, or problematic pornography use, affects approximately 5% to 8% of the United States adult population (Hull, 2020), which equates to approximately 26,259,161 of the United States population of 328,239,523 as of July 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Further, people who demonstrate an addiction to cyber-pornography reportedly spend at least 11-12 hours every week viewing pornography online (Hull, 2020). Researchers state that a person's behavior has become addictive when the person exhibits problematic behaviors, such as a) excessive engagement in the behavior; b) a continued craving to engage in the behavior; c) diminished self-control over engaging in the behavior; and d) continuing the behavior despite the personal, social, or occupational impairment (Allen et al., 2017). Not every person who views pornography will develop an addiction, but according to

Weiss (2020), for those who do, there are five types of pornographic addiction categories that they can fall into:

- 1) Brain Buzz Pornography Addict – This type of pornography addict takes the endorphins and opiates that are created by sex and attaches them to the object of pornography instead of a human being.
- 2) Brain Balance Pornography Addict - This type of pornography addict has a chemical imbalance in their brain, such as a chemically based depression, manic depression, bipolar disorder, or other mood disorder.
- 3) Escape Pornography Addict - This type of pornography addict has experienced some type of negative behavior such as abandonment, abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, or some other type of negative event.
- 4) Re-enactment Pornography Addict - This person may have never told anyone that they were sexually abused or used as a sex object, and the sexual trauma has created serious issues in their life.
- 5) Avoidance Pornography Addict - This type of pornography addict has challenges in romantic or marital relationships and is closed off emotionally to their spouse or significant other.

Human sexual behavior is defined as any activity that can induce sexual arousal and is considered a means to experience and express oneself as a sexual being (Husain & Qureshi, 2014). It has been broadly affected by the easy access and utilization of pornography in present times (Husain & Qureshi, 2014). A study conducted by Traeen and Nilson (2006) found that about 84% of people between the ages of 18 and 49 had watched pornographic films (Hull, 2020). According to Ross (2015), there are three types of encounters with internet pornography:

1) the elaboration of realistic circumstances, 2) the creation of fantasy scenarios, and 3) internet sex, where one party describes what they would like the other party to do to assist in their achieving an orgasm. Technology has changed the varieties and means of distribution of pornography; and, as previously mentioned, pornography can be viewed via several types of media contexts, including movies in theaters, DVDs, magazines, books, and websites, with the internet being the most convenient and accessible means by which to access and view pornography (Willoughby et al., 2015). Before the internet began distributing and mediating human sexuality in electronic forms, people could view pornographic videos on VHS, as well as in pictures and magazines, but sex was confined to the realms of direct human contact (Suni, 2013).

### **Pornography and Marital Quality**

The term *marital quality* refers to positive feelings that a spouse derives from marriage, including happiness, enjoyment, pleasure, and contentment (Marital Quality, 2019). Marital quality is strongly associated with evaluations of one's life as a whole and moment-to-moment experiences of happiness (Carr et al., 2014). Studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between marital quality and marital intimacy and that an increase in marital intimacy has a positive effect on marital quality (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001). Some claim that pornography use itself is not necessarily a problem for marriages; it can be used in a good way to stimulate sexual arousal and can assist with bonding activity between partners (Hull, 2020), thereby improving marital quality. A study completed by Maddox et al. (2011) investigated associations between viewing sexually explicit material and relationship functioning. The study showed that individuals who viewed sexually explicit material with their partner reported higher relationship functioning than those who viewed it alone (Maddox et al., 2011). Further, Maddox et al. (2011)

noted that women reported more positive feelings and sexual arousal when viewing pornographic videos with their partners as opposed to viewing it alone. An additional study suggested that couples who watch sexually explicit material together, for the purposes of fantasy stimulation and mutual sexual gratification, were more satisfied in their relationships (Groves et al., 2011). While Maddox et al. (2011) and Groves et al. (2011) reported positive findings related to couples watching pornography together, there are other studies that reported the opposite.

In their 2014 study, Doran and Price reported their findings on the relationship between watching pornographic films and various measures of marital well-being. The study found that men reported an inverse relationship between pornography use and marital satisfaction as pornography usage increased, both the frequency of sex with one's spouse and marital happiness decreased (Doran & Price, 2014). Doran and Price also noted that this negative relationship between pornography use and marital well-being has grown stronger during a time period when pornography has become more easily available. Using a data sample of over 20,000 married individuals, Doran and Price found that individuals who reported seeing an X-rated movie within the last year were 25% more likely to be divorced, 101% more likely to have an extramarital affair, and 12% less likely to have a happy marriage. Notably dissimilar to Maddox et al. (2011) and Groves et al. (2011), this study did not capture pornography use with couples who use pornography together; therefore, the results of Doran and Price's study appear to underestimate the complete effect of pornography use and marital well-being because pornography use by one individual is likely to influence the happiness of their spouse as well (Kleponis, 2010). Further, the cross-sectional nature of the data used in Doran and Price's study made it difficult to rule out the possibility of reverse causality, where marital unhappiness may provide the motivation for increased pornography use rather than the other way around (Perry, 2016b).

A similar study conducted by Perry (2016a) considered whether more frequent pornography use influenced marital quality and whether the effect was moderated by gender. This study was the first to draw on the longitudinal dataset from the 2006-2012 Portraits of American Life Study (PALS) (Perry, 2016a). PALS is a nationally representative panel survey with questions focusing on a variety of topics, including social networks, moral and political attitudes, and religious life (Perry, 2016a). For the first wave, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 2,610 participants in their homes from April to October 2006; the response rate was 58% (Perry, 2016a). The second wave of face-to-face interviews was conducted from March to September 2012 with 1,314 participants successfully re-interviewed (Perry, 2016a). After accounting for participants from 2006 who died or were mentally incapacitated, the Wave 2 response rate was 53% (Perry, 2016a). In general, married persons who more frequently viewed pornography in 2006 reported significantly lower levels of marital quality in 2012, and in terms of substantive influence, frequency of pornography use in 2006 was the second strongest predictor of marital quality in 2012 (Elhage, 2017). Interaction effects revealed, however, that the negative effect of pornography use on marital quality applied to husbands but not to wives; post-estimation predicted values indicated that wives who viewed pornography more frequently also reported higher marital quality than those who viewed it less frequently or not at all (Elhage, 2017). While Perry's (2016a) study concluded that viewing pornography reduced marital quality over time, pornography use is not the only thing that causes marital and/or relationship conflict. Other causes of conflict include poor communication, lack of trust, lack of sex, and poor management of finances. In related research, Gottman & Silver (1999) identified four harmful ways of managing these conflicts, including criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling

(Wetzler et al., 2018). Gottman termed them the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

### **Conflicts and Marital Quality**

Relationship conflict is a perception of interpersonal incompatibility and usually includes tension, annoyance, and animosity among spouses (Simmons & Peterson, 2000). Such conflict usually stems from struggles, disagreements, and arguments between husbands and wives (Mintle, 2015). Accordingly, conflict is a part of every relationship. Researchers categorize conflict behaviors or withdrawal periods in a marriage as destructive (Birditt et al., 2010). Destructive behaviors include overtly negative reactions to marital problems, such as yelling, insults, criticisms, belligerence, and contempt (Birditt et al., 2010). Withdrawal behaviors involve disengaging from the conflict and may include leaving the situation or keeping quiet (Birditt et al., 2010). When these issues are not addressed and conflicts are not resolved, marital quality is affected (Mintle, 2015). Similarly, Simmons and Peterson (2000) stated that relationship conflict negatively affects marital quality in three ways. First, relationship conflict limits the information processing ability because spouses spend their time and energy focusing on not engaging with one another rather than on solving their problems (Simmons & Peterson, 2000). Second, relationship conflict limits the spouses’ cognitive functioning (mental abilities such as reasoning, thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making) by increasing their stress and anxiety levels (Simmons & Peterson, 2000). Third, relationship conflict encourages hostile behavior and conflict escalation among spouses (Simmons & Peterson, 2000).

Notably, much research has demonstrated that pornography use is negatively associated with various measures of marital quality (Perry, 2018). One theory for this phenomenon suggests that viewing pornography can influence relationship quality by shaping the viewers’ sexual ideas

about relationships, intimacy, and body image (Perry, 2018). Pornography use can contribute to problems with marital quality in several areas, such as trust, communication, sex, finances, religion, abuse and domestic violence, and infidelity; this list is meant to be inclusive but not exhaustive. A website titled *Webroot* (2020) has provided the following statistics regarding internet use of pornographic materials and how it affects marriage.

- Pornography use increases the marital infidelity rate by more than 300%.
- 40% of people identified as “sex addicts” lose their spouses, 58% suffer considerable financial losses, and about 33% lose their jobs.
- 68% of divorce cases involve one party meeting a new paramour over the internet, while 56% involve one party having an “obsessive interest” in pornographic websites.

Every second:

- 28,258 users are watching pornography on the internet.
- \$3,075.64 is being spent on pornography on the internet.

Every day:

- 37 pornographic videos are created in the United States.
- 2.5 billion emails containing pornography are sent or received.
- 68 million search queries are made relating to pornography, which is 25% of total searches generated.
- About 200,000 Americans are classified as “pornography addicts.”
- 40 million American people regularly visit pornography sites.
- 35% of all internet downloads are related to pornography.
- 34% of internet users have experienced unwanted exposure to pornographic content through ads, pop-up ads, misdirected links, or emails.

- One-third of pornography viewers are women.

As previously noted, Gottman & Silver (1999) identified four harmful ways of managing conflict, which fall into the category of bad communication: criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling (Wetzler et al., 2018), all of which have been termed the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Gottman and colleagues (1999) found that negative destructive behaviors, such as withdrawal (where one marital partner seeks to discuss and resolve the situation while the other partner withdraws) and negative reciprocity (where one marital partner’s negative behavior instigates the other partner’s negative behavior) were repeatedly identified in observed interactions between husbands and wives and were effective predictors of divorce (Birditt et al., 2010; Gottman & Silver, 1999). Considerable pornography use falls into the category of negative destructive behavior, and behavioral theories of marriage contribute negative destructive behaviors to the declination of marital satisfaction and stability (Birditt et al., 2010).

### **Trust**

Trust is the foundation of every healthy relationship, and it is learned by having interactions and experiences with other people (Mintle, 2015). When one person distrusts another, the distrusting person will interpret unfavorable behaviors as hateful in intent and convey distrust through their conduct (Simmons & Peterson, 2000). The person whose behavior is interpreted as hateful perceives that they are distrusted and tends to reciprocate that distrust (Simmons & Peterson, 2000). Partners who do not trust one another cannot feel secure, so their relationship goes through frequent emotional highs and lows (Pascale & Primavera, 2017). This insecurity happens because the mistrusting partner spends much of their time scrutinizing their relationship and trying to understand their partner’s motives (Pascale & Primavera, 2017). Trust

is broken when someone is disloyal, lies to avoid conflict, sides against their spouse, and/or acts with disrespect or unfairness (Mintle, 2015). When an untrustworthy or negative event happens, it serves as evidence that the relationship has problems (Pascale & Primavera, 2017).

To study trust in relationships, Szymanski et al. (2015) developed a study that examined how pornography affects trust. The purpose of the study was to examine the role of relationship trust between the attitude of young adult women toward pornography and their male partners' pornography use and the women's psychological health (Szymanski et al., 2015). The results of the study suggest that higher perceived levels of male partners' pornography use led to a loss of emotional and psychological trust by the women in their relationships, which in turn negatively influenced their female partners' relational and psychological distress (Szymanski et al., 2015). Similarly, Tarver (2010) reported that pornography use can foster unhealthy preoccupations in fantasy and behavior, such as sexual addiction or hypersexuality. This can lead to unrealistic expectations within a relationship and can interfere with personal moral growth and the development of healthy and mature relationships, especially in a marriage where mutual trust, openness, and personal moral integrity in both thoughts and in actions are considered important (Tarver, 2010). Loss of trust in the relationship may leave female partners feeling nervous, insecure, and worried about the future of their relationships (Szymanski et al., 2015). This increased anxiety may contribute to overall feelings of psychological distress and take away from aspects of the relationship that used to be satisfying (Szymanski et al., 2015).

Feelings of mistrust, betrayal, loss, devastation, and anger are commonly reported by women when they learn of their partner's pornography use (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). Bergner and Bridges (2000) found that when women judged their partners' pornography viewing as excessive, they were inclined to believe that it had a negative effect on their relationship. In their

research, Bergner and Bridges studied 100 posts on internet message boards from women who thought their partners' viewing of pornography was excessive. In these posts, women often used words like cheating, affair, betrayal, sex addict, degenerate, and pervert to describe their partners (Bergner & Bridges, 2000).

### **Communication**

A common source of relationship problems is poor communication (Scott et al., 2013). Accordingly, Litzinger and Gordon's (2005) research suggests that unhappy couples appear to suffer from a communication skills deficit that inhibits their ability to effectively relay messages to their partners, such as an inability to clearly convey their point of view or the ability to be an effective listener, and this deficit contributes to marital dissatisfaction. The results of this study further demonstrate that couples lacking the necessary skills to regulate their emotional expressiveness and successfully communicate tend to become defensive or withdraw from a disagreement; these behaviors in turn predict later marital dissatisfaction and dissolution (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005). Lack of communication in a marriage can cause the connection between partners to be lost thereby causing the love to fade (Pace, 2018).

Some ways in which couples attempt to manage communication conflicts can be harmful; Gottman & Silver (1999) identified four of them: criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling (Gottman & Silver, 1999; Wetzler et al., 2018). Gottman initially called them the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," but later termed them "Four Train Wrecks" because they appear to be highly predictive of marital break-up (Wetzler et al., 2018). Lisitsa (2020) provided the following explanations for the Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse:

1. Criticism – Criticism is the act of saying negative things to one's partner and attacking their character (Lisitsa, 2020).

2. Contempt – Contempt is treating one’s partner with disrespect, which includes mocking them, ridiculing them, calling them names, mimicking them, eye-rolling, and/or scoffing at them. Contempt is the single greatest predictor of divorce (Gottman & Silver, 1999).
3. Defensiveness – A person becomes defensive when they feel that they have been unjustly accused; the defensiveness can escalate a conflict if the critical spouse does not back down or apologize. Defensiveness is typically a response to criticism (Lisitsa, 2020).
4. Stonewalling – Stonewalling is when the listener withdraws from the interaction, shuts down, and simply stops responding to their partner. Stonewalling is usually a response to contempt (Lisitsa, 2020).

With these communication conflicts, Gottman noted that there are four warning signs that indicate a relationship is headed for trouble: 1) The relationship becomes more negative than positive; 2) Couples continuously engage in the four train wrecks; 3) Both partners become overwhelmed during conflict; and 4) Attempts to repair the relationship fail (Wetzler et al., 2018).

Another study on the behavior of couples conducted over a 40-year span found that the most common communication problems revolve around partners giving one another “the silent treatment,” partner criticism, and defensive feedback (Pace, 2018), all of which line up with Gottman’s (1999) four train wrecks. These types of behaviors create distance, and when couples grow distant, they are less inclined to have sex or discuss the issues in their marriage (Pace, 2018). Similarly, Willoughby et al. (2016) noted that behaviors that disrupt or erode secure attachment will have a significant impact on a couple’s communication and intimacy.

Several studies have linked a lack of communication to pornography use. Gonsalves and Overstreet (2020) found that a lack of communication often leads to isolation, relationship conflict, shame, guilt, and feelings of inadequacy, which can then lead to pornography use. Maas et al. (2018) reported that pornography use has been associated with less sexual satisfaction and commitment, as well as a lack of communication and increased infidelity among couples. Other studies have suggested that pornography use is related to couple outcomes in ways such as poor sexual satisfaction, negative communication, and less relationship satisfaction (Poulsen et al., 2013; Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). Cooper et al. (2001) found that pornography use in men contributed to emotional detachment, poor communication, and diminished ability to recognize, acknowledge, and address the needs of their female, which resulted in decreased sexual satisfaction for both parties in the relationship. International studies have found that one of the most highly endorsed reasons for divorce is problems with communication (Scott et al., 2013).

### **Sex**

Sexual intimacy creates a strong bonding and attachment experience within monogamous romantic relationships (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Sexual desire and satisfaction play an important role in the development of romantic relationships and are an integral component of marital quality (Regan & Atkins, 2006). Stress, exhaustion, anger, resentment, pornography, and other factors can turn an otherwise healthy sex life into a non-existent one in a marriage (Mintle, 2015). According to Mintle (2015), men use sex to meet physical and emotional needs; for them, lovemaking brings closeness and feelings of being loved, and it relieves day-to-day stress and builds confidence. When sex is withheld in a marital relationship, the husband can become withdrawn and depressed; his sense of feeling loved is at stake because his way of communicating with his wife has been cut off, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and

inadequacy (Mintle, 2015). Moreover, Meyer (2017) suggested that withholding sex to punish a spouse breaks the marital bond. A marriage that loses its passion becomes more like a friendship and can cease to be a marriage based on love and intimacy (Heller, 2016).

Many women find sex to be the deepest form of love and connection, and while most women do love sex, the desire for sex can easily be inhibited by tiredness, resentment, or uterine pain (Watson, 2017). Also, women can become overwhelmed by such things as the laundry, children, and work, which can inhibit their desire to have sex or crave sex until their bodies are aroused; for many women, the process may take up to 45 minutes (Watson, 2017). Experiencing regular orgasms is not as easy for women as it is for men, but it is necessary for continued desire. In addition, women may prefer having sex in one position or by routine, because there is more guarantee of pleasure, which allows them to relax in the moment (Watson, 2017). Conflicts can arise when one person is unhappy with the quality or quantity (or both) of sex in the relationship (Mintle, 2015), and where there is a lack or disruption of the enjoyment of sex, there becomes a lack of commitment, which can open the door for pornography use (Ludden, 2019).

According to Willoughby et al. (2016), pornography use appears to be associated with less commitment to one's romantic partner. Numerous studies have examined the connection between pornography viewing and marital quality, with findings most often revealing a negative association (Perry, 2016a). Individuals who view pornography likely do so to escape the issues in the marriage that have led to sexual dissatisfaction (Willoughby et al. 2016). Typically, among men, pornography use negatively influences their conscious and/or unconscious expectations of body image, intimacy, and sexual relations, which affects their sexual and romantic relationships (Perry, 2016a). Doran and Price (2014) found that pornography use reduced the positive relationship between sex frequency and happiness for married men. Similarly, Yucel and

Gassanov's (2010) analysis of 433 married couples found that a husband's pornography use was associated with lower sexual satisfaction. Also, Schneider's (2000) study reported that 68% of respondents, 91 women and three men, whose partners used pornography expressed a decrease in sexual satisfaction and diminished sexual intimacy, and 52% reported a loss of interest in relational/marital sex. Additionally, a study by Guatam and Batra (1996) concluded that sexual-related factors and sexual dysfunctions lead to 22% of divorces.

### **Finances**

Financial problems were cited as a main reason for divorce due to the stress they caused within relationships for over half of the participants in a sample of 52 divorced individuals (Hawkins et al., 2012). Within the same sample of divorced individuals, 40% found that the most endorsed reason for divorce was how one's spouse handled money. In a separate study conducted by Scott et al. (2013), financial problems were cited as a key contributor to divorce by 36.7% of participants and by at least one partner out of 55.6% of couples. Of the 55.6% of couples who had at least one partner endorsed financial problems as a contributor to divorce, 50% represented couples in which both partners agreed that financial problems were a major reason for divorce. According to another survey released by SunTrust Bank (Dickler, 2018), which included people in a relationship or partnership, finances are the leading cause of stress in a relationship. The survey stated that some 35% of all respondents experiencing relationship stress reported that money was the primary cause of friction (Dickler, 2018). Among respondents aged 44 to 54 with relationship stress, 44% reported that money was the primary cause (Dickler, 2018). Perceived addiction to internet pornography is increasingly a focus of attention and has been verified by using methods of observation and experiments (Grubbs et al., 2015).

Accordingly, people who struggle with pornography addiction frequently have financial problems as a result of their pornography use (Hull, 2020).

Although pornography use has become more accessible and affordable, it remains one of the most profitable industries in the world, as millions of pornography users pay for its content (Perry & Schleifer, 2018). The pornography industry receives an estimated \$16.9 billion each year in the United States alone (Hull, 2020). Pornography use could impact marital stability through its influence on marriage-related factors, such as finances (Perry & Schleifer, 2018). To this extent, as a significant amount of money is being spent on pornographic materials, this may become a source of marital conflict (Perry & Schleifer, 2018).

Related to this issue, studies have shown that the accessibility of sexually explicit materials has become an issue for employers who monitor their employees' online activity (Perry & Schleifer, 2018). Seventy percent of all internet pornography is viewed between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., when most employees should be working (Mecham et al., 2018). A 2018 survey found that nearly 60% of respondents watched pornography while at work, with half of them viewing pornography on a monthly basis and 10% viewing it on a daily basis (McDonald, 2018). When employees are confronted with cases of internet abuse, such as the unrestricted use of the internet for personal purposes during standard working hours, which may include accessing inappropriate content such as pornographic material, managers react with job suspensions or dismissals (Young, 2010). Research suggests that if a marriage partner were to lose their job due to viewing pornography at work, this would result in significant financial and emotional strain on the marriage (Perry & Schleifer, 2018). Overall, pornography use can lead to marital and relationship problems, difficulties at and dismissal from work, financial problems, an

obsession with sexuality, and an urgent need for the individual to gain control over their own behavior (Egan & Parmar, 2013).

### **Religion**

In the Christian marriage, the husband is the head of the marriage and the household (as Christ is the head of the Church), and the wife is to submit to her husband as he submits to God (as the church is to Christ) (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010). Marriage partners are free to love one another in a completely unselfish spirit, and one should be able to love and enjoy the other person without fear of rejection, abuse, or domination (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010). However, one of the negative consequences of the dissolution of the biblical traditional model is the increase in divorce rates (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010). Studies have shown that for men who began watching pornography, their chance of divorce went from 5% to 10% over a two-year span, and for women, that number increased from 6% to 18% over the same time period (Shultz, 2016).

It is important to consider such factors as religion when evaluating sex, marriage, and pornography (Brown et al., 2016). However, individuals with strong ties to religion are less likely to report pornography use (Poulsen et al., 2013). Ley (2016) also found that when there is a conflict between a person's religious sexual values and their choice to use pornography, it contributes to their psychological and spiritual struggles. This conflict can create a negative association between the frequency of pornography consumption and sexual satisfaction for men with stronger ties to conventional religion (Perry & Whitehead, 2018). Religious people are likely to disapprove of alternative/nontraditional sexual behaviors, restrict their sexual fantasies, have fewer sex partners, and use less pornography in general (Ley, 2016). For females, being highly religious, having few sexual partners, and waiting to experience sexual intimacy until late

in the relationship are typical predictors of non-pornography use, but men are more likely to use pornography regardless (Poulsen et al., 2013). Consequently, religious factors are strong predictors of use or non-use. According to Perry (2016b), devout religious Americans tend to be morally opposed to pornography use, and those who frequently view pornography are likely to be unaffiliated with religion.

It has been determined that religion creates regret and depressive tendencies among pornography users (Grubbs et al., 2015). Grubbs et al. (2015) published a study that examined the role that religious belief and moral disapproval of using pornography play in the perceived addiction to internet pornography. The study indicated that religious individuals tend to disapprove of pornography use (Grubbs et al., 2015). A study by Maas et al. (2018) found that the negative association between pornography use and relationship satisfaction was stronger for those who were less accepting of pornography (Maas et al., 2018). Also, a study by Perry (2016b) reported that marriages that are homogamous in terms of religious tradition, denomination, beliefs, and/or practices tend to be more satisfying for both partners and are less prone to divorce. Perry's (2016b) study, conducted with data from Wave 1 of the Portraits of American Life Study (PALS), examined how the pornography consumption of married Americans was potentially related to the religious commitment of their spouses. Perry (2016b) further stated that spousal religiosity has a strong negative relationship on spouses viewing pornography. Moreover, Perry (2016b) also reported that for married persons who are frequent consumers of pornography, having a devoutly religious spouse may result in either 1) the spouse using pornography may feel more guilty about their viewing pornography considering their spouse's moral convictions, or 2) a greater likelihood of interpersonal conflicts over their use of pornography. In the first instance, the pornography user may associate the marriage itself with

discouragement and failure because of their guilty feeling. In the second instance, the pornography user may experience greater tension and marital dissatisfaction because of interpersonal conflicts. Overall, the general consensus is that there is a weak link between pornography use and people who attend an organized worship service at least once a week and identify as religious (Shultz, 2016).

### **Domestic Violence and Abuse**

In a study completed by Scott et al. (2013), where 52 divorced people were interviewed, domestic violence was cited by over a quarter of the individuals as a reason for divorce. Physical abuse is the most recognized type of domestic violence; it typically involves pushing, hitting, beating, and could involve using weapons (June & Black, 2002). Domestic abuse usually starts with small contacts, which then escalate to more serious attacks (June & Black, 2002). Domestic violence can lead to physical, emotional, and mental health issues, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, anxiety, panic, and substance abuse disorders (Sukeri & Normanieza, 2017). Domestic violence is considered mild when neither partner has been physically harmed, neither partner has a fear of being harmed, or when the violence is mild; however, mild domestic violence can quickly and easily escalate to physical and/or emotional abuse (Ripley, 2014).

Another type of domestic violence is psychological abuse, which is the act of destroying a person's self-worth through harassment and threats and could also include depriving one of food and sleep (June & Black, 2002). Another type of abuse is sexual abuse, which in a marriage is considered marital rape (June & Black, 2002). In Scott et al.'s (2013) study, domestic violence was cited as a contributing factor to divorce by 23.5% of participants; the participants also described how the abuse developed gradually until the severity of it intensified to

insurmountable levels. The participants also listed verbal abuse and physical aggression as the main types of domestic violence they had experienced and stated that they initially believed they could work through the problem, but later found it to be unbearable and the final straw in their relationships (Scott et al., 2013).

Pornography use opens the door to many forms of abuse in a marriage and relationships. The use of pornography by an abusive spouse can incite marital rape and other forms of sexual abuse with its visualizations of erotic illustrations and distortions of sexual activity (Dezelski, 2017). If someone in the relationship is already being abused, studies have shown that pornography use intensifies the abuse that is being perpetrated (Dezelski, 2017). Pornography represents women and men in many different ways, but almost all images of and writings about pornography characterize females as subordinate to males (DeKeseredy, 2015). One area that research is increasingly focused on is the contribution of sexually-explicit material to partnership abuse, which is also known as date rape or non-stranger sexual aggression (Ellibee & Kelly, 2015). Eleven percent of female patients at an urban community health center stated that they were forced or threatened to participate in sexual behaviors that the perpetrator had seen in pornographic videos (Ellibee & Kelly, 2015). Further, a study conducted by Bridges et al. (2010) analyzed pornographic videos and found that they exhibit high levels of aggression in both verbal and physical forms. Of the 304 scenes analyzed, 88.2% contained physical aggression including spanking, slapping, and gagging, and 48.7% also included the verbal aggression of name-calling (Bridges et al., 2010). The results of one qualitative study found that women were pressured to engage in anal sex with their male partners, suggesting that women were sometimes pressured to imitate sex acts that their partner first saw in pornography (Ellibee & Kelly, 2015).

**Infidelity**

Marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman, instituted by and publicly entered into before God, and consummated by sexual intercourse (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010). It is intended to be an exclusive contract between one man and one woman, issuing a permanent, mutually supportive partnership (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010). Physical adultery includes participating in any physical sexual activity with anyone other than one's spouse (Cloud & Townsend, 1999). A faithful spouse is one who can be trusted, depended upon, and believed in (Cloud & Townsend, 1999), and infidelity breaks this faithful bond. A person can also commit emotional adultery when they become emotionally attached to another person and intentionally keep the relationship secret from their spouse (Cloud & Townsend, 1999). Sexual fidelity is a key norm in the institution of marriage; therefore, any occurrence of extramarital sex or infidelity could contribute to the dissolution of a marriage (Previti & Amato, 2004). The National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs) reported that about 25% of married men and 15% of married women have had extramarital sex at least once (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). A partner's infidelity may cause a loss of trust and sexual dissatisfaction as the spouse who is faithful feels betrayed both emotionally and physically (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). Extramarital sex damages the relationship of the faithful spouse; the infidelity causes a reduction in both emotional and physical pleasure (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). The results of a 17-year longitudinal study ( $N=1,475$ ) conducted by Previti and Amato (2004) suggested that extramarital sex lowers marital happiness and increases the likelihood of divorce.

In the United States population as a whole, infidelity statistics indicate that more than 50% of men and women admit to committing infidelity in relationships, and 22% of men admit to infidelity at least once in their marriages (Hatch, 2019). Pornography use has been found to be

associated with less sexual satisfaction and commitment, as well as infidelity among couples (Brown et al., 2016). Prior research has indicated that individuals (particularly women) who have a partner who uses pornography often perceive it as a type of infidelity (Maas et al., 2018). Those who do not view pornography at all had an infidelity rate that was at least half that of those who do (Maddox et al., 2011). Research has shown that risky sexual behaviors, such as no condom use and infidelity, are also linked to pornography use (Negash et al., 2015). Additionally, watching pornography reminds viewers of previous and potential sex partners, which in turn may lower their dedication to the person with whom they are actually involved (Streep, 2014). Streep's (2014) study also affirmed that over time, exposure to pornography became a factor in infidelity. Extramarital sex can take a toll both psychologically and spiritually on individuals and can contribute to insecurities and stress, which can ultimately cause instability in a marriage (Kostenberger & Jones, 2010).

### **Gender Differences and Pornography Use**

Historically, pornography use has been associated primarily with men; however, according to Mychal (2012), women are just as much involved as men. A study of 49 males and 51 females completed by Husain and Qureshi (2016) revealed that the majority of the respondents, 74%, were found to be interested in viewing pornographic material. For most men, viewing pornography began prior to marriage, usually during the adolescent stage (age 13), when they first encountered the materials either on the internet or in magazines (Tarver, 2010). However, women typically begin watching pornography later in life, around the age of 18, and most reportedly used it for masturbation approximately one time per month or less (Tarver, 2010).

Men often use pornography on their own (Mychal, 2012), typically late at night, and for more immediate sexual pleasures, such as masturbation (Tarver, 2010). However, most women would rather watch pornography with their spouses (Husain & Qureshi, 2016) as a prelude to sexual intimacy (Tarver, 2010) to enhance their sexual experiences (Mychal, 2012). Men are quick to be aroused and relatively quick to achieve orgasm (Heller, 2016); they are especially aroused visually, so looking at women in magazines, videos, and online pornography can play a big role in their sexual life (Heller, 2016). Pornography does not always have this same effect on women. Studies have shown that women may be intrigued by the activity of what is happening when watching pornography even though it may not stimulate a desire for them to have sex (Traeen & Nilsen, 2014).

According to Mychal (2012), looking at pornography regularly can have a negative effect on sexual performance because the individual may start requiring stronger visual signals to become sexually stimulated. For some men who look at pornography regularly, having sex may no longer induce an orgasm (Mychal, 2012). Interaction effects revealed that the negative effects of pornography use on marital quality applied mainly to husbands but not wives (Perry, 2016a). Although married men report higher marital satisfaction than married women, they also report a greater frequency of pornography use (Perry, 2016b). However, a man who becomes addicted to pornography can become so accustomed to being sexually aroused by the women in pornography that he may eventually find it difficult to perform sexually with his spouse (Kleponis, 2010). The National Council for Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity (NCSAC) defines sexual addiction as “a persistent and escalating pattern of sexual behavior acted out despite increasing negative consequences to self and others” (June & Black, 2002, p. 35). Pornography addiction can

separate the user from their partner in terms of both time and emotions, and the resulting emotional detachment can be very dangerous to the viability of the marriage (Feurman, 2020).

In their study of married or cohabitating couples, Poulsen et al. (2013) found that men's pornography use was negatively associated with both partner's sexual quality, while women's pornography viewing was positively associated with their own sexual quality. This is a positive effect for females and was associated with their using pornography with their spouse rather than alone. Pornography consumption for men has a negative effect on their sexual ideas, expectations, and evaluations of their own sex lives (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Maddox et al., 2011), whereas pornography consumption for women might help them better understand their own bodies and sexual tastes (Perry, 2016a). Married men report higher marital satisfaction than married women, as well as a greater frequency of pornography use (Perry, 2016b). For women, their own pornography use may improve their relationship quality either as a way of learning about their own sexuality or as using it as part of sex with their husband (Groves et al., 2011). While men may use pornography as an outlet when otherwise sexually unsatisfied, when women use pornography, it is seen as an adjunct to lovemaking, to assist in raising the quality of sex for both persons (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011). Many psychologists have investigated the effects of pornography use on individuals as well as marriages, but most of this research has looked for evidence to confirm the assumed dangers of pornography (Ludden, 2018).

Given the variability in pornography use among couples, it is important to study the individual and gender differences when considering associations of pornography use with relationship outcomes (Maas et al., 2018). For men who were more accepting of pornography, more pornography use was associated with more relationship satisfaction, and the opposite was true for men who were less accepting of pornography (Maas et al., 2018). For women who were

high in pornography acceptance, there was little difference in relationship satisfaction; however, for women low in pornography acceptance, pornography use was associated with less relationship satisfaction (Maas et al., 2018). Men who were more anxiously attached and used more pornography were more satisfied with their relationship than women who were more anxiously attached and used more pornography (Maas et al., 2018). Hald (2006) noted that gender differences in social acceptability, compartmentalizing gender stereotypes, sex roles, and strategies used for identifying a mate are key factors in understanding gender differences in pornography consumption. Causation is uncertain; perhaps pornography use leads to relationship problems, or maybe relationship problems lead to pornography use. However, there is a third possibility: a combined perspective known as the *third variable problem* (Luden, 2018). It could be that both pornography use and relationship problems are symptoms of an underlying issue (Ludden, 2018). Determining the presence of one or more underlying issues is the purpose of this current study.

### **Chapter Summary**

Conflicts are inevitable in life and may be defined as types of discord that threaten the relationship between two people (June & Black, 2002). When conflicts arise, the ideal response for both parties would be to try to communicate and resolve the issues, but this is not always possible. There are many issues that contribute to marital conflict (small issues that can be resolved quickly), marital problems (larger issues that may take a long time to resolve), and marital dissatisfaction, including mistrust, poor communication, sexual problems, poor management of finances, religion, infidelity, domestic violence, and abuse. All of these issues, as noted in this chapter, can in some way be linked to pornography use and if not resolved can lead to divorce.

Could one resolution to the conflict and problem of pornography use be couples using it together? Perry's (2016a) study was not able to make this determination. However, Doran and Price's (2014), study loosely suggested that joint pornography use can create fewer problems for couples. This current study will attempt an answer to the question.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

### Overview

The chosen research design for this study is a self-report survey/questionnaire. This self-report questionnaire will be used to determine the prevalence of pornography use, and to what degree the use impaired marital quality. This self-report questionnaire will be geared towards testing if marital quality decreases if spouses watch pornography together, to determine if there is a bi-directional effect between pornography use and marital quality, and to discern if pornography use began as a result of marital dissatisfaction. The survey will be designed to assess marital quality, sexual intimacy, pornography use, and pornography's effect on both marriage and divorce. The respondents for the survey will be male and female heterosexual married or previously married individuals between the ages of 21 and 75 who viewed pornography via DVDs, CDs, streaming videos (i.e., Netflix, etc.), and/or the internet during the time of the marriage. The length of time spent viewing pornography will also be a focal point.

The general format for most self-report questionnaires is Likert scale responses in terms of frequency or experience. Questions for this self-report survey/questionnaire will be taken from both the CPUI and the CSI-4, and the survey will also be inclusive of questions on marital quality and pornography use. Respondents will answer each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from a great deal to not at all, strongly agree to strongly disagree, always to never, very easy to very difficult, very satisfied to very dissatisfied, very good to very bad, very likely to very unlikely, and much better to much worse. The questions will be rated as 5 being the greatest to 1 being the least. Respondents will read the questions and respond to them by themselves and without interference. The questions will be geared to assess the degree and impact of pornography use before and after marital dissatisfaction began.

### **Design**

The self-report survey falls into the category of quantitative research design. Quantitative research can be defined as “a formal, objective, systematic process used to describe variables, test relationships between them, and examine cause and effect associations between variables” (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019, p. 27). Quantitative research generates numerical data and seeks to find the true answer by testing hypotheses using objective and impartial scientific methods (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Quantitative research tests a hypothesis, which is the assumption about the relationships between dependent and independent variables, by drawing a representative sample of participants from a known population, measuring the variables, and testing them using statistical analyses (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). The null hypothesis assumes that there is no relationship between dependent and independent variables and is then either accepted or rejected based on the outcomes of the statistical analyses (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019).

Because the purpose of this present study is to determine a cause-and-effect relationship between pornography use and divorce, the category of quantitative design that will be used is descriptive. This design describes individuals, events, or conditions by studying them as they are in nature (Siedlecki, 2020). Descriptive designs examine the characteristics of a population; it identifies problems that exist within a unit, an organization, or a population; it also looks at variations in characteristics or practices between individuals or groups. (Siedlecki, 2020). The type of quantitative research descriptive design tool that will be used in this study is the survey research method. This method features the use of self-report measures on selected samples. It is a flexible approach that can be used to study a wide variety of basic and applied research questions (Price et al., 2015). This method has two important characteristics: 1) The variables of interest

are measured using self-reports. 2) Researchers have a strong preference for large random samples (approximately 300 respondents) because they provide the most accurate estimates of what is true in the population (Price et al., 2015). When the researcher uses a good sampling method to obtain representative samples, it increases the researcher's confidence that the results will provide a good basis for deductive reasoning of interests of the larger population (Warner, 2013). In the first characteristic, survey researchers ask participants (who are often called respondents) to report directly on their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; in the second characteristic, surveys can be long or short, and can be conducted in person, by telephone, through the mail, or over the internet (Price et al., 2015). Survey data are often analyzed using statistics, and most survey research is non-experimental (Price et al., 2015).

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: Will married couples who view pornography together have a lower quality of marriage than those who do not?

RQ2: Did pornography use cause problems in a marriage or did problems in the marriage lead to pornography use?

RQ3: Were there pre-existing problems in the marriage that led to pornography use?

### **Hypotheses**

Ha1: Marital quality is better when husbands and wives watch pornography together.

Ha2: There is a bi-directional causality between pornography use and marriage.

Ha3: Pornography, when used by one partner alone, causes problems in the marriage.

### **Participants/Recruitment and Setting**

The chosen method for this study is a self-report questionnaire also termed "survey." Researchers prefer large random samples (approximately 300 respondents) for this method

because they provide the most accurate estimates of what is true in the population (Price et al., 2015). Self-report questionnaires can be administered in person or online. In this case, the self-report questionnaire will be administered online via SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is an online survey development software that allows users to create and send surveys; it also, by its user's choice, collects and stores data and produces reports. The web link to this self-report questionnaire will be distributed via SurveyMonkey to an audience throughout the United States that meets specific criteria and demographics. SurveyMonkey will also be used to collect and record responses to obtain the results. The results will be analyzed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (IBM, n.d.). The survey will be voluntary for the participants and the responses will be anonymous.

### **Instrumentation**

A self-report study is a method of collecting data whereby, people respond to questions about themselves regarding a wide range of topics such as personality traits, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, preferences, and behaviors (Siedlecki, 2020). The self-report survey mentioned above, the CPUI, was designed to assess marital quality; however, the CPUI does not measure pornography use before or after marriage quality has diminished, nor does it assess a couple's marriage quality when viewing pornography together. The CSI-32, also previously mentioned, was designed to measure a person's marital satisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007); however, it also does not measure marital quality when pornography has been introduced and used within the marriage. The survey to be used for this current study will consist of a combination of the CPUI, and a reduced version of the CSI-32, the CSI-4, and also a few additional questions designed to gather data that is inclusive of marital quality and pornography use by married couples. The importance of studying the impact of pornography on marital quality has intensified as the

internet has dramatically increased the accessibility, anonymity, and affordability of pornography (Cooper, 1998; Doran & Price, 2014). The current study represents a first attempt to collect data that is recent and can be used to assess whether using pornography influences marital quality before and/or after pornography use, and how it affects marital quality when spouses use it together.

### **Procedures**

The self-report questionnaire to be used for this current study will be added to SurveyMonkey. The survey will be used as a measurement tool to assess whether marital dissatisfaction was caused by pornography use and to determine if pornography can help marriages if the husband and wife view it together. Once the questionnaire has been added to SurveyMonkey, a web link will be created. The web link will then be distributed to potential participants that meet certain criteria and demographics. The web link will be sent via e-mail in SurveyMonkey.

### **Measures**

The self-report questionnaire to be used for the current survey will be similar to the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) and Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). The survey will include the CPUI, the CSI-4, and additional questions regarding the effects of pornography use on marital quality. Both the CPUI and the CSI-4 have been tested for reliability and validity.

### **Controls**

Two variables were utilized as control variables given their previous associations with marital quality due to pornography use. Previous findings affirmed that married couples who used pornography more than twice during their marriage were more likely to experience a

marital separation in the six years following their reported pornography viewing compared to those who did not view pornography at all (Perry, 2017); however, Perry's (2017) study does not state if pornography use was the cause of the divorce/separation. The control variables of marital quality before pornography use and marital quality after pornography use were included in this model.

### **Marital Quality**

The CSI-32 is one of the most frequently used measures of marital quality in psychology research; it contains 32 items and has a variety of different response scales and formats (Funk & Rogge, 2007). A study was completed by Forouzesht et al. (2017) to test the convergent reliability and validity of the CSI-32. According to the results of the exploratory factor analysis, four factors were identified in the Persian version of the CSI-32: marital happiness, the warmth of the relationship, being together, and right choice (Forouzesht et al., 2017), all of which are necessary for this current study. The results showed that four factors of the CSI-32 are valid and reliable; the internal consistency reliability of the index was 0.96 (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ), and the convergence between the CSI-32 and Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) was calculated to be 0.9 (Forouzesht et al., 2017). Funk and Rogge (2007) also tested the convergence validity of the CSI-32 and found that the scales demonstrated strong convergent validity with the existing measures of relationship satisfaction. The scales were shown to offer increased precision and power in assessing relationship satisfaction while retaining strong convergent and construct validity (Funk & Rogge, 2007).

### **Sexual Satisfaction**

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) is a self-report questionnaire that assesses seven measures of couple relationships within three categories, including consensus in

decision-making, values, and affection (Hadley et al., 2013). The RDAS includes 14 items, each of which asks the respondents to rate certain aspects of their relationship on a 5- or 6-point scale (Hadley et al., 2013). Reliability of the RDAS has been found to have a Cronbach's alpha (reliability) of .90 and validity for the RDAS is supported by its high correlation with a similar measure, the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) (Hadley et al., 2013). The correlation between the RDAS and the MAT was .68 ( $p < .01$ ); the correlation between the RDAS and the original Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was .97 ( $p < .01$ ) (Hadley et al., 2013).

### **Pornography Use**

The CPUI is a 40-item self-report questionnaire designed to place high importance on the indications of compulsive and addictive tendencies to online pornography use (Grubbs et al., 2010). It demonstrated acceptable internal reliability in both a religious and secular sample and can be administered in a clinical sample of participants who report problematic pornography use; it possesses considerable promise for accurately assessing levels of pornography addiction (Grubbs et al., 2010). Factor analyses of the CPUI revealed some measure of construct validity as well as a three-factor structure that demonstrated acceptable reliability ( $\alpha > .80$ ) for each factor (Grubbs et al., 2010). In the self-report questionnaire created for this current survey, respondents are to respond to questions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from a great deal to not at all, strongly agree to strongly disagree, always to never, very easy to very difficult, very satisfied to very dissatisfied, very good to very bad, very likely to very unlikely, and much better to much worse. The questions will be rated as 5 being the greatest to 1 being the least.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analytical program that will be used to analyze the data is Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is an industry-standard software used by social science

researchers for complex statistical data analysis and offers advanced statistical analysis, a vast library of machine-learning algorithms, text analysis, open-source extensibility, integration with big data, and seamless deployment (IBM, n.d.). SPSS will be used to run a Cronbach's alpha analysis to compare the data collected with norming and/or research data that is reported by the instrument.

Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) analysis is the most commonly used test to determine the internal consistency of an instrument. In this statistical analysis, the average of all correlations in every combination of split-halves is determined. Instruments with questions that have more than two responses can be used in this test. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  result is a number between 0 and 1, and an acceptable reliability score is one that is greater than or equal to 0.70 (Heale & Twycross, 2018).

The expectation is that when couples use pornography together, there could be a positive effect on the marriage; if there is a negative effect from the pornography use, there could have been a problem in the marriage before the pornography use began. The variables being measured are male and female heterosexual married or previously married individuals between the ages of 18 and 74 who viewed pornography via DVDs, CDs, streaming videos (i.e., Netflix, etc.), and/or the internet during the time of the marriage.

### **Chapter Summary**

As previously mentioned, quantitative research generates numerical data and seeks to find the true answer by testing hypotheses using objective and impartial scientific methods (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). For this current study, the quantitative research to be tested will be that of marital quality and sexual satisfaction in regard to pornography use. The instrument to be used to collect the data for this current study will be an anonymous, self-administered questionnaire. The anonymity of the survey means that personal, identifying information will not

be collected. The survey will be designated for those who are married or divorced and have used pornography over the course of their marriage. Solicitation of participants will be via SurveyMonkey. The survey will be sent to a targeted distribution set of people that meet the previously mentioned criteria and demographics. The survey will consist of approximately 50 questions regarding marital quality, sexual satisfaction, and pornography use. The survey will be measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from a great deal to not at all, strongly agree to strongly disagree, always to never, very easy to very difficult, very satisfied to very dissatisfied, very good to very bad, very likely to very unlikely, and much better to much worse. The findings from this study may be biased due to the fact that the sample will be individuals who responded to the e-mail inquiries and were willing to participate in the survey.

Historically, studies have shown that pornography use has been a contributing factor in the divorce rate in America. For men who began watching pornography, their chance of divorce went from 5% to 10% over a two-year span, and for women, that number increased from 6% to 18% over the same time period (Shultz, 2016). This current study will attempt to determine if pornography use caused marital problems or if there were pre-existing problems in the marriage before the use of pornography. This current study will also seek to determine if married couples who view pornography together have a better quality of marriage than married couples who don't.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between internet pornography use and marital quality. First, the study examined the effects of online pornography use on marital quality when husbands and wives viewed it together, with the understanding that the marital quality would increase. A second purpose was to determine if pornography use caused the problems in the marriage, or if the problems in the marriage led to the use of pornography. A third and final purpose was to determine if pornography use caused problems in the marriage when used by one partner alone.

A sample of 784 participants was obtained during data collection. Participants completed a questionnaire through the online survey tool SurveyMonkey. Participants responded to demographic questions as well as questions surrounding their marital quality while using pornography during their marriage. All participants completed an appropriate consent form before taking the questionnaire, and the data collection procedures were approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board. Specific questions for the survey were created to procure a target market. In order to be eligible to participate in the survey, participants must have answered “yes” to the following questions:

- Are you between the age of 21 to 75?
- Are you currently or were you previously in a heterosexual marriage?
- Is your marital status married, divorced, separated, or widowed?
- Did you use pornography during your marriage?

Participants who answered “no” to any of these questions were disqualified from the survey.

This chapter describes the descriptive analysis used to examine whether the hypotheses were supported by the data. The independent variable being pornography use and the dependent variable being marital quality, because pornography use may have a direct effect on marital quality. A summary of the findings is presented.

**Descriptive Analysis**

**Participant Demographics**

As previously stated, a sample of 784 participants was obtained during data collection, 617 (95.81%) were between the ages of 21 to 75 ( $M = 1.04$ ,  $SD = .20$ ). Of those 617 participants, 474 (76.95%) were previously in a heterosexual marriage, and 442 (92.28%) were either married, divorced, separated, or widowed. Participants who were inclusive of the above demographics and used pornography during the time of their marriages resulted in 322 (73.29%) usable cases, of which 152 (47.2%) participants were male, and 169 (52.48%) were female. To analyze the research questions, a data analysis was performed using IBM (n.d.) SPSS statistics version 28.0. See Tables 4.1 through 4.1c for more detailed statistical information on the demographics.

**Table 4.1** *Case Processing Summary*

		N	%
Cases	Valid	322	41.1
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	462	58.9
	Total	784	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Table 4.2** *Descriptive Statistics of Survey Demographics*

Measure – Control Variables	N	%
Are you between the age of 21 to 75?	644	95.8%
Are you currently or were you previously in a heterosexual marriage?	616	76.95
Is your marital status married, divorced, separated, or widowed?	479	92.28
Did you use pornography during your marriage?	438	73.29

**Table 4.3** *Descriptive Statistics Age Range of Survey Participants*

Age		
Answer Choices	Responses	
18-29	23.96%	184
30-44	27.60%	212
45-60	33.33%	256
> 60	15.10%	116

**Table 4.4** *Descriptive Statistics Gender of Survey Participants*

Gender		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	44.40%	341
Female	55.60%	427

**Online Pornography Use and Marital Quality Scales**

**Time spent viewing online pornography.** Participants were asked if they spent more than five hours a week viewing online pornography. Of the 322 participants who fit within the study criteria, only 8.95% (N = 29) responded that they view pornography more than five hours per week. Fifty percent (N = 159) of the participants responded that they never view online pornography more than five hours per week. The answers were on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from always to never, with 5 being always to 1 being never. See Table 4.2 for more details on the responses.

**Table 4.5** *Frequency statistics of online viewing of pornography*

Answer Choices	N	%
Always	29	8.95%
Usually	26	8.02%
Sometimes	44	13.58%
Rarely	64	19.75%
Never	159	49.69%

**Marital Quality**

**Sexual quality.** Participants were asked how much they enjoy having sex with their spouses. The answers were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from a great deal to not at all, with 5 being a great deal to 1 being not at all. Of the 322 participants, 42% (N = 134) responded that they enjoyed having sex a great deal with their spouses. See Table 4.3a for more details on the responses.

**Marital quality before using pornography alone.** Participants were asked how was their marital quality was before using pornography alone? The answers were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very good to very bad, with 5 being very good to 1 being very bad. Of the 322 participants, 43% (N = 137) responded that their marital quality was very good. See Table 4.3b for more details on the responses.

**Marital quality after using pornography.** Participants were asked how did viewing pornography alone affect their marriage. The answers were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from much better to much worse, with 5 being much better to 1 being much worse. Of the 322 participants, 64% (N = 205) stated that their marital quality was about the same when viewing pornography alone. See Table 4.3c for more details on the responses.

**Marital quality when viewing pornography together.** Participants were asked if pornography use affected their marriage when they viewed it together with their spouses. The answers were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from much better to much worse with 5 being

much better to 1 being much worse. Of the 322 participants, 55% (N = 178) responded that their marital quality remained about the same when they viewed online pornography together with their spouse. See Table 4.3d for more details on the responses.

**Negative effect of pornography use.** Participants were asked if they felt pornography use had a negative effect on their marriage. The answers were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from a great deal to not at all, with 5 being a great deal to 1 being not at all. Of the 322 participants, 48% (N = 154) responded that online pornography use did not at all have a negative effect on their marriage. See Table 4.3e for more details on the responses.

**Positive effect of pornography use.** Participants were asked if they felt pornography use had a positive effect on their marriage. The answers were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from a great deal to not at all, with 5 being a great deal to 1 being not at all. Of the 322 participants, 25% (N=80) responded that online pornography use had a moderately positive effect on their marital quality, and 28% (N = 91) responded that online pornography use did not at all affect their marital quality. See Table 4.3f for more details on the responses.

**Table 4.6** *Descriptive Statistics on pornography use and marital quality*

	N	M	SD
How much do you enjoy having sex with your spouse?	322	2.16	1.27
How was your marital quality before using online pornography alone?	322	2.04	1.10
How did online pornography affect your marriage when you used it alone?	322	2.75	0.88
How did online pornography affect your marriage after using it together?	322	2.70	0.95
To what degree do you feel that your relationship with your spouse is rewarding?	322	2.20	1.30
To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together?	322	3.70	1.23
To what degree were you satisfied with your marriage before using online pornography with your spouse?	322	2.16	1.09
To what degree do you feel that pornography had a positive effect on your marriage?	322	3.37	1.37
To what degree do you feel that pornography had a negative effect on your marriage?	322	3.86	1.38

\*The Likert scale was coded and scored with the smaller number being greater, better, stronger, easier, or always.

**Table 4.7** *How much do you enjoy having sex with your spouse?*

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	N
A great deal	41.61%	134
A lot	25.78%	83
A moderate amount	15.22%	49
A little	9.94%	32
None at all	7.45%	24

**Table 4.8** *How was your marital quality before using online pornography alone?*

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	N
Very good	42.55%	137
Somewhat good	23.60%	76
Neither good nor bad	25.16%	81
Somewhat bad	4.97%	16
Very bad	3.73%	12

**Table 4.9** *How did online pornography affect your marriage when you used it alone?*

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	N
Much better	10.87%	35
Better	16.46%	53
About the same	63.66%	205
Worse	4.35%	14
Much worse	4.66%	15

**Table 4.10** *How did online pornography affect your marriage after using it together?*

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	N
Much Better	12.42%	40
Better	21.74%	70
About the same	55.28%	178
Worse	4.66%	15
Much Worse	5.90%	19

**Table 4.11** *To what degree do you feel that pornography had a negative effect on your marriage?*

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	N
A great deal	11.49%	37
A lot	7.14%	23
A moderate amount	13.04%	42
A little	20.50%	66
None at all	47.83%	154

**Table 4.12** *To what degree do you feel that pornography had a positive effect on your marriage?*

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	N
A great deal	13.98%	45
A lot	12.42%	40
A moderate amount	24.84%	80
A little	20.50%	66
None at all	28.26%	91

## Results

### Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Marital quality is better when husbands and wives view pornography together.

A survey was done to assess numerous variables that might predict to what degree marital quality would increase if partners viewed online pornography together.

#### *Variables for Hypothesis 1*

To test the hypothesis that marital quality is better when husbands and wives watch pornography together, a chi-square crosstabulation was run to analyze the association between the categorical variables. The question analyzed stated: “To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together?” The expected cell frequencies were examined to see whether there were any expected frequencies less than five. There were nine cells (36%) with an expected

cell frequency of less than five (Table 4.4a). Table 4.4 reports the sample of the characteristics of participants who used pornography together with their spouses. Of the 322 participants in the sample, 66.5% (n = 214) used pornography with their spouse from a little to a great deal, while 33.5% (n = 108) stated they did not use pornography with their spouse at all. The Pearson’s Chi-square value was 205.987 with  $df(16)$  and  $p < .001$  giving a critical value of 39.35. Additionally, a Phi alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the strength of the relationship which equaled .800. These results show that there is a statistically significant association with  $p < .05$ .

**Table 4.13** Conditional distribution of outcomes for the variables: To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together? \* How did online pornography affect your marriage after using it together?

		How does online pornography affect your marriage when using it together?					
		Much better	Better	About the same	Worse	Much worse	Total
A great deal	Count	18	6	0	0	0	24
	Expected Count	3.0	5.2	13.3	1.1	1.4	24.0
	% within To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together?	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A lot	Count	11	10	8	1	0	30
	Expected Count	3.7	6.5	16.6	1.4	1.8	30.0
	% within To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together?	36.7%	33.3%	26.7%	3.3%	0.0%	100.0%
A moderate amount	Count	9	26	35	2	1	73
	Expected Count	9.1	15.9	40.4	3.4	4.3	73.0
	% within To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together?	12.3%	35.6%	47.9%	2.7%	1.4%	100.0%
A little	Count	2	27	53	5	0	87
	Expected Count	10.8	18.9	48.1	4.1	5.1	87.0
	% within To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together?	2.3%	31.0%	60.9%	5.7%	0.0%	100.0%
None at all	Count	0	1	82	7	18	108
	Expected Count	13.4	23.5	59.7	5.0	6.4	108.0
	% within To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together?	0.0%	0.9%	75.9%	6.5%	16.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	40	70	178	15	19	322
	Expected Count	40.0	70.0	178.0	15.0	19.0	322.0

% within To what degree do you and your spouse use online pornography together? 12.4% 21.7% 55.3% 4.7% 5.9% 100.0%

\*Crosstabulation

**Table 4.14** Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	205.987 <sup>a</sup>	16	$p < .001$
Likelihood Ratio	209.573	16	$p < .001$
Linear-by-Linear Association	130.757	1	$p < .001$
N of Valid Cases	322		

a. 9 cells (36.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.12.

**Table 4.15** Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.800			$p < .001$
	Cramer's V	0.400			$p < .001$
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	0.638	0.030	14.830	$p < .001$
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	0.633	0.035	14.636	$p < .001$
N of Valid Cases		322			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

An additional Chi-square crosstabulation was run on the following questions to test the association between the categorical variables:

- 1) How did online pornography affect your marriage when you used it alone?
- 2) How did online pornography affect your marriage after using it together?

The expected cell frequencies were examined to see whether there were any expected frequencies less than five. There were 13 cells with an expected cell frequency of less than five (Table 4.4e). Table 4.4d reports the sample of the characteristics of participants who use

pornography together with their spouses. Of the 322 participants in the sample, 79.9% (n = 31) stated that their marital quality was much better after using pornography with their spouse, while 0% (n = 0) stated it was much worse. The Pearson’s Chi-square value was 274.692 with  $df(16)$  and  $p < .001$  giving a critical value of 39.35. A Phi alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the strength of the relationship, which equaled .924. The results show that there is a statistically significant association with  $p < .05$ .

**Table 4.16** To what degree were you satisfied with your marital quality before using online pornography with your spouse? \* How did online pornography affect your marriage after using it together?

		How did online pornography affect your marriage after using it together?					
		Much better	Better	About the same	Worse	Much worse	Total
Much better	Count	22	6	5	0	2	35
	Expected Count	4.3	7.6	19.3	1.6	2.1	35.0
	% within How did online pornography affect your marriage when you used it alone?	62.9%	17.1%	14.3%	0.0%	5.7%	100.0%
Better	Count	9	21	20	2	1	53
	Expected Count	6.6	11.5	29.3	2.5	3.1	53.0
	% How did online pornography affect your marriage when you used it alone?	17.0%	39.6%	37.7%	3.8%	1.9%	100.0%
About the same	Count	9	39	147	5	5	205
	Expected Count	25.5	44.6	113.3	9.5	12.1	205.0
	% within How did online pornography affect your marriage when you used it alone?	4.4%	19.0%	71.7%	2.4%	2.4%	100.0%
Worse	Count	0	1	4	7	2	14
	Expected Count	1.7	3.0	7.7	0.7	0.8	14.0
	% within How does online pornography affect your marriage when you use it alone?	0.0%	7.1%	28.6%	50.0%	14.3%	100.0%
Much worse	Count	0	3	2	1	9	15
	Expected Count	1.9	3.3	8.3	0.7	0.9	15.0
	% within How does online pornography affect your marriage when you use it alone?	0.0%	20.0%	13.3%	6.7%	60.0%	100.0%
	Count	40	70	178	15	19	322
	Expected Count	40.0	70.0	178.0	15.0	19.0	322.0
	% within How does online pornography affect your marriage when you use it alone?	12.4%	21.7%	55.3%	4.7%	5.9%	100.0%

**Table 4.17** Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	274.692	16	$p < .001$
Likelihood Ratio	164.871	16	$p < .001$
Linear-by-Linear Association	93.673	1	$p < .001$
N of Valid Cases	322		

a. 13 cells (52.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .65.

**Table 4.18** Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error	Approximate T	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.924			$p < .001$
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	0.462			$p < .001$
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	0.540	0.060	11.483	$p < .001$
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	0.506	0.055	10.481	$p < .001$
N of Valid Cases		322			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

**Hypothesis 1: Findings**

The analysis found that participants reported an increase in marital quality after viewing pornography together with their partners. The results show that this hypothesis is supported. These results are similar to a study completed by Grove et al., (2011), who found that when couples viewed pornography together there was an increase in sexual frequency and a willingness to try new sexual behaviors. Other studies suggest that the effect of pornography use on couples' well-being may be moderated by pornography acceptance (Nelson et al., 2010).

**Hypothesis 2:** There is bi-directional causality between pornography use and marriage.

A survey was done to assess numerous variables that might predict if pornography use causes problems in the marriage or if problems in the marriage led to the use of pornography.

#### *Variables for Hypothesis 2*

To test this hypothesis an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) analysis was run on the following three questions:

- 1) How was your marital quality before using online pornography?
- 2) To what degree do you feel that pornography use has had a negative effect on your marriage?

To test the hypothesis of whether there is bi-directional causality between marital quality and pornography use a one-way ANOVA test was performed. The one-way ANOVA results ( $F(4, 317) = 6.92, p = .000$ ) show that there was a significant variation of difference between the means of marital quality before pornography use and the negative effect that pornography use had on the marriage as demonstrated by  $p < .05$ .

Additionally, the effect size for  $H_{a2}$  is  $\eta^2 = 0.08$ , which also indicates a significant difference of pornography use and its effect on marital quality. The effect size is indicated by the Eta-squared measurement. This measurement describes how unrelated the data are from one another. The generally accepted measurement rule for eta-squared are:

- $\eta^2 = 0.01$  indicates a small effect;
- $\eta^2 = 0.06$  indicates a medium effect;
- $\eta^2 = 0.14$  indicates a large effect.

Furthermore, the Tukey post hoc also showed that there was a significant mean difference at  $p < .05$ . The negative effect of pornography use on the marital quality is  $p < .001$  at a moderate

amount. This test could not support the hypothesis that there is bi-directional causality between pornography use and marital quality.

**Table 4.19** ANOVA

How was your marital quality before using online pornography?

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	31.316	4	7.829	6.928	0.000
Within Groups	358.237	317	1.130		
Total	389.553	321			

**Table 4.20** ANOVA Effect Sizes

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
How was your marital quality before using online pornography?	Eta-squared	0.080	0.025	0.133
	Epsilon-squared	0.069	0.013	0.122
	Omega-squared	0.069	0.013	0.121
	Fixed-effect			
	Omega-squared	0.018	0.003	0.033
	Random-effect			

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

**Table 4.21** POST HOC TEST

Dependent Variable: How was your marital quality before using online pornography?

Tukey HSD

(I) To what degree do you feel that pornography had a negative effect on your marriage?		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	<i>p</i>	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
A great deal	A lot	-0.72033	0.28227	.082	-1.4948	0.0541
	A moderate amount	-1.05470*	0.23969	.001	-1.7123	-0.3971
	A little	-.73219*	0.21832	.008	-1.3312	-0.1332
	None at all	-0.32959	0.19463	.439	-0.8636	0.2044
A lot	A great deal	0.72033	0.28227	.082	-0.0541	1.4948
	A moderate amount	-0.33437	0.27576	.744	-1.0909	0.4222
	A little	-0.01186	0.25740	1.000	-0.7181	0.6943
	None at all	0.39074	0.23764	.470	-0.2612	1.0427
A moderate amount	A great deal	1.05470*	0.23969	.000	0.3971	1.7123
	A lot	0.33437	0.27576	.744	-0.4222	1.0909
	A little	0.32251	0.20983	.539	-0.2532	0.8982

A little	None at all	.72511*	0.18505	.001	0.2174	1.2328
	A great deal	.73219*	0.21832	.008	0.1332	1.3312
	A lot	0.01186	0.25740	1.000	-0.6943	0.7181
	A moderate amount	-0.32251	0.20983	.539	-0.8982	0.2532
None at all	None at all	0.40260	0.15640	.078	-0.0265	0.8317
	A great deal	0.32959	0.19463	.439	-0.2044	0.8636
	A lot	-0.39074	0.23764	.470	-1.0427	0.2612
	A moderate amount	-.72511*	0.18505	.001	-1.2328	-0.2174
	A little	-0.40260	0.15640	.078	-0.8317	0.0265

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

### Hypothesis 2: Findings

The one-way ANOVA test could not support the hypothesis in either direction as to whether marital problems led to pornography use or that pornography use led to marital problems. The results concluded that there was not a significant relationship between the two. A study completed by Samuel Perry (2017) found similar results. Perry’s (2017) study concluded that there were zero-order correlations between marital quality and pornography use.

**Hypothesis 3:** Pornography, when used by one partner alone, appears to cause problems in the marriage.

### *Variables for Hypothesis 3*

To test the reliability of Hypothesis 3 which states that pornography, when used by one partner alone, caused problems in the marriage, it was necessary to distinguish between those who viewed pornography periodically and those who viewed it often. An independent t-test was run to analyze the following two questions:

- 1) How often do you spend more than five hours a week using pornography on your computer?
- 2) How did online pornography affect your marriage when you used it alone?

Of the 322 participants surveyed 88 stated that they viewed pornography more than five hours a week. Of those 88 participants 35 said their marital quality was much better ( $M = 1.91$ ;  $SD = 1.25$ ) and 53 stated that their marital quality was better ( $M = 3.11$ ;  $SD = 1.25$ ).

The results of the independent t-test showed that there was not a significant difference in marital quality and pornography use when one partner viewed pornography more than five hours a week, and the effect that pornography use had on the marital quality when one of the partners used it alone. The analysis does not support the hypothesis with the results reporting  $t(73.14) = -4.412$  and  $p = <.001$ .

**Table 4.22** Independent t-Test Group Statistics

How does online pornography affect your marriage when you use it alone?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How often do you spend more than 5 hours per week using pornography on your computer?	Much better	35	1.9143	1.24550	0.21053
	Better	53	3.1132	1.25054	0.17178

**Table 4.23** Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	p	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
How often do you spend more than 5 hours per week using pornography on your computer?	Equal variances assumed	0.026	0.873	-4.409	86	0	0	-1.19892	0.27194	-1.73952	-0.65832
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.412	73.143	0	0	-1.19892	0.27171	-1.74043	-0.65741

### Hypothesis 3: Findings

The results of the findings for the independent t-test show that the hypothesis that pornography use causes problems in the marriage when one partner uses it alone was not supported. The findings were similar to those found in a study completed by Scott and his partners (2013). Scott's (2013) study concluded that the most commonly reported major contributors to marital problems were lack of commitment, infidelity, and conflict/arguing. The most common issues that led to divorce were infidelity, domestic violence, and substance use.

**CHARTS**

Chart. 4.1

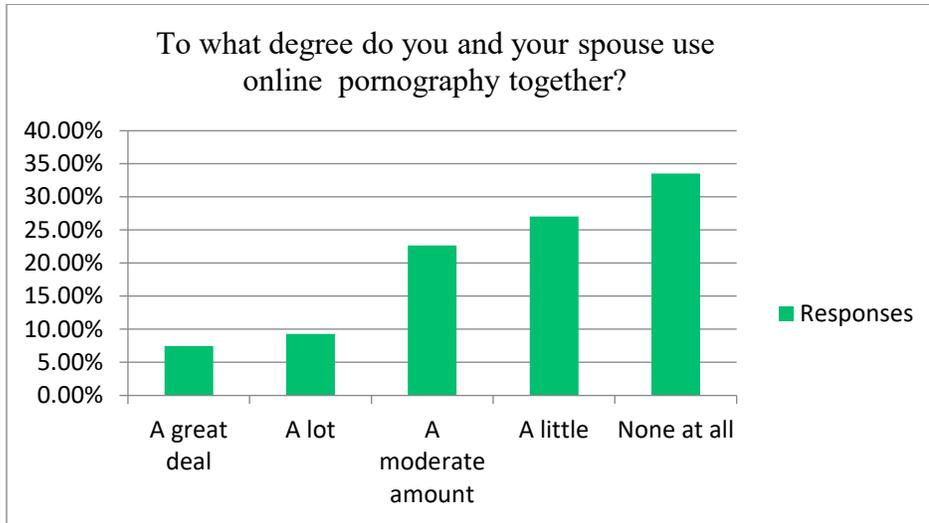


Chart 4.2

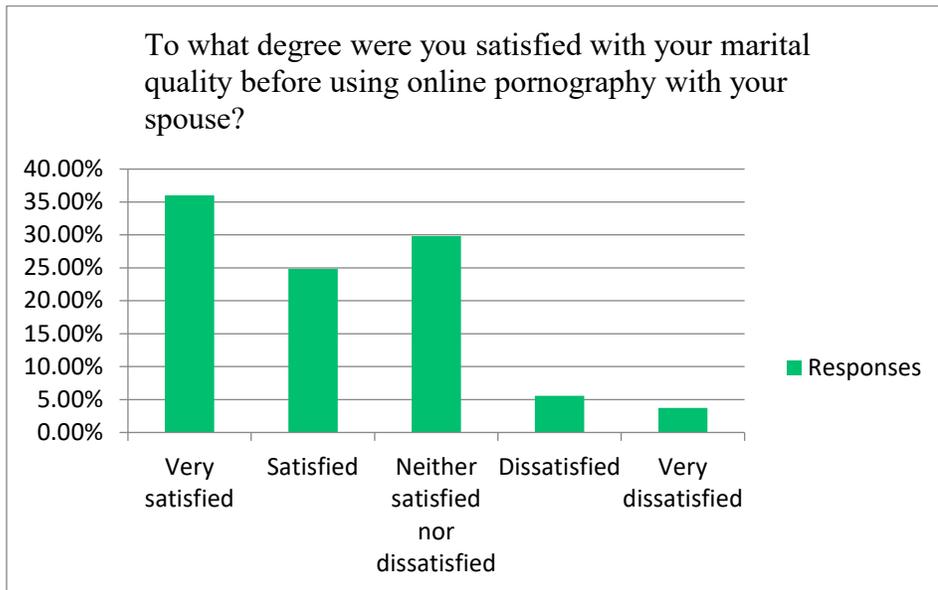


Chart. 4.3

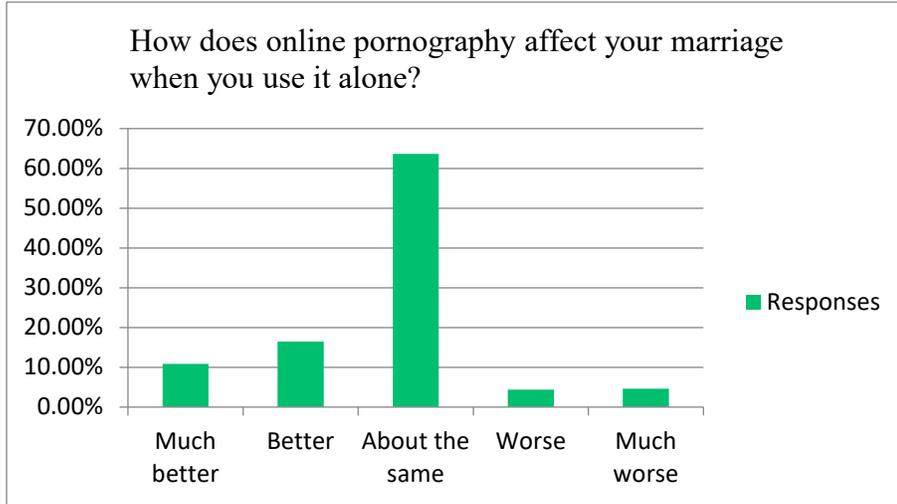


Chart. 4.4

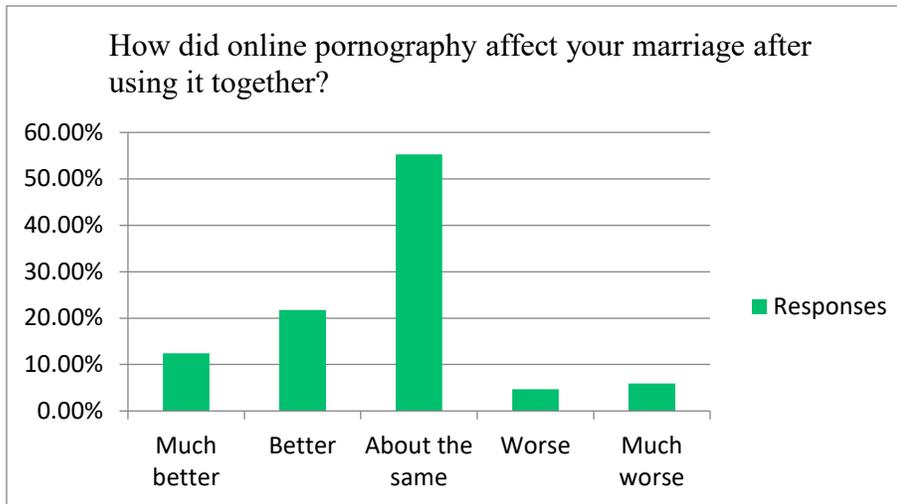


Chart 4.5

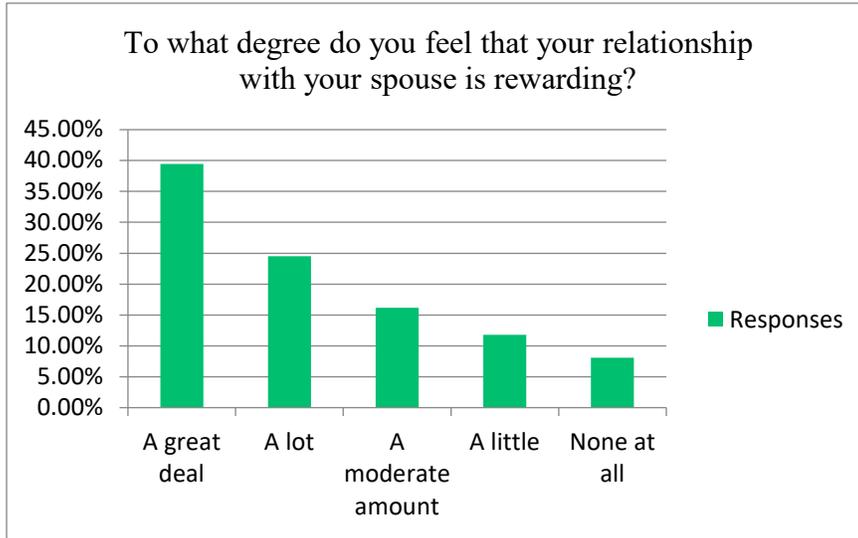


Chart 4.6

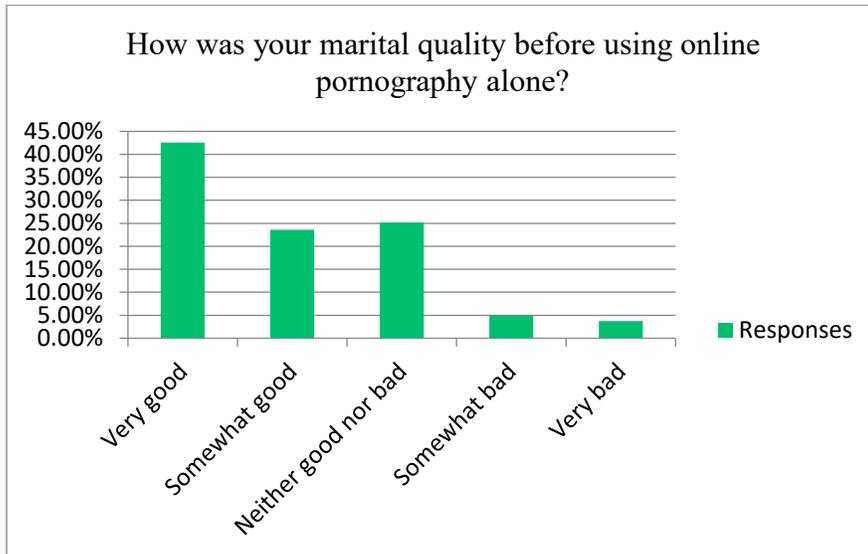


Chart 4.7

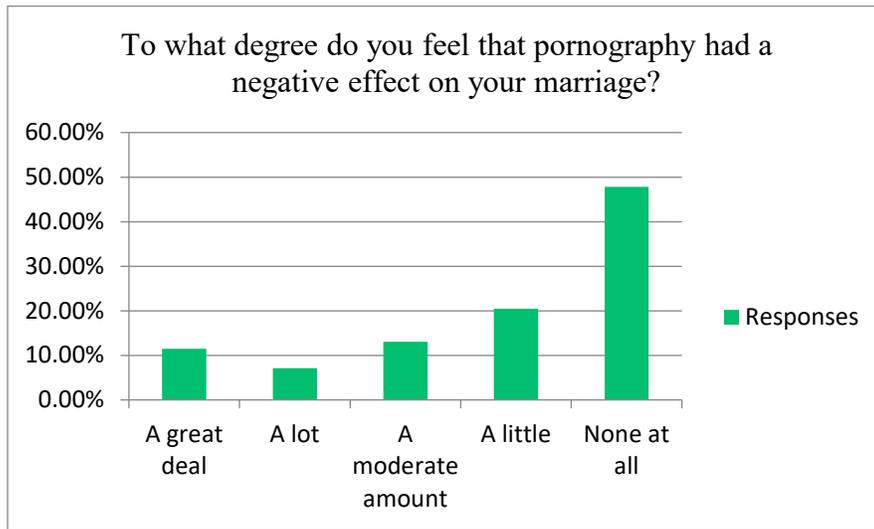
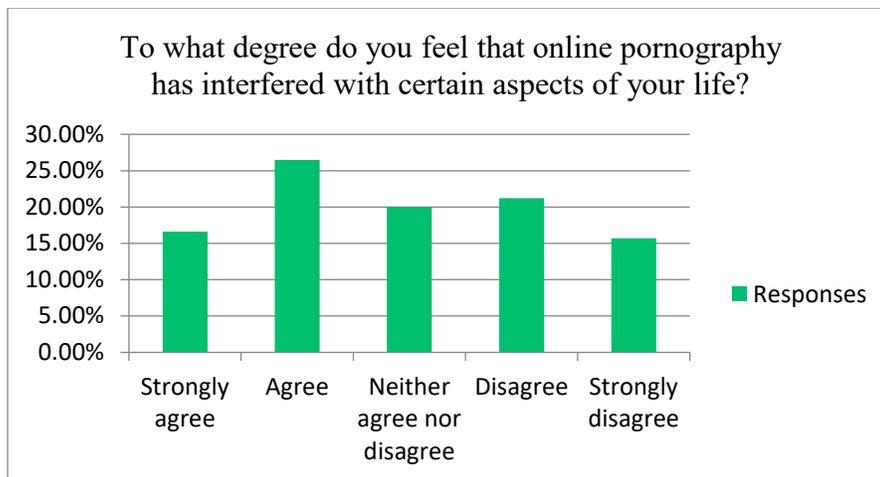


Chart 4.8



### Chapter Summary

By definition, marital quality is the consideration of how happy a person is with their marriage/relationship, or how satisfied a person is with their marriage/relationship (Omani-Samani et al., 2017). To determine several variations of how online pornography use affects marital quality when couples used it alone versus using it together, a Pornography Use and Marital Satisfaction survey was created. This survey combined the CSI-4 with the CPUI, and also included a few additional questions to make the survey inclusive of both marital satisfaction

and pornography use. For psychology research, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) is one of the most widely used measures of marital quality. For the purposes of this research study, a Cronbach's analysis was run on the Pornography Use and Marital Satisfaction survey to determine its reliability, but only to compare it to the KMSS. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Pornography Use and Marital Satisfaction survey was 0.959. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for KMSS was 0.901 (Omani-Samani et al., 2017). By this comparison, the two surveys are compatible with one another.

The goal of this current study was to determine if online pornography use was a factor in marital issues, thereby causing divorce. The three hypotheses were:

Ha1: Marital quality is better when husbands and wives watch pornography together.

Ha2: There is a bi-directional causality between pornography use and marriage.

Ha3: Pornography, when used by one partner alone, causes problems in the marriage.

The results of the finding for Ha1 were positive. There was a slight marginal percentile increase in marital quality when husbands and wives viewed online pornography together, (see Chart 4.4). This finding is consistent with a study by Poulsen et al. (2013), which concluded that female pornography use had a slightly positive association with sexual quality for both women and their partners. These results were also found in a study by Daneback et al. (2009), which showed that pornography use with couples who strictly used pornography together, enhanced their sexual relationship.

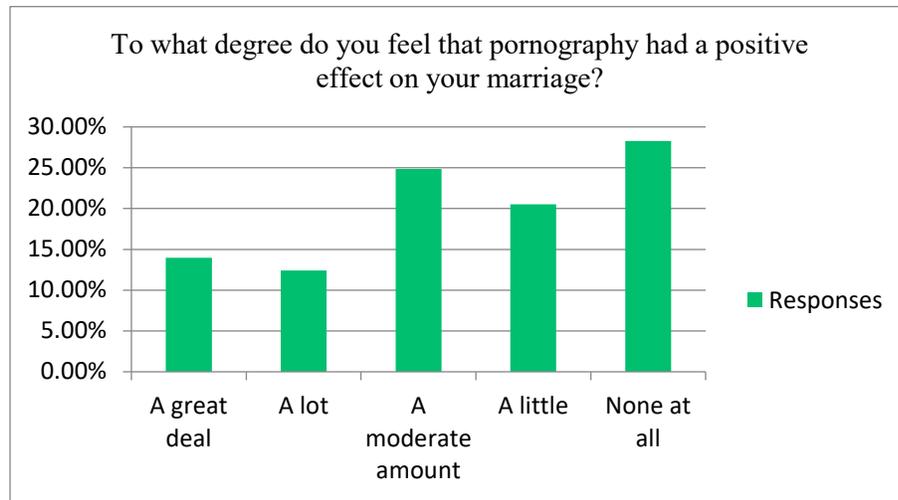
However, the results of the findings were not supported for either Ha2 or Ha3. Of the 322 married or previously married individuals that participated and met this study's requirements, the mean score showed that pornography use did not have an effect on the marriages. A study completed by Samuel Perry (2017) found similar results. Perry's (2017) study concluded that

there were zero-order correlations between marital separation and pornography use. See Tables 4.11 and 4.12 along with Charts 4.9 and 4.10, which display results of negative vs positive results of pornography use on marital quality.

**Table 4.24** *Negative vs. positive effects of pornography use on marital quality*

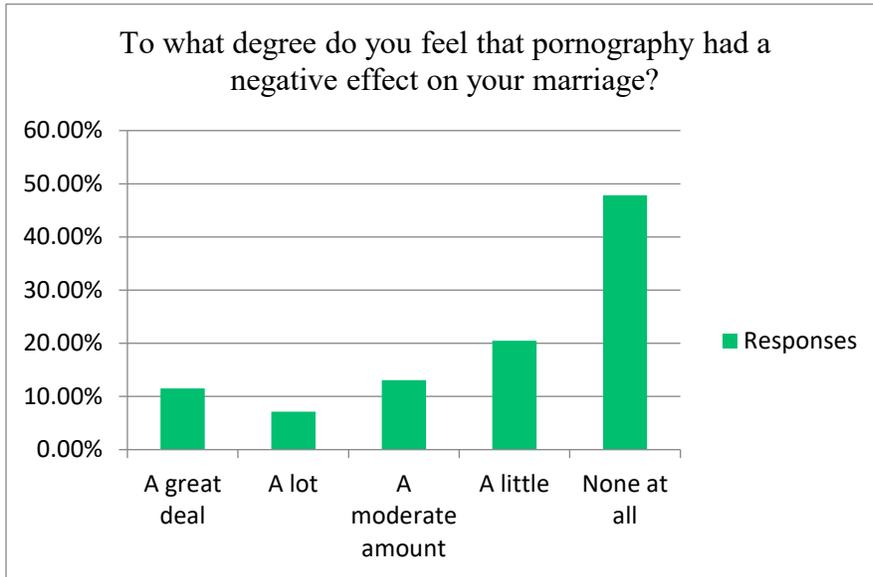
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mode
To what degree do you feel that pornography had a negative effect on your marriage?	322	3.8602	1.38383	4.0	5.0
To what degree do you feel that pornography had a positive effect on your marriage?	322	3.3665	1.37485	3.0	5.0

Chart 4.9



Answer Choices	Responses	
A great deal	13.98%	45
A lot	12.42%	40
A moderate amount	24.84%	80
A little	20.50%	66
None at all	28.26%	91
Answered		322

Chart 4.10



Answer Choices	Responses	
A great deal	11.49%	37
A lot	7.14%	23
A moderate amount	13.04%	42
A little	20.50%	66
None at all	47.83%	154
	Answered	322

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Overview

Across the world, it has been noted that there are several factors that contribute to the excessive use of pornography. It has been indicated that the use of pornography directly, has effects on marital quality. Pornography is defined as sexually explicit media intended only to stimulate the viewer's or listener's sexual urge (Husain & Qureshi, 2014). Multiple sources describe pornography as "any printed or visual object that displays sexual organs or actions designed to evoke sexual pleasure" (Husain & Qureshi, 2014, p. e36). The advantages and disadvantages of viewing pornography in a marriage have been examined, along with other strategies for spotting marital quality conflicts and gender variations in pornographic viewing. Pornography can devastate marriages in a variety of ways, including challenges of trust and communication, sexual relationships, finances, religion, and domestic violence. It has been implied that these factors have resulted in the increase of pornography use and have affected the quality of marriages. While previous research has increased our understanding of how one spouse's pornographic use can harm the other spouse and can occasionally result in divorce, whether there is a beneficial effect when husbands and wives view pornography together has not been determined. This current study's specific objective is to close knowledge gaps regarding pornographic usage and marital quality. For achieving the purpose of this study, marital quality includes quality, well-being, satisfaction, happiness, comfort and communication levels, trust, and intimacy.

The first gap that this study address is whether married couples who watch pornography together have a lower marriage quality than married couples who do not (Brown et al., 2016; Maddox et al., 2009; Szymanski et al., 2015). The second argument implies that pre-existing

marital problems influenced the usage of pornography (Carr et al., 2014; Doran & Price, 2014). Finally, the third gap implies that the relationship between marital dissension and pornography intake is high when one partner watches it alone (Maddox et al., 2009). On one hand, the improvement in marital quality associated with watching pornography alone rather than with a partner has had a negligible effect, but on the other hand, many couples may view pornography together to improve their sexual relationship and better communicate sexual desires (Janssen, 2002). According to the research of previous studies, as provided in this study, a couple's degree of contentment, comfort and communication, trust, and intimacy are all predictors of marital quality. Sexual desire and fulfillment are necessary components of romantic partnerships and have a substantial impact on its overall quality (Regan & Atkins, 2006). Stress, exhaustion, anger, resentment, and pornography are just a few of the things that may wreak havoc on the sexual lives of an otherwise good marriage, according to Mintle (2015), along with abuse, infidelity, and lack of trust, to name a few.

Anyone who has a strong relationship recognizes the importance of trust earned through interactions and experiences with others (Mintle, 2015). Individuals who have grown to be insecure because of poor experiences in previous relationships often become suspicious of their partner's actions and may misunderstand unpleasant occurrences as malicious (Simmons & Peterson, 2000). Individuals whose activities have been classified as malicious may believe they are being observed and begin to feel the distrust from their partner (Simmons & Peterson, 2000). Couples lacking mutual trust cannot feel safe in their relationship, which may result in repeated emotional ups and downs. Szymanski and colleagues (2015) investigated the influence of pornography on marital trust in a study. The goal of the study, according to the researchers, was to look at the impact of relationship confidence from the male sexual perspectives, the male

partners' consumption of hardcore pornography, and overall mental health (Szymanski et al., 2015). The researchers discovered that when reported levels of pornography use by male partners increased, women lost emotional and psychological trust in their relationships, which harmed the female partners' relationships and caused psychological distress.

Communication breakdowns are also a frequent source of conflict in relationships (Scott et al., 2013). According to Litzinger and Gordon's (2005) research, happy couples suffer from a communication skills deficit, impairing their capacity to interact successfully with their spouses. They may lack the ability to clearly explain their point of view or listen effectively, which both contribute to marital discontent. The results of this study show that couples who lack the abilities to properly manage their emotional expressiveness and effectively communicate are more prone to become protective or withdraw from a conflict; these behaviors are linked to marital conflict and divorce (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005). When communication breaks down inside a marriage, there is often a lack of affection between partners (Pace, 2018).

Although communication breakdown has been found to cause problems in a marriage, money troubles have also been indicated to be amongst the top issues. Hawkins et al. (2012) completed a survey where more than half of those surveyed indicated financial issues as a primary factor for divorce, owing it to the strain that it placed on the individuals' internal relationships. According to the study's conclusions, 40% of divorced individuals cited their spouse's financial management as the key cause for the divorce. As observed and investigated, a growing amount of attention is being paid to what appears to be pornography as the source of the financial problems (Grubbs et al., 2015), and pornography abusers frequently encounter financial troubles as a result of their addiction (Hull, 2020).

Pornographic material consumption generates an environment susceptible to numerous forms of abuse in marriages and relationships. Due to its appealing sights and distortions of sexual action, pornography has the potential to induce marital rape and other forms of sexual abuse in marriages (Dezelski, 2017). If one of the couples has been abused previously, statistics indicate that using pornographic materials exacerbates the abuse (Dezelski, 2017). Pornographic images and writings portray various gender roles, although almost all portray females as inferior to males (Dekeseredy, 2015). Sexually explicit media research on the effect of partnership abuse, also known as 'date rape' or 'non-stranger sexual aggression,' is becoming more prevalent (Ellibee & Kelly, 2015). Eleven percent of female patients at a big metropolitan community health clinic reported being coerced or blackmailed into sexual practices comparable to those represented in pornographic media (Ellibee & Kelly, 2015). Moreover, a quarter of respondents cited domestic abuse as a contributing factor to their divorce in a study conducted by Scott et al. (2013). Physical abuse is by far the most prevalent kind of domestic violence; it often involves pushing, striking, and beating and may even involve the use of weapons (June & Black, 2002). Domestic violence typically begins with little interactions and then escalates to more serious assaults (June & Black, 2002). Domestic violence is related to various health problems, including depression, panic attacks, anxiety, and substance use disorders (Sukeri & Normanieza, 2017). Domestic violence is considered minor when neither partner has been physically assaulted, when neither party is fearful of being injured, and when the hostility is minimal; nonetheless, even modest domestic violence can swiftly escalate into physical and mental abuse (Ripley, 2014).

Pornographic viewing was found to be negatively linked with both partners' physical quality expectations of a mate (Poulsen et al. 2013). Opposite though, it was positively related to sexual quality in the married or cohabiting couples study performed by Poulsen et al. (2013), and

individuals who viewed pornography in groups rather than alone profited from this effect, which was more prevalent among females. Of note, pornography consumption has a detrimental effect on men's sexual notions, expectations, and assessments of their own sex lives, as reported by Bridges and Morokoff (2011) and Maddox et al. (2011), but both studies also reported a beneficial effect on women's awareness of their bodies and sexual preferences.

### **Discussion**

As previously noted, not much research has been published that examines the effect on marital quality when husbands and wives view online pornography together. The focus of this particular study was to determine if pornography use caused marital problems; if marital problems led to pornography use; or if marital problems would decrease if husbands and wives viewed pornography together. It has been noted that pornography is a big business in the United States. Pornographic material searches account for 25% of all daily Internet searches. Additionally, every second, around 28,000 people are exposed to pornographic material (Brown, 2014).

The results of this current study show that online pornography use was not a major component in marital quality, and seemingly not a significant factor in the cause for divorce. A SunTrust Bank survey (Dickler, 2018) discovered that money is the biggest stressful factor in romantic relationships. According to poll data, more than 35% of individuals experiencing relationship stress indicated money as the leading source of dispute (Dickler, 2018). Money was the most common source of marital stress for 44% of respondents aged 44 to 54, according to a 2017 survey (Dickler, 2018).

The findings of this current study did not conclusively rule out the first hypothesis, which suggested that marital quality would increase if husbands and wives viewed online pornography

together. The study concluded that there was a moderate increase in marital quality when husbands and wives viewed it together. A study by Maddox et al. (2009) concluded that couples who viewed sexually explicit material (SEM) with their partners reported more dedication and higher sexual satisfaction. In addition, couple satisfaction is closely related to sexual satisfaction (Byers, 2005). To this end, and in regard to marital satisfaction, the results of this current study suggest that pornography use should be a shared experience between husbands and wives.

The second hypothesis' intent was to determine if pornography use caused marital problems, or if marital problems led to pornography use. The results of this study did not provide a positive conclusion in either direction. Fifty-five percent of the respondents stated that their marital quality remained the same as it was before and after viewing online pornography. Furthermore, Gonsalves and Overstreet (2020) found that a lack of communication often leads to isolation, relationship conflict, shame, guilt, and feelings of inadequacy, which can then lead to pornography use. Also, a study by Ludden (2019) found that where there is a lack or disruption of the enjoyment of sex, there becomes a lack of commitment, which can open the door for pornography use.

The third hypothesis was also not supported by the results of the survey. Only 4.66% of respondents stated that their marital quality decreased when watching pornography alone; 63.66% stated that it remained the same. A study by Perry (2016b) reported that married males report a higher level of both marital satisfaction and pornographic material consumption than married women. Also, previous literature has shown that men tend to view SEM alone while women choose to watch it with their partner (Traeen, 2006). In addition, according to a study completed by Grov et al. (2011), women's usage of pornographic materials, whether to explore their sexuality or have sex with their spouses, may improve the overall quality of their marriages.

The results of this current study are inconclusive relative to similar research, as noted above; participants provided similar responses to whether pornography had a negative effect on their marriage and whether it had a positive effect on their marriage.

### **Implications**

Findings in this study demonstrate that pornography use may not be a significant factor in marital quality, which suggests other possible reasons for marital distress. The study concluded that marital quality moderately increased when the husbands and wives viewed pornography together. Of the 322 responses received, 42% reported that their marital quality was very good before using online pornography alone, and 12% reported that it became much better. Twenty-two percent stated that their marital quality became better after viewing pornography together with their spouse; in this instance, the types of online pornography use in which women are interested, in congruence to the type of pornography use in which men are interested, should be further explored.

Pornography has been associated with committed love relationships in a number of ways, and an increasing body of research indicates that the degree to which partners or spouses see pornography concurrently or separately is significant. Future studies should ideally incorporate longitudinal dyadic data that account for both spouses' pornography watching, as well as more detailed evaluations of pornography consumption to characterize the content consumed. Additionally, to give more precise estimates of pornographic consumption, dyadic data may aid in disentangling other variables that may have impacted the experience of marital separation.

As pornography is likely to have a differential influence on the relationship outcomes of same-sex and heterosexual couples, future studies should ideally involve large samples of both same-sex and heterosexual couples to discover any differences. This study did not conclude that

poor marital quality results from when one spouse viewed pornography alone. The study also did not conclude that there was a bi-directional effect between pornography use and marital quality. Of the 322 responses received, 63% reported that their marital quality stayed about the same after they began to use pornography alone. To this end, counselors may consider additional factors for dissatisfaction in marital quality, such as communication, trust, finances, and religion, to name a few.

### **Limitations**

Although this current study presented significant results, there were a few limitations, that may have impacted the results. The sampling used was not based on probability. No information was gathered in regard to race, ethnicity, or religion, and neither was the sampling income based. The sampling was based on specific demographics only in regard to online pornography use and how it affected marital quality; in addition, participation was limited to married, divorced, or widowed heterosexual couples who used pornography during their marriages.

The data was secured via an online survey. The online survey provided participants with anonymity, which would be an encouragement for individuals to participate, rather than the face-to-face interaction, which could cause a hindrance (Cooper et al., 1999); however, because it is an online survey, individuals who participate may not be totally honest in their responses. Further, considering that participants receive a small stipend for completing online surveys, they may provide answers strictly for the benefit of receiving funds.

### **Recommendations**

In order to conclude if pornography use leads to poor marital quality, it may be beneficial to know if the individual was addicted to pornography and not just someone who used it periodically. A person who is addicted to pornography may exhibit little control over destructive

sexual behaviors, and they also use their sexual behavior to deal with or escape from stress (Perkison et al., 2014). It may be helpful if the study was given to partners who are exhibiting problems in the marriage during the time when the problems are occurring. Also, since this study indicated that marital quality increased when husbands and wives viewed it together, it may be helpful to study what the increase consisted of (i.e., sexual quality, communication, or overall marital quality). In other words, it is recommended to further identify what it is about the pornography use that increased the happiness in the marriage.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed and discussed the findings of the study, limitations and recommendations for future research. The current study examined positive as well as the negative aspects of online pornography use in marriages, as well as methods for evaluating marital quality issues and gender variations in pornographic viewing. As previously mentioned, pornography has a variety of detrimental effects on relationships, including trust and communication issues, sexual encounters, money, religion, and domestic violence. Sexual desire and fulfillment are essential elements of romantic partnerships, and they have a substantial impact on the relationship's overall quality. Stress, fatigue, fury, animosity, and pornography are just a few of the things that may ruin a marriage's sexual connection. Willoughby et al. (2016) concluded that individuals who view pornography likely do so to escape the issues in the marriage that have led to sexual dissatisfaction. While this current study did not conclude that there is a bi-directional effect on marital issues and pornography use, it did however, indicate that when couples watched it together, the quality of their relationships could somewhat improve.

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