

**INFLUENCE AND REMEDIES OF INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY IN
TODAY'S TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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Abstract: Pornography has been becoming an increasingly controversial topic in today's technological society. It is the most widely searched topic on the internet today. Through research and surveys, it is found that internet pornography sites are finding many new ways to get around the firewalls and blocks that are used by many homeowners, businesses and schools. A sample of working professionals in the Indian industry, representing an educated and web-enabled group, found that the traditional assumptions of male dominated and driven by curiosity were found to be true.(Consultation Paper, 2009),

In general, internet-based research, whatever form it takes, is needed at the academic level to eventually develop meaningful policies, practices and procedures in intelligently dealing with internet sexuality and its place in understanding E-Commerce environment.

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is Pornography?

The word “pornography” is derived from the Greek porni (harlot) and graphein (to write) and was originally used to denote books or paintings that portrayed the lives of prostitutes. It is now applied to sexually explicit material, whether in the form of books, paintings, photographs, sculptures, films or videos, that intends to sexually excite the observer. However, what actually constitutes pornography remains a matter of debate: the distinctions between the erotic, the artistic and the pornographic are not always clear. Nor is it always possible to determine the motivation underlying a sexually explicit image or text.

1.2 Growth of internet pornography:

When the thought of pornography comes to a person's mind, one usually thinks of a Playboy magazine and very explicit sexual videos, but pornography goes way beyond those immediate stereotypes and preconceived notions. Internet pornography has become a big business in today's Indian society. There are over 100000

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pornographic websites that entice potential customers to pay to visit and one fifth of them are based in the India alone. In fact, in terms of information exchanges, pornography has also become the number one searched for topic online (Hagelin, 2004; Mota, 2002; Thornburgh and Lin, 2004). There are pornographic materials for every age and every conceivable desire to view which has led to an exponentially growing e-commerce business enterprise. Unfortunately, one of the major problems is that pornography is not just a hidden option known only to actual users, it shows itself to everyone, including people who do not want to see it and to innocent children trying to do research for legitimate school projects, although receiving pornographic materials is a protected right (Alexander, 2002; Boies, 2002; Lee and Tamborin, 2005). Web-enabled pornography is virtually everywhere, accessible in every situation, even in academic settings and with the increasing use of different technologies. There are new ways that porn is able to get through and around traditional security protocols offered by blocks and firewalls. Pornography is proving to be a problem at home, in school and in the workplace, with possible solutions becoming less effective over time and with a seemingly endless demand for its offerings. As pornography becomes more prevalent in today's technological society, its increasing burden towards any one with internet access may be rectified by enhanced security software and common-sense precautions.

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When dealing with pornography on the internet, traditional wisdom is that most users who visit the sites are predominantly male and mostly visit these websites because of their curiosity and societal norms against such material.

2 Strategies for control over Pornography

2.1 Prevalence of pornography over the internet

Pornography is rapidly become more than just a nuisance. There are many instances of where internet pornography, such as e-gambling, is becoming an addictive behaviour, among the innocent or unwary (Sanders et al., 1999; Stefano, 2004; Tallion, 2004). To counter this potential problem at home, PC owners now must face new strategies to combat pornography-related issues that were unknown a relatively short time ago. Many parents are starting to monitor their children, since the accessibility of such materials are becoming more common and children are developing the technological skills to circumvent their parents' desires.(Bourke M, Hernandez A.,2009). For example, a recent segment in the news where a Ten-year-old boy was suspended from reputed Delhi school for talking about a pornography site that he had visited at home. When his parents were told about it, they were shocked and had no idea that their son even knew what it was, let alone how to get to the website.

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Homeowners are also susceptible to contracting pornographic-related viruses and/or receive unwanted materials as banner advertising. Many people are unaware that when visiting certain pornographic websites, they may contract a virus or seemingly related e-mails, which contain viruses, which are routinely sent to their e-mail accounts. Many times when such fraudulent activities occur, many users do not report such incidents because of embarrassment. There are many ways that PC users can attempt to stop or at least stem the growing tide of pornography from taking over their systems. Schools use firewalls and security programs in an attempt to ensure that students are not going where they should not go on school-owned computers. Even with update security protocols like firewalls and SPAM filters, many students are finding ways to circumvent such attempts and routinely access pornographic websites. Many students use their class time in the computer labs to entertain themselves through pornography, in the process disturbing those students around them and wasting valuable resources. Many colleges are also having issues with viruses as well as controlling what is going on in dormitory rooms with students having access to webcams and potentially setting up their own porn sites in the privacy of their rooms. Some schools even go to the extent of having students pay for printing, as a way to prevent students from wasting resources by printing materials from pornographic websites that are offensive to other students. In

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fact, some administrations at schools may try to limit internet access because of the constant misuse of computers and pornography.

Such misuse of the internet may occur in the workplace as well. Some workers, including professionals, have begun to consume company time and resources in non-value-added activities in pursuing their personal wants and needs. These activities may result in losses in productivity and may result in unwanted lawsuits because of the vulgar content of what some employees are viewing and printing on companies' resources. As in other institutions, there are also problems associated with viruses and e-mails in relation to accessing pornographic websites. Many employers have been attempting to rectify the problem using the same security software, such as monitoring system-wide e-mails, implementation of firewalls, protection programs and other ways to try and stop the use of porn in the workplace; all with limited success.

2.2 Possible solutions

What solutions can schools, libraries, and parents depend on to eliminate the accessibility of pornography to children?(Cavanagh, M., 2005).The internet is a powerful and unrestricted place. Sociologists typically deal with the many related problems that society is dealing with in the case of internet pornography, but is there any way to solve

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these problems that are not just technology-based? Students as well as the general public are finding that the informational connectivity of the internet is a truly wonderful place to gather information for a variety of research and consumer behaviour. However, just as it is a convenient and easy way to exchange information, unfortunately, the internet is also a place where very obscene and dark tendencies may be carried out and may prove harmful, both psychologically and physically to the user.(ACMA, 2009),

The ultimate shame is that within this new world of information sharing, there has been increased emphasis on reducing accessibility and informational sharing, perhaps the two greatest characteristics of the web. Unfortunately, many schools and libraries must spend enormous portions of their shrinking budgets to invest in IT-infrastructures to do just that, restrict informational flows over the internet. Many well-publicised attempts on the commercialising firewalls and filters in order to try to keep pornographic information away from the particularly vulnerable, i.e., the children. Sometimes unwanted pop-up messages or e-mails associated with non-pornographic websites or domain names that are misleading frequently lead the unwary onto a porn website that can fool firewalls placed to block children from looking up certain words and accessing certain websites. (ABC News, 2007))

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Unfortunately, for example, legitimate attempts at information gathering may be blocked when a child tries to look up the word 'breast' on a search engine, since they may be blocked from gathering any type of information about the subject. A recent study found that, when some filters are set at the least restrictive level, filters correctly block 87% pornographic materials, while incorrectly blocking an average of only 1.4% of websites with legitimate health information (Thornburgh and Lin, 2002).

Of course, where is the balance? It is the major assumption of the present study that this balance must be developed through education and not simply by throwing more technology at the problem in hopes of finding a more permanent solution.

This situation, in turn, creates a steady market for new technology vendors to develop more useful firewalls and filters that are able to distinguish between restricted and unrestricted material and also to make it easier to disable the blocking for bona fide usage without long delay and hassle.

In addition, as a counter argument, many people may feel that the routine installation of filters and firewalls of pornographic materials over the internet goes against the First Amendment and the right to free speech.

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With dual incomes common among many family structures, the role of technology becomes even more critical to the monitoring process. As noted by Thornburgh and Lin (2004), there are many monitoring methods that are available, including remote viewing of a child's screen, logging of keystrokes, and recording of web pages visited. Of course, some may feel that the employment of these methods may result in violating the privacy of children, while others feel that it is necessary for the well-being of the child. Perhaps information specialists need to consider promoting media literacy and internet safety education. This may teach children to self-regulate themselves on the internet. If children are taught the right way to research information and how to distinguish if a source is appropriate for their topic, this could eliminate them from opening explicit websites. In any event, children need to be taught to make wise decisions by either their parents or their teachers.

Spam on the internet is another problem that needs to be addressed. Spam e-mails are sent to virtually anyone to try to entice potential customers to visit their websites, which may be inappropriate or dangerous. Many of these e-mails may range from visiting a porn-related chat room or the availability of prescription drugs. Many feel the need to be protected from these annoying and harmful e-mails as well as the numerous pop-up ads that interfere with one's internet session. There should also be the option to 'opt out' of an unwanted e-mail immediately, instead of being trapped in a seemingly endless

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loop. Also, if an e-mail contains sexually explicit content, then, it must appear in the first 19 characters of the subject line and sexually oriented content cannot appear in the subject line for all to see without opening it. It must also show that it is an advertisement and have a clear and concise way to 'opt out' of the e-mail. These e-mails can be very harmful to children because they present the opportunities to children to view them without having to search the web directly.

Another possible solution to reduce the accessibility of pornographic materials on the internet would be for such websites to require age verification. For example, Cybernet is a corporation that runs a web-based service called 'Adult Check', which is a form of age verification. Adult Check serves the purpose of screening out minors primarily by requiring credit card identification and also being charged a fee. (Carroll J, Padilla-Walker LM, Nelson LJ., 2008), Of course, a child could steal their parents or another adult's credit card, but the fee will be presented on the next month's bill. There are always ways to get around such protocols, especially if a child is really determined, but this is a good beginning to try to stop children from viewing porn and allowing real, age appropriate consumers the right to subscribe.

2.3 Effectiveness

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How effective are these solutions and are they cost-effective? They are a magnitude of problems associated with pornography on the internet, but are there ways to check the effectiveness of stopping internet pornography. Perhaps porn today is more vulgar and offensive, and its pushers are much more aggressive in their search of new customers.

Now there is no need to even leave one's home to purchase pornography. Since a never-ending supply of ever more erotic and interactive pornography can be accessed and experienced in a completely private world; perhaps to the technology wise pornographer, anyone with a computer is a potential addict. Unfortunately, many internet users still believe that unless they go looking for porn, it will not find them. What many users do not realise, however, is just how aggressively many pornographers are implementing new strategies in marketing and technology to push pornography to unwary users, without their consent, and often even without their knowledge. The most common technique for tricking the internet user may be by pure deception.

1 For example, when an individual walks into their neighbourhood grocery store, he/she would expect to find groceries on the shelves. However, what if instead, this individual finds thousands of explicit pornographic videos – the natural tendency is to be outraged. It would be logical to assume that if the store appeared just as it did

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yesterday with the same name and same signs, any unsuspecting shopper would assume it was the same grocery store and not a porn outlet. This may be true in the real world, yet the digital world provides opportunities for various ways to accomplish this deceitful tactic on the internet. It is common practice among pornographers to purchase expired domain names when the original owner forgets to renew the current domain name, a strategy known as 'porn-napping'. After purchasing the expired domain name, they then redirect the expired URL back to their own websites. Porn-nappers sometimes offer to resell the domain name back to the original owner for an exorbitant fee that borders on extortion. Also, many pornographers legally purchase domain names for legitimate topics in a switch-up referred to as cyber-squatting (Rupp and Smith, 2003; Smith, 2003a; 2003b). This originated at a time when most businesses were not particularly aware about commercial opportunities on the internet. The term basically derives from squatting and refers to the act of reserving a particular internet domain name for the purpose of selling it at a higher price later. For example, if someone expecting to find information about the President of the USA might type in 'whitehouse.com' and be very confused at finding explicit porn on the website. The official site for the Whitehouse is at 'whitehouse.gov' rather than '.com'. Other examples of cyber-squatting include the innocent-sounding web domain names of 'civilwarbattles.com', 'eugenoregon.com', and 'tourdefrance.com'.

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2 A close cousin to porn-napping and cyber-squatting is a technique known as a 'doorway scam', which makes use of one of the most common tools on the internet, namely, the search engine. Experienced pornographers have figured out that by carefully constructing their websites, and designing them around non-pornographic themes, they gain new opportunities to deceive unsuspecting surfers. Web page content is then created to place the website's high ranking on a search engine's results, and after clicking on it, the user is redirected to a porn website. Another version of the doorway scam is to create a porn website around a common, non-pornographic theme. So rather than redirect the internet user to another unrelated, but pornographic website; this technique actually creates pornographic web pages related to their title. Thus, in an innocent search for 'livestock', the unsuspecting user may open up a page depicting bestiality.

For example, if a user was attempting to go to one of the most popular search engines, 'google.com', and accidentally typed in an extra 'l' (googlle.com), the same individual may have ended up at an Asian porn website. Many pornographers are buying up the misspelled domain names of trendy, high-traffic websites with hard-to-spell names, such as 'abercrombieandfitch.com', to name a few (Williams, 2002).

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3 In a related technology and its misuse, spimming is a word for Spam sent through Instant Messaging (IM) channels. Some disguised IMs are embedded with web-enabled links that lead unwary users to websites many times featuring access to pornographic websites. Nearly 600 billion IMs were sent worldwide in 2003, and Yahoo estimates that 2% of its own messages are spim (roughly 12 billion messages of spim a year).

4 Some in the electronic porn industry definitely takes advantage of the free opportunity to solicit itself in this fashion. Advertising has become a huge business for websites (Rupp and Smith, 2003), and this innovation has not eluded persistent pornographers. Fortunately, most legitimate and responsible businesses will not sell advertising space to pornographers. Unfortunately, this situation has not stopped a large number of porn-industry leaders, who have created fake system error messages, message alert boxes, or false forms that dupe you into thinking you have to click on the OK button or enter certain information, when in reality, an individual may be clicking on the link to open the pornographer's website.

4 General implications and suggestions

In order to block pornographic e-mails, SPAM filters are generally used more than another technology. In general, there are many ways that the porn industry can try to lure the innocent bystanders of the

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web into their sites. Filters can only eliminate some of the problem that some pornographers have created, but education of the usefulness and pitfalls of information exchanges over the internet are the keys.

This is an industry that continues to grow at a rapid pace, but it is hard to relate to customers that are indecisive and do not know whether or not they want the services or not, because of societal pressures to conform. Ultimately, restricting such informational exchanges may run counter to the very purpose of the open connectivity of the internet that makes it so appealing to the general public. Such information specialists prevent such interchanges; or should they accept such exchanges as simply by-products of the web? Currently, the internet pornographic industry is affecting productivity at work as well as routines in school. Although various resources have been implemented to protect internet users, the prevalence of pornography on the internet is still a major nuisance. It deserves to be studied as a phenomenon associated with e-commerce and online information reviews in a scholarly manner.

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