Evaluating the Impact of Relational Versus Religious Attachment on Pornography Use
Brandon Waggoner

Liberty University

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Evaluating the Impact of Relational Versus Religious Attachment on Pornography Use

 Humans are relational beings. This statement is not only found in empirical evidence (Hayes, 2016; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015) but also in Scripture (Gen. 2: 18; Heb. 10: 24-25) and in our culture. From love songs to romantic comedies and even the humor in situational comedies, relationships permeate all aspects of the human experience. Thus, it is not a far stretch to see the need to evaluate individual relationships and how they impact addictive or perceived addictive behavior. Pornography is an important factor to evaluate relationally due to its negative outcomes (Foubert, 2017; Perry & Hayward, 2017). Two genres of relational impact that will be evaluated in the literature will include religious attachment and adult, non-romantic attachment.

**Attachment Styles and Pornography Use**

 Current research on attachment styles and pornography use centered on much of the attachment work in the past (Gilliland, Blue Star, Hansen, & Carpenter, 2015; Popovic, 2011). Many have shown the strong ties with avoidant and anxious attachment styles as strong predictors for beginning and continued pornography use (Zapf, Greiner, & Carroll, 2008; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Dewitte, 2012). These studies show a predisposition to pornography use and fertile soil in which this perceived addictive behavior can grow and develop. Davis, Shaver, and Vernon (2004) highlight this link in attachment to problematic sexual behavior. They show that sex and sexual behavior can be tied to a need for security, comfort, emotional closeness, reassurance, enhancement of self-esteem, and stress reduction. There appears to be a need for filling these relational gaps that pornography fills in many instances. Perry and Whitehead (2018) enhance this factor by finding that pornography use and related sexual satisfaction was more dependent on what viewing pornography means to the consumer and their moral community and less so on the practice itself. The question remains as to which factor is more predictive of pornography use.

 Stack, Wasserman, and Kern (2004) evaluated the social factors on pornography use. Social ties included religious, marital, and political bonds. Conclusions showed weak religious ties and lack of a happy marriage predicted pornography use. Past sexual deviance was also a high predictor. Pornography use is also positively associated with their gender role conflict and avoidant and anxious attachment styles and negatively associated with their relationship quality and sexual satisfaction (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014). Thus, treatment of pornography use is also suggested to be coupled with relational treatment when these factors are present (Zapf, Greiner, & Carroll, 2008). Beyond the attachment with individuals, there are also many predictors that can impact pornography use. One of these other factors is religious involvement (Davis & Davis, 2013) and concept and attachment to God (Exline, Grubbs, & Homolka, 2015).

**Religious Attachment and Pornography Use**

 There are two facets to this discussion: religious attachment and God attachment. Much has been studied regarding the impact that religious attachment has on human functioning. Strong religious attachment has been shown to increase purpose (Galek et al. 2015), diminished psychological stress (Bradshaw et al. 2010), and resilience after negative situations (Ellison et al. 2014). Thus, these positive aspects could be considered major factors that could influence pornography use in individuals. Religious attachment specifically is an indicator of moral disapproval of pornography use and perceived addiction to pornography. The perceived addiction (rather than actual use) is related to lower self-esteem, more anger, and more anger toward God (Wilt, Cooper, Grubbs, Exline, & Pargament, 2016). While it can be hard to separate the religious attachment from an attachment to God, there have been ways to try to emphasize the specific attachment to God and not just religiosity.

 Jankowski and Sandage (2014) studied the impact that a God attachment has on an individual’s “safe haven” mentality which allows for secure emotional development. They emphasized that their findings show a strong personal humility that is necessary to look outside oneself to be able to develop this God attachment. Here, the God attachment is dependent on the individual and not on the attachment alone. Thus, it can be argued that there may not be a distinction between religious attachment and God attachment. However, that the attachment in this arena is dependent on the perception of the individual (Homan, 2014; Knabb, & Pelletier, 2014).

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