

Change sex education to combat the effects of porn, say researchers

October 18 2016



Credit: University of Nottingham

A Parliamentary Group focusing on family and child protection is to hear how changes are needed to sex education in the classroom to protect young people from the damaging effects of pornography.

Academics from The University of Nottingham will present the findings of their research into the effects of [pornography](#) on sexual development and behaviour to Parliamentarians, charities and members of the Working Party on the Family, part of the Lords and Commons Family and Child Protection Group, later this week.

The research, led by Professor Kevin Browne and colleagues in the University's Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology, makes recommendations that sex education should place more emphasis on trusting and long-term relationships to challenge the images associated with internet porn.

Professor Browne said: "Over the last 15 years, there has been a huge increase in the availability and use of pornography via a range of electronic devices and the ease of access and anonymity afforded viewers presents concerns for the short and long-term effects on society, particularly the [sexual development](#) of [young people](#) and their attitudes and beliefs towards sex."

Concerns include underage sex, expectations of what is 'appropriate sex' and excessive use of pornography leading to harmful sexual behaviour and [sexual offences](#). Sharing nude 'selfies' via apps on smartphones such as Snapchat – or sexting as it is commonly known – under the age of 18 is illegal, yet its prevalence suggests that many young people view it as no more serious than flirting.

The Nottingham research aimed to investigate the potential link between the progression of sexual activities and behaviour of young people with same sex and opposite sex partners and their use of pornography and texting.

They recruited more than 2,500 people via an online survey – around 70 per cent of whom were 'emerging' adults aged between 18 and 25 years old. Of those who completed the researchers' questionnaire, 56% were female, 44% were male and three-quarters identified as heterosexual.

The results found:

- Just two per cent had never viewed pornography
- Of those who had viewed pornography, 42 per cent had done so under the age of 13
- Four out of five participants had engaged in sexting – more than half of them while under the age of 18
- Males were 11 times more likely than females to use pornography on a daily to weekly basis

- Those who first viewed pornography under the age of 13 were 1.7 times more likely to use pornography on a daily to weekly basis
- All sexual activities are starting earlier compared to previous research, with females consistently starting sexual activities younger than their male counterparts with both opposite and same-sex partners
- Early pornography use (under the age of 13) is related to earlier sexual activity, early age of sexting and more frequent use of pornography for both males and females
- For females only, early use of pornography was associated with a history of family breakdown and a preference for same-sex partners.

The findings will be presented to members of the Working Party on the Family on Thursday October 20 as part of a Child Safety Online: Keeping Ahead of the Game symposium.

The researchers will conclude by recommending that [sex education](#) in schools should move towards teaching topics around sexual behaviour, safe-sex and sexually-transmitted diseases within the context of relationships.

Professor Browne added: "Sex education should challenge the images perpetuated by internet porn, which supports casual sex without emotion, responsibility or health protection and potentially encourages coercive sexual bullying and forced sex among young people. Indeed, research has shown that at least seven per cent of English female pupils experience sexual abuse from peers at school and in the community."

The research also addresses the question of the law around sharing naked 'selfies' particularly under the age of 18. It is currently illegal and in a few documented cases children have been prosecuted and placed on the

sexual offenders' register for sexting such images of themselves.

Given the implications of enforcing this law, the study debates whether the laws need to be revised, making it illegal only when these images are distributed to others by the recipient.

Provided by University of Nottingham

Citation: Change sex education to combat the effects of porn, say researchers (2016, October 18)
retrieved 19 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-sex-combat-effects-porn.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.