

# Sexually explicit material affects behavior in young people less than thought

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Viewing sexually explicit material through media such as the Internet, videos, and magazines may be directly linked with the sexual behavior of adolescents and young adults, but only to a very small extent. That is the conclusion of a new study published in *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*. The findings suggest that the practice is just one of many factors that may influence the sexual behaviors of young people.

Concerns have been raised that viewing sexually explicit material may negatively affect sexual behaviors, particularly in young people. Because previous studies on the topic have been narrowly focused or limited in other ways, Gert Martin Hald, PhD, of the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, and his colleagues conducted an [online survey](#) of 4,600 young people aged 15 to 25 years who lived in The Netherlands.

The survey revealed that 88 percent of males and 45 percent of [females](#) had watched sexually explicit material (through the Internet, magazines, videos, television, and/or other media) in the past 12 months. There was a direct association between watching sexually explicit media and a variety of sexual behaviors—in particular adventurous sex and sex that involves the exchange of money—even when a number of other factors were taken into account. However, the association was modest, accounting for between 0.3 percent and four percent of differences in sexual behaviors. This indicates that watching sexually explicit media is one of a number of factors that may shape the sexual behaviors of young individuals, but it may not be as directly linked as previously thought.

"Our data suggest that other factors such as personal dispositions—specifically sexual sensation seeking—rather than consumption of sexually explicit material may play a more important role in a range of sexual behaviors of [adolescents](#) and [young adults](#), and that the effects of sexually explicit media on sexual behaviors in reality need to be considered in conjunction with such factors," Dr. Hald said.

"It has been 65 years since Kinsey first published on sexual behaviors, yet researchers continue to avoid this area of science. It is important to have factual information in order to make educated decisions," explained Dr. Irwin Goldstein, Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*.

The study's findings may be particularly informative for policy makers and educators concerning the effects of sexually explicit media consumption on young people's sexual behaviors.

**More information:** Hald et al. "Does Viewing Explain Doing? Assessing the Association between Sexually Explicit Materials Use and Sexual Behaviors in a Large Sample of Dutch Adolescents and Young Adults" *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*; Published online April 25, 2013. [DOI: 10.1111/jsm.12157](https://doi.org/10.1111/jsm.12157)

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