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Religious self-declaration and the attitudes of the youth towards pornography

Religijne deklaracje a postawy młodzieży wobec pornografii

Abstract:

Pornography belongs to those phenomena which have not been clearly defined in the literature. The ambiguity of this phenomenon, promoted in contemporary socio-cultural reality and its normalization means that it can be interpreted and evaluated in many different ways. The approach showing how pornography influences the development and functioning of the youth in various educational environments is missing from available studies and analyses.

The present article is aimed to present the results of the author's own research on the dependence of religious self-declaration and the attitudes of young people towards pornography. The present article is meant to be an introduction to discussions and in-depth research in this area. The research concerns a group of 127 students; in order to collect empirical data, a questionnaire prepared by the author was used. By carrying out analyses, an attempt was made to find an answer to the question whether religious self-declaration diversifies attitudes of the youth towards pornography in the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspect.

Key words: pornography, attitudes towards pornography, ambiguity in the sense of pornography, religiousness

Abstrakt:

Pornografia należy do tych zjawisk, które nie zostały jasno określone w literaturze. Dwuznaczność tego zjawiska, promowana we współczesnej rzeczywistości społeczno-kulturalnej i jej normalizacja, oznacza, że można ją interpretować i oceniać na wiele różnych sposobów. W dostępnych badaniach i analizach brakuje podejścia pokazującego, w jaki sposób pornografia wpływa na rozwój i funkcjonowanie młodzieży w różnych środowiskach.

Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie wyników badań własnych autorki dotyczących zależności deklaracji religijnej i postaw młodych ludzi wobec pornografii. Niniejszy artykuł może stać się przyczynkiem do dyskusji i dogłębnych badań w tej dziedzinie. W ramach artykułu przedstawiono wyniki badań 127 studentów przeprowadzonych przy użyciu metody własnego autorstwa. Przeprowadzając analizy, podjęto próbę znalezienia odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy deklaracja religijna dywersyfikuje postawy młodzieży wobec pornografii w aspekcie poznawczym, emocjonalnym i behawioralnym.

Słowa kluczowe: pornografia, postawy wobec pornografii, dwuznaczność w rozumieniu pornografii, religijność

1. Introduction

Pornography is undoubtedly one of the phenomena which are most harmful to the physical, psychological and moral development of the youth (Scott, 1998). The ambiguity of pornography entails many different interpretations, which in turn makes it difficult to define this phenomenon. Among many approaches to pornography two basic concepts can be pointed out, according to which it can be described as: a way of evoking sexual arousal of the recipient through presentations of sexual intercourse or human nudity, or unreal, disgracing, obscene way of presenting sex or nudity (Imieliński, 1974, p. 107).

The necessity to conduct research on the perception of pornography by young people is undeniably dictated by the fact of individual and social damage which is caused by this phenomenon. D. Kornas-Biela (1999, pp. 13-25) mentions the following areas which are influenced by watching pornography: value system, moral and social development, the image of femininity and masculinity and the interaction between the sexes, the attitude to marriage and family as well as the physical "self". The author also points out that pornography is a form of violence that affects the personality of children; it affects the formation of sexual pathology; it affects criminal behavior; it has an addictive effect on personality; it affects the psyche of children and adolescents. Scientific research proves that young viewers of content deviating from real, everyday life are exposed to developmental disorders also in the field of psychosexual development, which also affects subsequent adverse sexual behaviors of early adulthood. Disorders of psychosexual development in adolescents are, according to researchers, associated, primarily with excessive exposure to sexual content at this age as well as sexual abuse (Hunt, Kraus, 2009).

The use of pornography poses a threat especially for those young people whose knowledge about sexuality is scarce and does not correspond to reality. These young people are deprived of the ability – which is specific to the adults - to confront the information contained in pornography with the reality. They start to fill this information gap with false information acquired through the contact with pornographic material (Krawulska-Ptaszyńska, 2004, p. 284).

Objectification of human beings is also an inherent, particularly degrading element of pornography. According to some authors, this process does not apply only to actors who use each other's bodies only to satisfy their own sexual needs, but also to viewers who are reduced to the position of a "payment facility" (Mahoney, 1983, p. 572). Many studies reveal the relationship between watching pornography and occurrence of certain behaviors and attitudes. Two surveys carried out on

a group of 969 and 992 people analyzed whether pornography affects risky sexual behavior in people in early adulthood (especially in the context of casual sexual contact). These surveys have shown that the more the respondents watched pornographic content, the more they were involved in the search for casual sexual contacts and the more sexual partners they had; they also planned to have more partners in the future (Braithwaite, Coulson, Keddington, Fincham, 2015).

The surveys mentioned in the present article are aimed at finding an answer to the question whether the religious self-declaration of the youth differentiates their attitudes towards pornography. Religious self-declaration undoubtedly determines the basic axioms of ethical behavior. However, it often happens that the declared religiousness is external only and it is not a value in its own, but it is an instrumental value, chosen for the following reasons: sense of security and social position (Chlewiński, 1991, p. 92). People demonstrating external religiousness are passive towards the object of religion, they are characterized by the absence of link between declared religiousness and attitudes in everyday life (after: Dziedzic, 2016, p. 71). Sociological research proves that this applies in particular to norms related to sexuality (Marianiński, 2012, pp. 347-366, Jedynak, 2014, pp. 19-20). The research performed may indirectly allow to determine whether in the area of the attitudes of the youth towards pornography it is valid to state that "(...) young Poles are quite religious but not very moral" (Marianiński, 1991, p. 84).

2. Methodological assumptions of the research

The aim of the conducted research was to determine whether there is a dependence between the religious self-declaration of respondents and their attitudes towards pornography. An initial hypothesis was assumed that religious self-declaration is a variable that differentiates the attitudes of young people in the analyzed area.

In the present article, the attitude was defined following the authors of the structuralist trend, distinguishing its cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimension (Nowak, 1973, Mądrzycki, 1977, Mika, 1987). The attitudes of the youth towards pornography were analyzed based on the level of knowledge on pornography, the nature of this knowledge - depending on the sources of information used (cognitive component), emotions declared (emotional component) and declarations on the intentional viewing of pornographic materials as well as the frequency of these practices (behavioral component).

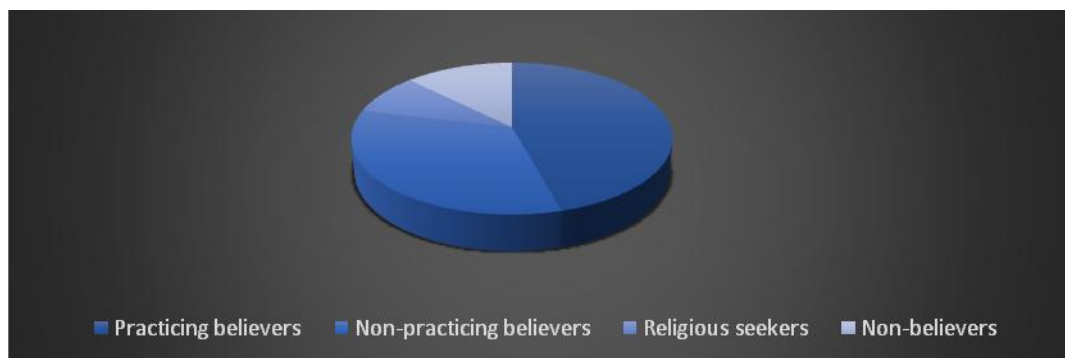
The assessment of the level of respondents' knowledge on pornography was carried out on the basis of a short test, containing 6 questions, divided into 22

detailed issues in the field of the analyzed subject. If the provided response was correct, then the respondent received 1 or 2 points; depending on the nature of the question and the degree of correctness of the response the respondent could get a maximum of 24 points. The sum of the points obtained was an indicator of the level of knowledge possessed by the respondent. For the purpose of this research the following scoring system was adopted:

- 0-9 points – low level of respondents' knowledge,
- 10-18 points – average level of respondents' knowledge,
- 19-24 points – high level of respondents' knowledge.

The research was carried out in June 2017 among the students of the last grades of two secondary technical schools in Rzeszów. The method used was a diagnostic survey, whereas class survey was chosen as the research technique. In the research random sampling was used. Out of the total number of 150 completed questionnaires, 127 questionnaires were qualified for the analysis.

The characteristics of the research sample due to the religious self-declaration of the respondents are illustrated in the chart below.



Source: Empirical studies

Graph 1. Religious self-declaration of the youth (N=127)

The group of respondents was dominated by practicing believers (45.7%), 33.1% of respondents declared that they believe but do not practice, 12.6% declared themselves as non-believers and 8.7% as a religious seekers.

In order to statistically verify the assumed hypothesis, the nonparametric Chi-square test was used. To determine the strength of relationship between variables, r_c correlation coefficient was used, which can take positive values from 0 to 1. Due to the fact that this coefficient allows only to demonstrate the strength of an existing relationship without specifying its direction, the obtained results were subject to qualitative analysis based on percentage data (as cited in: Góralski, 1974, p. 34).

3. The results of empirical research

Knowledge on a selected area of social reality in a significant way determines human attitude towards the phenomena, objects or processes related thereto. Attitudes of the youth towards pornography will be related to the level of respondents' knowledge on this subject. As indicated by the research results, the subject of pornography is not widely known. Only 9.5% of the respondents demonstrated high level of knowledge on the subject, in the case of 62.2% the level of knowledge was average, whereas 28.3% of the respondents demonstrated low level of knowledge.

Table 1. Religious self-declaration of the youth and the level of knowledge on pornography

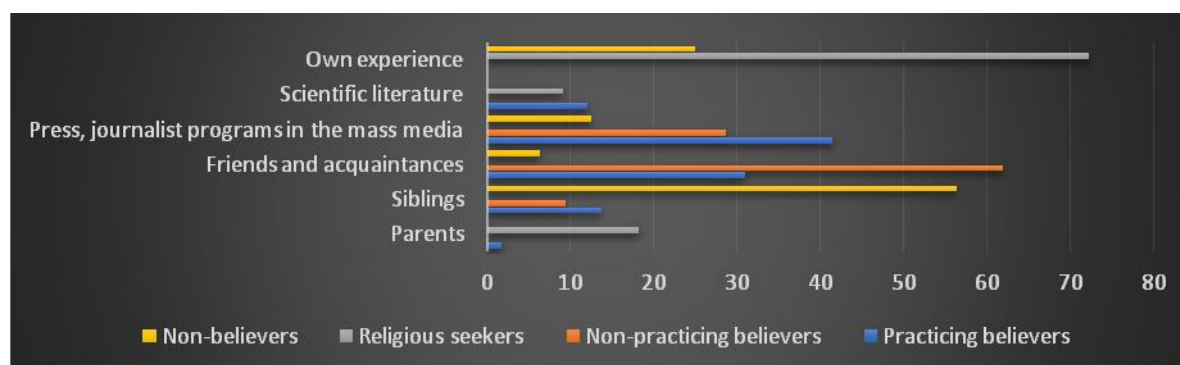
Level of knowledge	Religious self-declaration								Total	
	Regularly practicing believers		Non-practicing believers		Religious seekers		Non-believers			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High	5	8,6	-	-	6	54,6	1	6,3	12	9,5
Average	32	55,2	28	66,7	4	36,4	15	93,8	79	62,2
Low	21	36,2	14	33,3	1	9,1	-	-	36	28,3
Total	58	100	42	100	11	100	16	100	127	100

($\chi^2=39,9 > \chi^2_{0,01;6}=16,8$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,4$)

Source: Empirical studies

The above presented data indicate that the highest percentage of young people demonstrating high level of knowledge on pornography is in the group of religious seekers (54.6%). Also in this category, distinguished on the basis of religious self-declaration, only 9.1% of respondents obtained a result that would qualify their knowledge of pornography as low. Similarly, in the group of the youth declaring themselves as non-believers, none of the respondents demonstrated a low level of knowledge. In the category of practicing believers, only 8.6% presented high level of knowledge, while none of the respondents in the category of non-practicing believers qualified for high level of knowledge. The differences between categories are statistically significant, the strength of the relationship between the religious self-declaration of the youth and the level of their knowledge on the subject of pornography is defined as average.

The scope and nature of knowledge on a selected area of social reality results from preferred sources which provide information on a given topic. The chart below shows the sources of knowledge on pornography chosen by particular categories of respondents.



Source: Empirical studies

Graph 2. Religious self-declaration of the youth and the level of knowledge on pornography (N=127)

The above data indicates that the highest percentage of respondents derived their knowledge on pornography from friends and acquaintances (35.4%), secondly the respondents pointed to journalist programs in the mass media and the press as the sources of their knowledge on pornography (29.9%), and subsequently to siblings (16.5%), own experience (9.5%) and scientific literature (6.3%). It is relatively rare that this type of content would appear in pedagogical relations and in conversations with parents (2.4%). Statistical analysis of the data obtained in the study indicates the existence of a significant relationship between religious self-declaration and the sources from which young people derive their knowledge on pornography ($\chi^2=121$; $\chi^2_{0,01;15}=30,6$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,7$). We define the strength of this relationship as high. The highest percentage of respondents who learned about pornography from their own experiences was revealed in the group of religious seekers (72.7%). This direct source of knowledge was also indicated by 25% of non-believers, however this choice was not made by regularly practicing believers and non-practicing believers.

While analyzing the emotional component of the attitudes of the youth towards pornography, it should be noted that although emotional responses of an individual may be expressed in the behavioral sphere, they are, however, not always directly observable, they are often suppressed, deliberately hidden or inadequate to their strength or character. The table below presents data concerning the declared emotions, which are evoked in the youth by the contact with pornographic materials.

Table 2. Religious self-declaration of the youth and emotions declared by the respondents (N=127)

Declared emotions	Religious self-declaration								Total	
	Regularly practicing believers		Non-practicing believers		Religious seekers		Non-believers			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Curiosity	17	29,3	15	35,7	2	18,2	-	-	34	26,8
Pleasure and relaxation	-	-	7	16,7	5	45,5	3	18,8	15	11,8
Indifference	17	29,3	13	31,0	4	36,4	12	75,0	46	36,2
Disgust	14	24,1	6	14,3	-	-	1	6,3	21	16,5
Shame and embarrassment	10	17,2	1	2,4	-	-	-	-	11	8,7
Total	58	100	42	100	11	100	16	100	127	100

($\chi^2=46,7 > \chi^2_{0,01;12}=26,2$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,5$)

Source: Empirical studies

The highest percentage of respondents (36.2%) declared indifference as a reaction to the contact with pornographic materials, 26.8% of respondents indicated curiosity, 16.5% disgust, 8.7% shame and embarrassment. Positive emotions were declared by 11.8% of the youth participating in the study. These respondents pointed to pleasure and relaxation as their response to the contact with pornography. The analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between religious self-declaration of the examined group of young people and the declaration of emotions related to pornography. The strength of this relationship can be described as average. The fact that shame and embarrassment were not mentioned as reactions to pornography in the categories of religious seekers and non-believers is a noticeable tendency. None of the religious seekers has pointed to disgust as the dominant emotional reaction to pornographic material. While in the group of non-believers the highest percentage of the youth indicated indifference (75% of indications), in the group of religious seekers there were no indications to disgust. In this group, the highest percentage of respondents (45.5%) declared pleasure and relaxation during their contacts with pornography. It should be noted that this choice was of the highest percentage among all categories of respondents distinguished on the basis of their religious self-declaration. None of the examined believers and regularly practicing believers indicated this particular reaction.

While analyzing the behavioral component of the attitudes of the youth towards pornography, the focus was on declarations of viewing pornographic materials and the frequency of such practices. The table below presents declarations of the respondents regarding deliberate watching pornographic materials.

Table 3. Religious self-declaration of the youth and declarations on deliberate pornography watching (N=127)

Declaration regarding deliberate pornography watching	Religious self-declaration								Total	
	Regularly practicing believers		Non-practicing believers		Religious seekers		Non-believers			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I watch pornography	2	3,5	23	54,8	8	72,8	11	68,8	44	34,7
I used to watch but I stopped	12	20,7	15	35,7	1	9,1	5	31,3	33	26,0
I have never watched	36	62,1	4	9,5	-	-	-	-	40	31,5
I have never watched but I intend to try	8	13,8	-	-	2	18,2	-	-	10	7,9
Total	58	100	42	100	11	100	16	100	127	100

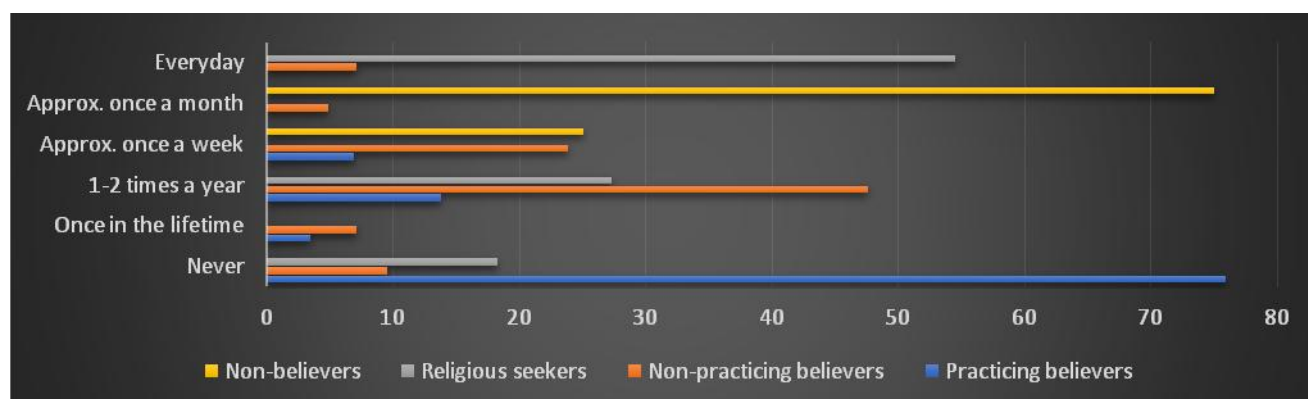
($\chi^2=76 > \chi^2_{0,01,9}=21,7$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,6$)

Source: Empirical studies

The findings of the study indicate that the declarations related to watching pornography varied. 34.7% of the respondents declared that they watched pornographic material, 31.5% claimed they had never watched, whereas 26% watched pornography it in the past, but stopped. The lowest percentage of respondents (7.9%) did not have any experience in watching pornography, but intended to try.

Religious self-declaration of the youth diversified the respondents' declarations in a statistically significant way. We define the strength of this relationship as high. None of the respondents in the category of religious seekers and non-believers indicated that they did not watch pornography. Both these groups were dominated by declarations on viewing pornographic material. The highest percentage of students who claimed that they had never deliberately used such materials (62.1%) was revealed in the group of regularly practicing believers.

The respondents were also asked about the frequency of watching pornographic materials. The data obtained is presented in the chart below.



Source: Empirical studies

Graph 3. Religious self-declaration of the youth and declarations on the frequency of pornography watching (N=127)

It was established during the study that 39.4% of respondents indicated that they never watch pornographic materials, 24.4% respondents do it approximately 1-2 times a year, 14.2% approx. once a month and 11% approx. once a week. 3.9% of respondents claimed that they watched pornographic materials once in their lifetime, and 7.1% claimed that they do it every day. The analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between the variables considered ($\chi^2=197,3 > \chi^2_{0,01;15}=30,6$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,8$). We define the strength of this relationship as very high. The tendency revealed in the analyses shows that deep faith and regular religious practice are associated with less frequent use of pornographic materials. The percentage of regularly practicing believers who declared that they had never deliberately watched pornographic material amounted to 75.9%, while in the category of young religious seekers more than half (54.5%) admitted to watching pornography every day and 75% of non-believers were watching pornography approximately once a week.

Conclusions resulting from the analyses

On the basis of the conducted analyses, it was found that the religious self-declaration of the youth differentiates their attitudes towards pornography in the area of:

- cognitive component of attitude
 - a) level of knowledge ($\chi^2=39,9 > \chi^2_{0,01;6}=16,8$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,4$),
 - b) sources of knowledge on pornography ($\chi^2=121 > \chi^2_{0,01;15}=30,6$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,7$),
- emotional component of attitude – declared emotions related to the pornographic materials ($\chi^2=46,7 > \chi^2_{0,01;12}=26,2$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,5$),
- behavioral component of the attitudes

- a) declaration of deliberate watching pornography ($\chi^2=76 > \chi^2_{0,01,9}=21,7$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,6$),
b) frequency of deliberate watching pornography ($\chi^2=197,3 > \chi^2_{0,01,15}=30,6$; $H_1 \neq 0$; $r_c=0,8$).

It should be noted that the highest strength of relationship occurs in the case of: frequency of viewing pornography (very high strength of relationship with religious self-declaration), sources of knowledge on pornography (high strength of relationship with religious self-declaration), declarations of deliberate use of pornographic materials (high strength of relationship with religious self-declaration religious).

The research material obtained in the study allowed to formulate some conclusions that may be of prophylactic utility. With respect to the sources of knowledge on pornography, it seems that in the group of young religious seekers the most important tendency is the dominant number of indications to their own experiences. It can be assumed that the questioning of fundamental values and the orientation towards radical pluralism favors exploration and experimentation in other areas of human life, including those depreciating the dignity of the human being (Mariański, 2007, pp. 53-59).

This may also be suggested by high percentage of indications to pleasure and relaxation as the dominant emotions in contact with pornographic materials. This may indicate the search for sexual stimuli in this type of materials. Declarations regarding the frequency of watching pornography in this group also indicate a fixed activity. While reviewing research across various scientific disciplines, P. Fagan (2010), notes that initially, when viewing pornographic materials, young people feel shame, embarrassment, lack of self-confidence, after a loner period, however, the pleasure of watching emerges (ibid., p. 5). Among those people who watch pornography, the phenomenon of the so-called escalation is also observed, which consists in searching for more and more drastic pornographic materials in order to achieve the same or even greater excitement. In one of the studies, as many as 49% of respondents stated that they watched pornography which previously had not been of any interest to them or even provoked disgust (Wéry, Billieux, 2016).

It also seems to be important that the highest percentage of regularly practicing believers indicated mass media as the source of knowledge on pornography. Z. Lew-Starowicz (2004, p. 471) emphasizes that these contents present sexual behaviors that are far removed from reality, that are focused on sexuality without taking into account other contexts, that may become a model of distorted relationships and sexual activity, which in turn may result in a psychosexual development disorder. Many authors, citing the results of research, also point out that in the case of children and teenagers, each type of pornography has a negative effect, because it creates a false image of sexuality and gender relations, suggesting

that it is possible to buy sex and separating sexuality from feelings and value system (Łaciak, 1998, Obuchowska, Jaczewski, 2002, Lew-Starowicz, 2002).

In all categories distinguished on the basis of religious self-declaration, only a small percentage of respondents indicated to parents as the source of knowledge on pornography. Nowadays many young people grow up in families concerned about the observance of a specific sexual taboo, therefore they are curious and willing to learn more about this forbidden sphere of life. It is especially in religiously rigorous families, that this topic is not to be discussed and raised in the presence of parents. As a consequence, they learn to hide their sexuality and their interest therein from their closest relatives and are left with their dilemmas on their own. There is a danger that as a result of contact with pornography, these young people will gain knowledge that is far removed from reality, which in turn determines the negative consequences for their further psychosexual development (Beisert, 1991, p. 72, Mahoney, 1983, p. 412).

The research shows that deep faith and commitment to religious practice can be considered as a protective factor in the case of young people who nowadays are very often exposed to various forms of pornography. Undoubtedly, the issue requires further research and exploration on a larger research sample. It is also important to ask questions about the types of pornography viewed, the negative effects that are observed by the youth in relation to watching pornographic materials and the reasons for watching pornography.

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