

The Effects of Sexually Explicit Material on Children and Young People

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ABSTRACT

Recently interest into the effects of pornography on children and young people has grown leading to an increase in studies in the area, laws being changed and public concern growing. This paper aims to recap these findings including more recent studies carried out in the UK. The literature shows links between viewing pornography and sexually explicit material and young people's attitudes and behaviours. This suggests that youth culture is affected by sexual imagery (Anderson, Shibuya, Ichori, et al, 2010; Löfgren-Martenson & Mansson, 2010; Peter & Valkenburg, 2007) and that this influences children and young people's attitudes and behaviours (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). The impact is contingent on the young person's support network (L'Engle, Brown & Kenneavy, 2004), social learning (Hunter, Figueredo & Malamuth, 2010) and other demographic factors, not least gender which has been consistently found to be significant (e.g. Stermer & Burkley, 2012). Recent studies have found changes in sexual practices of young people which are attributed to viewing pornography such as an increase in anal sex and casual attitudes to consent (Marston & Lewis, 2014). Links between porn use and sexual coercion have also been found (Wright, et al 2014). How and in what ways children and young people are affected by such imagery - and what can be done to reduce the negative impact on young people is debated in the light of the gaps in the literature and the issues with the existing literature. Further need for study is discussed along with planned areas of research.