

Submission
No 5

INQUIRY INTO IMPACTS OF HARMFUL PORNOGRAPHY ON MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Name: Dr Nicholas Lawless

Date Received: 28 October 2024

I am a clinical psychologist and couple therapist. I frequently treat both individuals and couples who have been/are currently being negatively impacted by pornography, either their own use of pornography or someone else's.

I also spent a number of years researching pornography and its effects for my PhD thesis. I have attached a heavily condensed version of my thesis as a supplementary file. 3 of the 4 studies that comprise the thesis are now published and able to be accessed by anyone free of charge, but Chapter 1 of the thesis consists of a literature review which provides an overview of much of the pornography research in the past 50 years and would be a good starting point for anyone trying to get their head around this topic.

Taken together, I have many years of clinical and academic experience dealing with the negative impacts of pornography.

Here are some clear learnings that address many (but not all) of the terms of reference:

- Pornography is a very powerful form of sexual education. I am yet to come across anyone, pro-porn or anti-porn, that disputes this, and there is an abundance of research to support this. Whatever pornography shows will be replicated in society.
- Mainstream pornography contains high levels of verbal and physical aggression, casual sex and infidelity. Those who watch pornography are thus being taught (without them necessarily realising this) that these things are not only acceptable but desirable.
- Unsurprisingly then, using pornography has been shown to not only influence people's attitudes towards these behaviours, but also increase the chance of them acting out these behaviours in their own lives. I have seen this numerous times in my clinical work, where pornography use has started someone down the devastating path of infidelity or sexual violence and abuse.
- The overwhelming majority of pornography is accessed via the internet.
- The current restrictions and education programs (or lack of) are entirely inadequate to deal with the issue of pornography use.
- Harmful pornography - what exactly is that? My research makes it clear that at least for those in romantic relationships, all pornography is harmful and should be avoided regardless of the content.

Please reach out if you would like further clarification or elaboration on any of these points or would like me to give evidence at a hearing.