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Abstract: Tamil Nadu is an Indian state with different cultural trends in marriage, including endogamy, post-marital residence, spousal differences in age and education, and the extent of women's say in the timing of marriage and choosing a partner, and disbursal of dowries. Even today, sex remains a topic of controversy, linked to immoral and voyeuristic values, especially in a patriarchal heteronormative society, like Coimbatore. With limited research available on the experiences of women watching porn, the researchers attempted to know and understand how the women of Coimbatore viewed pornography, simply from a voyeuristic perspective. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten women (natives and residents of Coimbatore), from diversified backgrounds. Discussions related to porn consumption, meanings, risks, dangers, experiences and pleasures associated with it were initiated. The findings of the study offered basic insights into the topics discussed, which may be helpful in normalizing women's experiences, promote a healthier and more open discourse about pornography consumption among Coimbatore women.	

WOMEN AND PORNOGRAPHY: A VOYEURISTIC PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE

ABSTRACT:

Tamil Nadu is an Indian state with different cultural trends in marriage, including endogamy, post-marital residence, spousal differences in age and education, and the extent of women's say in the timing of marriage and choosing a partner, and disbursal of dowries. Even today, sex remains a topic of controversy, linked to immoral and voyeuristic values, especially in a patriarchal heteronormative society, like Coimbatore. With limited research available on the experiences of women watching porn, the researchers attempted to know and understand how the women of Coimbatore viewed pornography, simply from a voyeuristic perspective. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten women (natives and residents of Coimbatore), from diversified backgrounds. Discussions related to porn consumption, meanings, risks, dangers, experiences and pleasures associated with it were initiated. The findings of the study offered basic insights into the topics discussed, which may be helpful in normalizing women's experiences, promote a healthier and more open discourse about pornography consumption among Coimbatore women.

Keywords: *Women, Pornography, Voyeurism, Internet, Pleasures, Risks*

INTRODUCTION:

With sex remaining a controversial subject even today in the Indian society, especially in a conservative and traditional social setup like Coimbatore, pornography has flawlessly blended into popular culture, so well that embarrassment or furtiveness is no longer part of the equation. A concern with pornography as a cultural product and content along with sexual cultures and practices, and with the reception of pornographic content marks a paradigm shift in research, Feona Attwood (2002). Studying pornography consumption may include various realms related to it, such as paraphiliac behaviour, addiction, aggression, gender differences in pornography consumption, influence on behaviour, related patterns, sexuality, extramarital sexual behavior, cultural changes, etc. Watching pornography also presents a probable therapeutic or recreational use as well as an excitement of engaging in what is forbidden. Super-religious homes bring up women with the belief that they should be ashamed for wanting sex and experience pleasure. It is important to understand what it means for women to watch porn, what importance it holds in their lives, McDonald (2012). Viewing pornography has always been tied up in the structural inequalities of a patriarchal and heteronormative society, like India, especially down South. It is important to identify the very individual personal histories that are

interwoven with the sense-making and pleasures of watching pornography, Sarah Ashton, Karalyn McDonald & Maggie Kirkman. (2019).

A study in 2015, reports India coming close to second position with 30% women watching online porn, slowly bridging the gap and despite bans, India became 3rd largest porn watcher in 2018. Where sex education lacks, pornography can become a means of self-education, and viewing pornography for the first time can be a shocking and/or intensely pleasurable and/or exciting experience, both for women and men. Adolescents who are sexually active tend to more likely be self-exposed to sex in the media and relatively, are more likely to progress in their sexual activity, A.K. Bridges, R.M. Bergner & M. Hesson-McInnis (2003). Men hold the reins in the realm of pornography, where women are depicted sexually as sex objects in explicit texts. With men dominating the industry of pornography with regard to production as well as consumption, it becomes necessary to know and understand how women view pornography, how they accept it, and their personal-level attitudes, behaviour and experiences, relatively.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In response to controversies, with regard to the balance between nature and culture in determining human sexuality, the female sex drive is more pliable compared to that of male in response to sociocultural and situational factors, D. A. Hargreaves & M. Tiggemann (2009). In the pornography debate, the issue at stake is nothing but the age-old conflict between an individual's freedom and the social control, J. D. Brown & K. L. L'Engle (2009). Voyeurism is a popular genre of pornography. Pornography sexualizes women's inequality, and harm of it begins with the women in it, Catharine A. MacKinnon (2018). The current patriarchal and heterosexist social landscape inundates with mainstream pornographic material and promotes very specific socially constructed female sexual performances, S. Daniel & S. K. Bridges (2013). Effects of exposure to pornography include the trivialisation and objectification of women, increased acceptance of rape myths, desensitisation to sexual force, and spontaneous rape-fantasy generation, Kirk Doran and Joseph Price (2014). Female consumers of pornography are constantly persisted with questions of subordination, harm, objectification and authenticity and the need to consider women's well-being before their own pleasures in watching or reading pornography – but this may be as much to do with the questions and approaches researchers take, P. J. Wright (2013). Compared to women, men reported greater sexual arousal and enjoyment to pornography and found them more accepting and less degrading; and sexual arousal and enjoyment were positively related to ratings of acceptance, Cox, J., Fernandez, et al., (2012). Sexually

explicit text frequently consumed by females relatively reflect the long-term orientation of their mating strategy, N. M. Malamuth, T. Addison & M. Koss (2000). Evolutionary processes designed men to be more visually attracted to and aroused by sexual stimuli, M. Allen, D. D'Alessio & K. Brezgel (1995). In men, visual stimulation can occur frequently in response to seeing strangers as well as acquaintances, even from a distance, and such arousal is unlikely to evoke the negative effect to generate caution. Women, in contrast, are relatively more attracted to tactile and auditory stimuli, more likely a means of communicating a feeling that occurs only with familiar persons, D. Zillmann & J. Bryant (1984). When sexual arousal levels of men and women are equated, men are more likely to participate in a similar experiment in response to a porn film, than women, S. S. Hendrick (1988). Motivations behind Internet pornography consumption can be broken down into four factors - relationship, mood management, habitual use, and fantasy, E.S. Byers (2005). Ever since the Internet made it so easy to access, there is no longer any stigma attached to porn, Pamela Paul (2005).

PORNOGRAPHY & VOYEURISM:

Pornography is any related material that aims to create or enhance sexual thoughts or feelings in the beneficiary. It contains explicit exposure of the genitals and sexual acts, such as masturbation, vaginal and/or anal intercourse, oral sex, rape, etc. *Voyeurism* is derived from the French '*voir*,' which comes from the Latin '*videre*,' and both mean 'to see.' In general, voyeurism involves the behavior of a voyeur or a voyeuse, a secret spectator experiencing satisfaction from viewing the sexual activity of others. The literature on voyeurism describes its incidence among the general public also, where it can be seen in activities that include viewing of pornographic magazines, the Internet, and movies that are not illegal, J. S. Carroll, Padilla-Walker, et al. (2008).

Pornography serves not only as a means of sexual arousal and stimulation, but also as an entertainment and information source about sex and sexuality. Distinct lines are drawn between the pro-pornography - to be for pornography and to stand in favour of civil liberties, sexual liberation and science; and the anti-pornography - opposition to pornography was considered repressive, reactionary and anti-sex, Pamela Paul (2005). It is often socially unacceptable, considered deviant or shameful and censored. With pornography having seeped into mainstream culture, the confined images of porn world have become progressively intense, making it a billion-dollar industry. Internet pornography usage is a motivated behaviour meant to obtain what one wants to see, Bryant Paul & Jae Woong Shim (2008). Internet has made anything available to everyone with just a click away.

WOMEN AND PORNOGRAPHY IN INDIA:

Being the world's most popular porn site, Pornhub gave an insight into the world of porn with a series of statistics for 2018 by releasing review of the previous year. According to the report, India stands the third largest in porn consumption, hungry for free-to-access porn with the United States taking the lead, followed by the United Kingdom. Even with the ban in place, Pornhub, states that India's average time spent has increased by 2 seconds and an average Indian spends 8 minutes 23 seconds on the website (per session). The average age of Indians exploring porn was 29. Of the total traffic from India, 30% were women. Globally, 29 percent of 33.5 billion were women. Most of the traffic was from Android on mobiles and Windows on desktops.

A study among 40 million Pornhub users, by Pornhub along with New York-based news website, The Daily Beast, revealed that women across the globe are also watching more hardcore acts than men, while lesbian porn was found to be the runaway hit among women.

Erudition on pornography has examined pornography, footpath pornography, C. Sabina, J. Wolak & D. Finkelhor (2008), the relationship between erotics and the internet, Shohini Ghosh (2005) and pornography and modernity, S. V. Subramanian, K. Jones, A. Kaddour & N. Krieger (2009). Researchers have explored how the exercise of sexual rights and expression of sexualities, especially of women from diverse social, political, economic and cultural contexts are facilitated by the Internet.

METHODOLOGY:

Research with regard to how women view pornography is sparse. This study examines how women view pornography, in general, from a voyeuristic perspective. Includes discussions related to female porn consumption, like when they started viewing, how and why they view it, different meanings, risks and dangers, experiences and pleasures associated with it. India being a patriarchal society with heteronormative practices, focuses pornography debates on men assuming that pornography is made and viewed only by men, with intense stress on the ill effects of pornography. The fact of pornography consumption by women has been ignored more often. Hence, this study focusing on the women of urban Coimbatore of Tamil Nadu state.

This discussion focuses on in-depth interviews carried out with 10 women between the ages of 21 and 30, located in the city of Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India with diversified backgrounds. All of them well-educated, English-speaking, proficient in using technology, natives & residents of urban Coimbatore and most of them in respectable professions like educational sector (respondents #1 – academician, #2 & #3 – college students), financial sector (respondent #4), management sector (respondent #5), health sector (respondents #6 & #7), private employee (respondent #8) and housewives

(respondents #9 & #10). Out of the ten, five are married, three are unmarried, one is divorced and the other a widow. Two among the ten identified themselves as bisexual while seven as heterosexual and other is yet to discover herself. Six of them live in their homes and four away from home.

A small group was chosen to gain deeper understanding on how women view porn. Names of respondents have been omitted to ensure the assured respondent confidentiality. A qualitative approach has been adopted to unveil how women experience viewing pornography with concentration on the pleasures women experience in viewing it and how they surmount sexually explicit material. This is with regard to delineating the idea that sexually explicit media texts are experienced and understood in a variety of ways and evoke strong and often contradictory reactions, not all of which are represented in public debates about pornography, G. Andrews, J. Corry & T. Slade (2004).

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS:

The consumption of porn by women can be seen as a tension and entanglement between pleasure and risk where the search for pleasure is shadowed by the spectre of virtue, P. Krishnakumar & K. Satheesan (2014). The discussions were based on when & how the women started watching porn, what they saw, their experiences and pleasures, risks and dangers and different meanings porn viewing had in them.

WHAT PORN?

While discussing the porn consumption of women, it is also imperative to look what porn they consume. Most of the interviewees hesitated in the beginning, but opened up to the categories they watched. Lesbian porn, romantic and young white couple were the most preferred categories among others like threesome, virgin, workplace, amateurs and hardcore. Only one of the respondents liked watching bondage, rape and violent sex porn.

Lesbian porn was the most watched and favourite category even among the strictly straight respondents. They felt a sense of pride, dominance, more connected with the bodies and the sexuality of women on-screen as well as independence from men. 'Lesbian seduces straight girl' was a hit among women. Respondents just wanted to explore, look at and learn things that they did not actually want in real life. An important fact is that lesbian porn need not end when the man ejaculates, which happens in hetero porn.

PORN CONSUMPTION AND COIMBATORE WOMEN:

The impossible demand for women to be sexually desirable as well as sexually virtuous, S. Sinha (2015), describes the consumption of porn by women in a context where urban modernity appears

to both, provide new possibilities of self-expression as well as articulate older concerns about morality and Indianness, N. Hasnain & D. Kumar (2016). Respondent #1, a 27-year-old teacher, separated from her husband for the past two years, often feels guilty watching pornography. As a teacher, she is responsible for molding children who are the future of a society and hence feels immoral about her habit. Respondents #2 & #3, college friends pursuing post-graduation, are in a homosexual relationship, staying together in a rental apartment. One of them is engaged to a cousin and soon-to-be-married. They watched porn together on mobile phones, laptops and sometimes connected it to their TV. They were in their own space and were happy about it. Respondent #4, a 27-year-old finance manager, a widow, currently in a live-in relationship with her boyfriend who had introduced her to pornography. She simply watches porn with him to make him feel comfortable and happy. She has always been indifferent about watching it. Respondent #5, a 24-year-old married manager, mother of one, in a joint family, watches porn as an entertainment. She feels relaxed after watching porn amongst her busy work-life balance. She developed a craving for porn during her pregnancy, when she started watching it. Respondent #6, a 22-year-old unmarried nurse, employed in a private hospital enjoys watching porn with her colleague on mobile phones, especially during night shifts when there is nothing much to be done. Respondent #7, 26-year-old married doctor, started watching porn in her early twenties when studying medicine. She started watching porn out of curiosity, with her classmates, as a source of education and information. She rarely watches porn as she rarely finds alone time and never when on-duty, as she feels disoriented for some time after watching it. Respondent #8, a married private employee, very hesitantly told that she watches porn from her husband's compulsion. She was coerced into watching it to avoid fights, rants and sometimes physical and/or sexual violence following the refusal. Respondent #9, a 30-year-old housewife, started watching porn when she was 25. She was surfing through her husband's phone one day, when she tumbled upon a folder with pornographic videos. Her husband was more than willing to share the content with her. She started viewing porn at home, when alone and sometimes locked in bedroom or bathroom if her children were playing at home. Respondent #10, a 26-year-old housewife, had been watching porn after her college days. Her friends insisted it as a way to take the upper hand in the relationship after marriage. She watches porn, at home, on her mobile phone using earphones after ensuring that her in-laws are not around. She sometimes feels guilty about hiding this from her husband but is neutral about it mostly. Most of the respondents preferred mobile phones to desktops or laptops, with the advantages of small, personal screen, proximity, easy access and control to hide when someone suddenly appears nearby.

MEANINGS:

Most of the respondents keenly observed the facial expressions and feelings of porn stars. They reported feeling less pleasure and enjoyment when they perceived the sexual activity on screen to be unrealistic and vice versa. Few of the respondents enjoyed porn, but still felt that it was socially inappropriate, believing that women should not watch porn. They felt conflicted with something they enjoyed doing and considering the same to be socially unacceptable. Most women reported evaluating the bodies of the performers. This also reflected on how they felt about their own bodies when compared to the porn star's physique. However, some respondents felt less insecure about their bodies after watching porn, though their ways of comparison considerably varied from each other's. All the respondents connected with the screen content and imagined themselves in the position of the woman on screen. They only wanted the women on screen to go through what made them happy and they enjoyed.

Respondents #2 and #3 indicated that it was arousing to watch together as an inspiration for different ideas of sexual activities. They were able to connect with the woman on screen as well as identify their sexuality and preferences. However, respondent #8 always felt threatened with her partner's porn use, indicating that she did not like to engage in similar activities from screen. She reported to have always held a perspective that watching porn would never align with her character. Respondent #9 still had to deal with the nagging fact that her partner was experiencing arousal for someone else, though they shared porn material. Respondent #4 felt that a person had a right to watch porn and she was okay with accompanying her boyfriend as each of them engaged in the other's interests. They also enjoyed trying something new from what they watched. Some of the respondents were sexually aroused while watching porn, while some were not. Some respondents did not want sex to be confined in a bedroom. They wanted to explore potential erotic places, like foreign beach, glasshouse, mountain top, terrace, balcony or living room simply to break the convention. Respondents who were married, and in heterosexual monogamous relationships, preferred pleasure outside of genitals. They were more particular with the love, care and trust involving each other. They felt pornography empowering as well as offering a learning space.

PLEASURES:

The respondents had erotic responses when probed on desires, appeals and pleasure points. Most of them wished to be the woman on screen, able to moan or scream with pleasure while having an orgasm. Two of the respondents enjoyed the sounds more, while the others the visuals. Three

respondents were exhilarated and aroused watching the man enter the woman on screen. Respondent #10 enjoyed seeing the woman on top, feeling a sense of control and dominance. Most of the respondents preferred long foreplays including intimate, soft touches, caresses with fingers and tongue, and trust rather than violent or hard sex.

The respondents indicated various erogenous zones, such as wrists, nape of the neck, hip, stomach, back of the knee, ears, lips, breasts, thighs and clearly genitals were the last. Penetrative sex was secondary to them. One respondent came into terms with her own sexuality and body after watching porn. She realized that she could take control of, understand and express her feelings. Another respondent learnt that sex had no limitations or definitions. She realized she had control over deciding to touch or being touched, even if it was her husband. One of the respondents revealed her attraction towards genitals of the woman on screen. Respondents preferred women with thin or medium bodies, long fingernails, long or short hair let loose.

Women's viewership of the naked male body can be read in a number of ways; as resistant reading, as a popular feminist expression, as an act of pleasure, or as merely reinstating patriarchal structures of inequality, R. B. Krueger, M.S. Kaplan (2009), M. Diamond, E. Jozifkova & Weiss (2010), D. K. Braun-Courville, M. Rojas (2009), R. Bauserman (1996), D. Brandt, D. S. Prescott & R. J. Wilson (2013). One respondent fantasised painful, hard, violent sex and rape, but never actually wanted them in her real life.

Most respondents viewed the male body on screen as a source of pleasure for the woman. Only one of the respondents watched the male bodies keenly and others observed that men did not have much to show, except their penis. None of the respondents were turned on by watching penis, except for when it entered the woman on-screen.

Pleasure in the body part, such as the neckline or the curve of an arm, as a celebration of its constituent elements, gives a sense of the scope and complexity of sensual pleasure that breaks the specific sexual associations with genitals, R. Morgan (1980) and describes the necessity of over-determining phallic substitution in the representation of the female form, Pamela Paul (2005).

RISKS AND DANGERS:

Women view porn as something that is produced by men, with women, for men and strongly believe that they might get a bad reputation or be called a 'bad girl' when caught for watching it, especially in a traditionally conservative society, like Coimbatore. Women grow up with a conventional understanding that when you are married to a person, sex is all about getting into bed and sleeping with

him. There is lack of related education, when everyone around hesitates speaking about it. Pleasure has never been considered the fore end of sex. Women who watch porn could easily be labeled a prostitute or slut, easily available.

Most of the respondents seemed to be aware of the risks involved in accessing pornography. Respondent #6, a nurse in a hospital was scared about her family judging her, when at home, if they knew what she was watching. Her concerns were more related to respectability. At hostel, where she shared her room with a friend, she usually locked herself in the room when alone and watched porn on her mobile phone or laptop, using earphones. Six out of 10 respondents could not discuss the topic openly with their family, friends or colleagues whereas four of them could discuss with their partners. Respondent #5 sometimes watched it while at office, during breaks and always used headphones. Most of the respondents used mobile phones and internet to access pornography. The internet offers a 'new public space' which possibly raises the tensions of risk and danger, K. Jangam, K. Muralidharan & K. A. Tansa (2015). These women usually kept multiple windows open, ready to switch between, in case someone comes near. They practiced the habit of using headphones or muting the phone, irrespective of whether they were alone or not. Three of the respondents, on occasions used their personal laptops and always deleted the browse history. Setting aside of time is a symptom of our cultural shame around viewing pornography, but is also a requisite of engaging properly with the text, Pamela Paul (2005). The respondents were reluctant to use public internet access, like in malls or cafes for the fear of being discovered, if someone tracked the sites visited by the users.

Respondent #8 was compelled to watch a variety of porn, including violence and rape, by her husband. She developed an aversion towards sex and porn, as her partner wanted to try out new positions and hardcore sex which was violent and painful for her, both mentally and physically. Unless women are actually attacked, no violence is seen to have been committed whereas in a common setting, the context of women's access to public spaces are the everyday negotiations as to how, when, and with whom to commute, where to be, when to be or not be out, what to wear, where and how to walk, how to modify and understand one's gaze, and other such strategies that women employ in public spaces is what constitutes 'normal' violence, J. Gupta, A. Raj & M. R. Decker (2009). Women viewing porn have another side to it, as to what violence is in general as well as in relation to pornography, K Jangam, K. Muralidharan & K. A. Tansa (2015). Almost all the respondents had a kind of constant fear of being caught by others. Women demonstrated a constant self-surveillance in relation to the arguments about harm, D. S. Prescott & R. J. Wilson (2013). Respondent #1 had tried to stop watching porn feeling

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7 guilty of doing something wrong as a teacher and what her colleagues and students would think of her,
8 but then she resorted back to watching porn after two months. The respondents felt that they could not
9 concentrate fully due to all the consciousness and efforts to ensure safety from being caught. They
10 always had the feeling of doing something wrong. The fear of losing respectability being the risk, where
11 a woman may become considered sexually available, which is a violence in itself.

12 **CONCLUSION:**

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14 The questions and assumptions related to porn, censorship, legality, bans & blocks, crime and its
15 effects when kept aside, women of Coimbatore have been progressively consuming online porn, with
16 increased prevalence and usage of Internet and mobile phones, despite public discourse and attitudes
17 related to pornography remaining a taboo in a social context. **The porn consumption by women can**
18 **be seen as a stressful dalliance between pleasure and risk where ‘the search for pleasure is**
19 **shadowed by the spectre of morality** Hasnain N, Kumar D, (2016). Women have actively viewed
20 pornography as a means to pleasure that is accompanied with guilt and disappointment. Respondents
21 not only indicated their pleasures of pornography consumption and viewing female bodies, but also
22 their displeasure in representing violence. Respondents spoke of violence having to do more with
23 dangers and risks, in terms of accessing porn, fear of being discovered, seen as sexually available,
24 losing respectability, feeling ashamed and guilty to face friends and family with one of the respondents
25 experiencing violence and abuse in all fronts. Sexual imagery descriptions also point to a non-
26 heteronormative idea of penetrative sex, and to intimacy in an eros of touch, caress and sharing, T. S.
27 Jaisooriya & Janardhan Reddy (2015). The women consistently and clearly expressed their needs and
28 pleasures in viewing pornography, taking on the non-penetrative-sex front. Women readers desire to see
29 the naked male body in its entirety, including the penis, G. M. Hald & Malamuth, (2011) and actively
30 construct the ways in which they would like to see this naked male body, involved in action, such as
31 caring, caressing the erogenous points, other than genitals, and loving a woman most importantly, E. M.
32 Morgan (2011). Most of the respondents preferred lesbian porn though it had nothing to do with
33 performance, but by women for women and the screen entirely being about female bodies, centered
34 only with clitoral stimulation and vaginas and nothing about penis. Most of the women felt morally
35 guilty for doing something wrong and socially unacceptable, from the setting they grew up in.
36 Coimbatore, on a cultural and religious front, offers a wide range of conservational traditions, norms
37 and practices as to how a homely, desirable and good woman should be, with stress on the good name
38 of the family that brings her up. The level of exposure she had from when she was a child has to also be
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considered. Women prefer smartphones more than laptops, muted or with earphones plugged-in for porn consumption, irrespective of family, friends or colleagues around them. Internet and mobile phones have taken virtual voyeurism or online pornography to new heights offering easy accessibility to explicit sexual materials to everyone, not excluding women.

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