Sex on Camera: APostmodern Feminist Critique on Pornography

ABSTRACT

Pornography has been a topic of ongoing debate, particularly among feminist thinkers, regarding its implications for women's subjugation and oppression versus its potential as a means for women to express their sexuality, empower themselves, and exercise autonomy. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of pornography from diverse cultural, religious, and legal perspectives. Additionally, it explores the divergent feminist viewpoints on pornography, examining their respective issues and inconsistencies. On one side, anti-pornography feminists argue that pornography inherently serves as an oppressive tool that degrades and subjugates women. On the other side, pro-pornography feminists assert that pornography can empower women and facilitate the exploration and appreciation of their own sexuality. By employing these feminist perspectives, the study offers a critical analysis of pornography through a postmodern lens. Postmodernism emphasizes the importance of considering diverse perspectives based on varying experiences and conflicting narratives of women involved in pornography. In this study, the researcher distinguishes between the concept of pornography and its associated industry. As a concept, pornography is regarded as a catalyst for women's self-actualization and the free expression of their sexuality, thus representing a form of sexual liberation. However, as an industry, pornography can give rise to problems such as sex trafficking and exploitation, with women often being the victims. Consequently, the study emphasizes the need for certain boundaries or standards that prioritize women's autonomy, safety, and well-being. These limitations or standards are considered essential in enabling women to find meaning in their pursuit of self-actualization and the expression of their own sexuality.

Keywords: pornography, feminism, postmodernism, women's autonomy, sexuality

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Pornography has been a part of human experience. Pornographic obsession is not limited to the past. Pornography is often defined as sexually explicit material created with the intention to sexually arouse its audience (Daskalopoulou & Zanette, 2020; Mckee et al. 2022). The production, distribution, and consumption of pornography have become an integral part of global society, with the advent of technology enabling unprecedented access to a vast array of pornographic content (Banyard, 2010; Nair, 2018).Written pornography, images, and videos were the three main types of pornography consumed. The most common form of consumption was videos, but women were

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far more likely than men to read written pornography (Solano, et al., 2020). The most popular Internet porn site in the world has revealed data showing that itswebsite received over 42 billion visits alone in 2019 (Pornhub, 2019). Its numbers have kept on rising especially that pornography is most often accessed through cell phones (Herbenick et al., 2020). Mestre-Bach et al. (2020) found out that pornography use increased by 11 percent during the Covid pandemic. Ninety-four percent of men and 84 percent of women have seen pornography at some point in their lifetime (Herbenick et al., 2020). However, the presence and impact of pornography on society have been the subject of ongoing debate among researchers, policymakers, and the general public. Some argue that pornography serves as a healthy form of sexual expression that can be used to explore and understand sexual desires (Attwood, 2017; McCormack &Wignall, 2017), while others contend that it perpetuates harmful attitudes, objectifies women, and contributes to the proliferation of sexual violence (Foubert et al., 2019; Waltman, 2021). As such, examining the complexities of pornography is crucial to understanding its role in contemporary society and its implications for individuals, relationshipsand the wider culture.

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In the same way, feminist views on pornography are diverse and complex. Some feminists argue that pornography is harmful to women and reinforces gender inequalities (Long, 2012; Mikkola, 2019), while others argue that it can be empowering and that individuals should have the right to choose what they consume (Strossen, 2000).

Even though feminists have differing opinions on pornography, their major goal is to emphasize how women can be freed from a male-dominated society. Hence, this research tries to provide a thorough knowledge of pornography from a variety of perspectives, including feminist ones. Furthermore, by utilizing these feminist perspectives, the researcher can establish a foundation for critique on pornography. By doing so, a comprehensive understanding of how pornography emancipates women in society will be established.

Review of Related Literature

Pornography not only has been a divisive issue among feminists as to whether it is a tool for the subordination of women or a weapon for women's sexual liberationbut alsoa controversial and debatable issue in various perspectives. To guide us, ~~the~~ brief reviews of ~~the~~ related literature are presented below.

Cultural Perspectives on Pornography

Pornography is a controversial topic that elicits different cultural perspectives. Some cultures view it as a form of sexual liberation and expression, while others perceive it as exploitation and degradation (Mikkola, 2019; Padva, 2019). In Western cultures, pornography is generally more accepted and seen as a means of free expression and sexual empowerment (Attwood, 2017). Recent research suggests that pornography consumption is viewed as a form of leisure, play, and entertainment (McKee, 2012; Daskalopoulou & Zanette, 2020). McCormack and Wignall (2017) argue that pornography can be an enjoyable activity with educational merits for young men. Similarly, Smith et al. (2015) found that for young people, pornography serves as entertainment and allows them to explore their sexual identities. However, debates persist regarding the

UNDER PEER REVIEW

objectification and commodification of women in pornography and its societal impact (Weeks, 2017).

In contrast, some Eastern cultures hold more conservative views on pornography, considering it taboo and shameful (Purwaningtyas & Wibowo, 2022; Randall, 2021; Sniewski & Farvid, 2020; Zarafonetis, 2017). In ~~the~~ Philippine culture, for example, pornography is generally regarded as taboo due to the influence of conservative Catholic values (Cruz, 2022). The topic of pornography is often considered sensitive and is rarely discussed openly or in polite conversation.

Pornography and its portrayal of sex in the media pose significant challenges in various countries, despite cultural and historical differences. In the predominantly Catholic Philippines, where the topic is considered sensitive, pornography has become a major industry, with the country having the highest percentage of regular pornography viewers (Francoeur & Noonan, 2004; Bernarte et al., 2016; Ling, 2017). In contrast, ancient Indian culture integrated eroticism as a part of adult education, with the Kamasutra serving as a guide for sexual pleasure (Math et al., 2014; Dahiya, 2021). However, the influence of British colonialism and Victorian morality brought changes to Indian attitudes towards pornography, which is generally seen as immoral and degrading despite reports indicating significant consumption (Vanita, 2013; Loomba, 2018; Velayati, 2018; Gabriel, 2017; Kumari et al., 2016; T, 2018; Shaik & Rajkumar, 2015).

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In Chinese culture, influenced by Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, which emphasize modesty and social harmony, pornography is generally frowned upon (Chen, 2017; Yue, 2017; Lee, 2020; Link, 2019; Yuan, 2019; Dikötter, 1995; Judy, 2016). Despite this cultural restriction, certain forms of sexually explicit content, such as erotic literature and art, have a longer history and are sometimes viewed as artistic expressions or used for sexual education (Yao & Lu, 2013; Ruan, 2013). In Japan, erotic art, exemplified by "Shunga" woodblock prints, had a prominent role in artistic culture during the Edo period, although it later became stigmatized with the Westernization of the country (Redjou, 2016; Wagner, 2019; Buckland, 2013). Today, while porn consumption is prevalent in Japan, there is a sense of shame associated with it, and concerns exist regarding its societal effects, such as declining birth rates and issues of sexual harassment and exploitation (Diamond & Uchiyama, 1999; Galbraith, 2017).

In summary, the cultural perspectives on pornography vary widely across different countries, ranging from acceptance and integration to taboo and condemnation. The discussions surrounding pornography encompass complex and nuanced debates about its impact on individuals, society, and cultural values.

Religious Perspectives on Pornography

From a religious perspective, consuming or producing pornography is often seen as a violation of moral or spiritual principles (Mestre-Bach et al., 2021). Various faiths view sexuality as sacred and intimate, meant to be expressed within committed and loving relationships (Lofton, 2019). Islam considers pornography a major sin, emphasizing modesty and chastity in all aspects of life, including sexuality (Farmahinifarahani, 2021; Farmahinifarahani & Ranjbar, 2022; Hassan, 1990). Islamic scholars view pornography as haram, violating Islamic teachings by objectifying individuals and promoting immorality and indecency (Sinaulan, 2017). Christianity considers pornography sinful, contradicting God's moral and sexual laws, and emphasizes the sacredness of sex within marriage (Yamoah & Dei, 2015; Perry, 2019). Buddhism discourages sexual

UNDER PEER REVIEW

misconduct, including the objectification and exploitation associated with pornography, promoting ethical conduct and mindfulness (Bao, 2012; Faure, 1998; Wallace, 2013). Hinduism, while diverse in its views, generally considers pornography as immoral and incompatible with principles of dharma, purity, self-control, and spiritual progress (Alter, 1994; Mehta, 2006; Alter, 2011).

Legal Perspectives on Pornography

Pornography is a controversial topic, and its legality and morality vary worldwide. In the United States, pornography is generally considered protected speech under the First Amendment (Tubbs & Smith, 2018). However, child pornography is illegal in most countries, and some forms of pornography may be considered obscene and not protected by the First Amendment (Greenberg, 2022; Louis, 2017; Moore & Murray, 2021). The Supreme Court has established a three-part test to determine obscenity, evaluating community standards, prurient interests, offensiveness, and artistic or literary value (Bradley, 2018; Fix et al., 2017).

Different countries have varying laws and regulations regarding pornography. In the Philippines, there are legal restrictions on pornography, penalizing the production of films for violence, lust, or pornography (Pangilinan, 2018). Child pornography is prohibited, but adult pornography is not explicitly illegal. Nevertheless, the government heavily regulates it, blocking adult websites and criminalizing the possession and distribution of obscene materials. Debates exist regarding stricter regulations versus comprehensive sex education (Pangilinan, 2018).

In India, obscenity laws regulate pornography, defining obscenity as lewd, lustful, or degrading and corrupting others (Chaudhry, 2022; Salim, 2017). Selling pornographic books is illegal, and there are additional provisions addressing child pornography and indecent representation of women. Despite regulations, a black market for pornographic materials exists, and many Indians access pornography online. There is a debate about the impact of pornography on society, with arguments ranging from objectification and sexualization of women to protection as free speech (Singh, 2021; Gangoli, 2016).

China views pornography as a social ill and heavily regulates its production and consumption. The production and distribution of pornographic material for profit are prohibited, and the government enforces strict censorship laws to control pornographic content (Sigley, 2007; Gu, 2021). However, there is a growing demand for pornography in China, prompting increased efforts to crack down on production and distribution (Liang & Lu, 2012).

In Japan, a more permissive legal framework allows the production and distribution of pornography as long as it does not violate laws related to obscenity, child pornography, or non-consensual acts (Kotani, 2022). Japanese pornography, known for its pixelation to obscure genitals, thrives and contributes significantly to the country's economy. Concerns have been raised about the exploitation and objectification of women and its potential contribution to sexual harassment and assault (Wong & Yau, 2020; Diamond & Uchiyama, 1999).

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Generally, laws and attitudes towards pornography differ among countries, ranging from permissive to restrictive, and debates surround its impact on society, freedom of speech, and the objectification of women.

Feminist Perspectives on Pornography

The effects of pornography on individuals, particularly women, are a subject of debate among feminists. Some studies have shown that exposure to pornography can increase aggression, normalize harmful or violent behaviors, and contribute to the objectification and sexualization of women (Ferguson & Hartley, 2022; Foubert et al., 2019; Gervais & Eagans, 2017). These negative effects have led some feminists to strongly oppose pornography, citing its reinforcement of gender inequalities and perpetuation of exploitation and abuse in the industry (Long, 2012; Mikkola, 2019; Waltman, 2021).

However, there are differing feminist perspectives on the value and impact of pornography. Some feminists argue that pornography can provide sexual education, demystify sex, and empower both performers and consumers, advocating for individuals' rights to choose what they consume without judgment or shame (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Daskalopoulou & Zanette, 2020; Strossen, 2000). They see pornography as a form of sexual expression that can potentially liberate women (Sullivan, 1994).

This division among feminists arises from the traditional depiction and representation of women in Western civilization, where women have often been reduced to symbols or metaphors rather than having their own credibility (Owens, 2018). Some feminists view pornography as a male-dominated industry that perpetuates inequality and oppression of women (Long, 2012).

From a postmodern perspective, reality is subjective and constructed through language and cultural context, and there is no one true way of knowing (Lourdunathan, 2017; Yin, 2018). Different people can hold different perspectives on pornography, and no objective determination of which perspective is correct exists.

Taking a postmodern lens can provide a counterbalance to feminism's tendency towards universalization, and offer a comprehensive understanding of pornography, including feminist standpoints. This approach allows for a critique of pornography while also considering its potential for women's emancipation in society (Lourdunathan, 2017).

In summary, perspectives on pornography within feminism vary. Some feminists emphasize its negative effects on women and perpetuation of gender inequalities, while others argue for its potential educational and empowering aspects. That notwithstanding, ~~P~~postmodernism challenges the notion of a singular truth and encourages a comprehensive understanding of pornography from various perspectives, considering its impact on women in society.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored o~~i~~n postmodern feminist perspective as a useful framework to explore the divisive issue on pornography. Accordingly, the postmodern feminist perspective aims to examine any ideas that have contributed to societal gender inequity (Sands & Nuccio, 1992; Tong, 2018). It examines these ideas and tries to advance gender parity by criticizing logocentrism, bolstering multiple discourses, dissecting texts, and attempting to advance subjectivity. While doing so, they consider the differences between and among women according to class and race. Eventually, it adopts an intersectional viewpoint. Flax (2013) asserted the goals of postmodern feminist theory to: (1) define a feminist conception of society; (2) examine how society affects women; (3) examine the part that relationships of power and knowledge play in determining how women perceive society; and (4) develop strategies for changing society.

Research Questions

UNDER PEER REVIEW

Previous research in feminist scholarship has primarily focused on changing perspectives on various topics related to gender, class conflicts, and multiculturalism. However, there is a notable lack of research regarding different feminist views on pornography and its impact on women in society. This research seeks to address this gap and contribute to the growing field of philosophical scholarship by providing a better understanding of feminist perspectives on this specific societal issue. The research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is pornography in terms of:
    a. cultural perspectives (Filipino, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese culture);
    b. religious perspectives (Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism);
    c. legal perspectives (Philippine, Indian, Chinese and Japanese laws);
    d. and in general why is pornography considered bad or good (moral or immoral) according to these perspectives?
2. How do feminists view the morality of pornography?
3. What feminist perspectives are this study critiquing on in terms of: a) acceptance, b) condemnation in reference to culture, religion, and laws?
4. What are the limits or standards to consider for pornography to be emancipatory for women?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for various individuals and groups interested in feminism and social studies, particularly in the context of pornography. It is relevant to the following:

***Social Studies Researchers*:** This research adds to the understanding of pornography from a feminist standpoint. It provides insights into different perspectives on pornography and its implications for women's sexual concerns within the fields of feminism and social studies.

Feminists: The study is valuable for enhancing understanding of feminism and the struggles faced by feminists in society. It offers resources that can help clarify concerns regarding social issues like pornography and its impact on the status of women. Exploring pornography through diverse feminist lenses also contributes to the growing discourse on sexuality and sexual behavior.

Students*:* Students interested in studying feminism and social issues, particularly those related to pornography and women's concerns, can benefit from this research. It serves as a foundational introduction that can guide their future research endeavors in these areas.

Teachers: This study aims to provide teachers with a valuable tool for approaching the teaching and discussion of social issues such as pornography and women's concerns from a feminist standpoint. By highlighting different feminist perspectives on pornography, it emphasizes the importance of considering these viewpoints to promote the overall empowerment and liberation of women from social struggles.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a philosophical research method, specifically utilizing a postmodern feminist perspective, to conduct a critique of pornography. Postmodernism is viewed as a diagnostic perspective on society and requires the deconstruction of readings and writings to uncover hidden hierarchies, dominations, oppositions, inconsistencies, and contradictions (Rosenau, 1991; Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher gathered information through intensive library research

UNDER PEER REVIEW

and analysis of online resources related to pornography, presenting various perspectives on the topic, including different feminist views. The researcher also explored the potential emancipatory elements of pornography for women.

However, it is important to note the limitations of the study. The focus iwas primarily on the concept of pornography and various feminist views, including anti-porn, pro-porn, and postmodern feminist perspectives. The study also considersed other perspectives such as cultural, religious, legal, and moral viewpoints. The researcher aimsed to determine a specific view to serve as a basis for critiquing pornography in the context of women's emancipation.

3. DISCUSSION

This section contains an elaboration of postmodernism, a discussion of two feminist camps on pornography, namely the anti-pornography feminists and the pro-pornography feminists, and their respective viewpoints. It also highlights the postmodern feminist perspective and its analysis.

A. Postmodernism: Exploring Postmodernism: Philosophy, Language, and Culture

Postmodernism, a philosophical and cultural movement that emerged in the late 20th century, challenges the modernist notion of progress and questions the existence of objective truth and universal values. This article delves into the key features of postmodernism, including its emphasis on language and discourse, rejection of grand narratives, fluid conception of the self, and its impact on art and culture. While postmodernism has garnered both influence and criticism, it continues to shape contemporary philosophy and culture.

The Role of Language in Shaping Reality: Postmodernism highlights the active role of language and discourse in constructing our understanding of reality. Language is seen as more than a mere representation of the world; it actively shapes our perceptions and constructs our reality. This perspective denies the existence of an objective reality beyond our linguistic and cultural frameworks.

The Rejection of Grand Narratives: Postmodernism challenges the idea of a grand narrative or metanarrative that explains the world. Instead, it emphasizes the existence of multiple, competing narratives, which are shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors. These narratives are in a constant state of flux, reflecting the plurality of perspectives.

The Fluidity of the Self:Postmodernism rejects the notion of a stable, unified self. Instead, it posits that the self is a fluid and fragmented construct constantly influenced by social and cultural forces. The self is subject to ongoing shaping and reshaping, challenging traditional conceptions of identity.

Blurring of Boundaries in Art and Culture:Postmodernism is characterized by a blurring of boundaries between different art forms and genres. It often appropriates existing cultural forms and recontextualizes them in new and unexpected ways. Traditional aesthetic standards are rejected in favor of prioritizing the subjective experience of the viewer or consumer.

Critiques and Controversies:While postmodernism has made significant contributions, it has also faced criticism for rejecting objective truth and embracing relativism. Some critics argue that postmodernism promotes a cynical and nihilistic worldview that undermines meaningful social

UNDER PEER REVIEW

change. Despite these critiques, postmodernism remains an influential and debated movement in contemporary philosophy and culture.

Postmodernism challenges the modernist ideals of progress, objective truth, and universal values. It emphasizes the role of language and discourse in shaping our understanding of reality, rejects grand narratives, questions the stability of the self, and blurs boundaries in art and culture. Although subject to criticism, postmodernism continues to shape contemporary thought and cultural practices, inspiring ongoing debates and discussions.

B. Two Feminist Camps on Pornography

In the 1970s, men's violence became a major feminist concern. The feminist movement opposed male aggression against women and highlighted how male domination fostered a culture that both criminalized and condoned violence. This criticism of violence extended to the obscenity statute controlling sexual content (Buchwald et al., 1993). Feminist critics examined the cultural justifications for this violence, particularly in mass media, where misogynistic images eroticized dominance and servitude. A feminist critique of pornography emerged, focusing on the harm caused to women depicted in such material (Dworkin & MacKinnon, 1988). This struggle gave rise to two major positions within feminism: (1) anti-pornography feminists, often identifying as radical feminists, who see pornography as a threat to women and advocate against it, and (2) pro-pornography feminists who view pornography as a discourse that challenges gender conventions and promotes women's sexual liberation.

B.1 Anti-Pornography Feminism: A Critical Analysis of Pornography's Impact on Women

Anti-pornography feminism emerged as a result of consciousness-raising efforts within the second wave feminist movement (Arnold, 2000; Gornick, 2000; Rowbotham, 1989). This movement employed consciousness-raising groups, which involved analyzing personal experiences within the context of sexism to inspire political activism among women (Gornick, 2000). The process of sharing personal experiences led to political analysis and action, revealing that women's oppression is a societal issue that necessitates collective efforts (Jones et al., 1968, p.36).

The Link between Pornography and Violence against Women: Anti-pornography movements strongly emphasized the belief that sex poses a threat to women and that pornography fuels male aggression and subjugation of women through sexual violence (Comella & Tarrant, 2015). Radical feminist writing in the 1970s analyzed the sex industry and pornography from the perspective of patriarchal male violence against women (Long, 2012). It was famously asserted that "pornography is the theory, rape the practice" (Morgan, 1877; Echols, 1983). Anti-pornography feminists argued that sexuality and violence are inherently intertwined and find expression in pornography (Echols, 1983).

The Role of Pornography in Rape Culture: In her book *Against Our Will*, Brownmiller (2005) argued that pornography plays a pivotal role in rape culture, enabling men to exert control over women and normalizing sexual violence. Brownmiller (2005) considered pornographic content that degrades women to be obscene, advocating for the prohibition of material that objectifies and humiliates women. She differentiatesd between educational or objective sexual material and content that perpetuates the dehumanization of women.

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UNDER PEER REVIEW

Pornography as a Societal Issue:Bronstein (2011) positsed that pornography is not solely an issue of individual choice but a societal problem that perpetuates harmful attitudes and behaviors towards women. She viewed pornography as hate speech rather than free speech, promoting violence against women. Bronstein (2011) further arguesd that the rise of anti-pornography analysis was influenced by the failure of the sexual revolution to provide sexual liberation for women, consciousness-raising movements exposing widespread male sexual abuse, and radical feminists' critique of heterosexuality.

Pornography and the Enslavement of Women:Dworkin (1974) claimsed that pornography plays a significant role in the societal enslavement of women. She arguesd that pornography shapes our understanding of gender and erotic identity, reinforcing oppression and despair. Dworkin (1981) further contendsed that the theme of pornography is male power, and the degradation of women serves to celebrate and maintain that power. According to Dworkin (1985), pornography sexualizes inequality and supports the objectification and degradation of women, perpetuating their subordination within society.

*Pornography as Oppressive Action:*MacKinnon (1993) rejectsed the notion that pornography falls under the protection of free speech. She considersed pornography itself to be a form of sexual assault, constructing and facilitating the dehumanization and exploitation of women. MacKinnon (1989) arguesd that pornography not only reflects existing oppression but actively contributes to the humiliation, rape, and even murder of women. She assertsed that treating pornography as speech silences the voices of less powerful women and perpetuates male dominance.

Anti-pornography feminism emerged as a response to the awareness of the harmful impact of pornography on women. Proponents of this movement argue that pornography fuels male violence, perpetuates rape culture and objectifies and degrades women. They view pornography as a societal issue that requires regulation and the collective efforts of feminists to challenge and dismantle its harmful effects.

B.2. Pro-Porn Feminism: The Defense of Pornography and Women's Sexual Autonomy

Pro-porn feminist ideology centers around the principles of freedom and autonomy for women in their sexual experiences. This perspective argues against the regulation of pornography, asserting that it is not inherently detrimental to women's rights. Instead, it contends that pornography can empower women and provide a positive impact on their sexual lives. This viewpoint challenges the feminist censorship movement and emphasizes the importance of education, advocacy, and empowerment in achieving feminist goals.

The Defense of Pornography and Free Expression: Strossen (2000) in her book "Defending Pornography" made a compelling case against attempts to regulate pornography, highlighting its positive aspects and its connection to free expression. She argued that the claim that women can never consent to appear in sexual images diminishes their autonomy and citizenship. Strossen criticized the feminist censorship movement, viewing it as rooted in a distrust of sex itself. She contendsed that censorship of pornography violates the First Amendment and advocatesd for a more nuanced approach to combating sexism and violence against women through education and empowerment.

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*The Diversity of Women's Experiences and Viewpoints:*Strossen (2000) also criticized the anti-pornography movement for relying on moral arguments and failing to recognize the diversity of

UNDER PEER REVIEW

women's experiences and viewpoints. She emphasizesd the importance of considering the complex intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in discussions about sexuality and free speech concerns. Strossen's perspective challenges the Dworkin-Mackinnon worldview and presents a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of women's sexuality.

Pornography as Empowerment and Sexual Exploration: McElroy (1995) offersed a stronger defense of pornography in her book "XXX: A Woman's Right to Pornography." She arguesd that pornography benefits women personally and politically, asserting that women have the right to engage in, and learn from pornography. McElroy contendsed that pornography encourages women to explore novel perspectives on sex and fosters their sexual imagination and curiosity. Through interviews with porn actors and actresses, she challengesd the perception that they are solely victims of patriarchy, highlighting their intelligence, humor, and independence.

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Pornography as a Source of Sexual Information and Empowerment: McElroy (1995) further arguesd that pornography serves as a valuable source of sexual information, dispelling cultural and political stereotypes and allowing women to interpret sex for themselves. She viewsed pornography as a safe space for exploring sexual sensations and desires in a sexually challenging world. McElroy emphasizesd that women should be free to engage in any behavior that does not involve coercion or deception, and that opposition to pornography should not involve removing it from the world but respecting individual choices.

Pro-porn feminism advocates for the freedom and autonomy of women in their sexual experiences and defends the positive aspects of pornography. It challenges the censorship movement, promotes a nuanced understanding of women's diverse experiences, and highlights the potential benefits of pornography for women's empowerment, sexual exploration, and access to sexual information.

C. Critiques of Anti-Pornography and Pro-Pornography Feminism: Examining the Issues

C. 1.Anti-Pornography Feminism

Censorship Concerns: Opponents argue that the movement's attempts to ban pornography amount to censorship and infringe upon freedom of speech and expression. The ban is seen as ineffective in eradicating patriarchal portrayals of women, as viewers' interpretations of pornography vary. Censorship could potentially lead to greater oppression of women and hinder progress toward social equality.

Sex Negativity: Critics argue that anti-pornography feminism views all sexual expression as negative and harmful, fostering a repressive and puritanical attitude towards sexuality. Non-traditional sexual connections or expressions are often labeled as unnatural and morally threatening, promoting a limited understanding of sexual relationships.

Ignoring Women's Agency: The movement is criticized for disregarding the agency of women in the industry, assuming all participants are victims and overlooking those who willingly choose to engage in pornography. Ignoring women's agency perpetuates harmful stereotypes, limits their participation in society, and fails to recognize their autonomy and decision-making capabilities.

Ignoring the Role of Patriarchy: Some argue that anti-pornography feminism places excessive emphasis on pornography as the cause of gender inequality, neglecting other factors such as economic disparities and the systemic role of patriarchy. Ignoring the role of patriarchy can hinder

UNDER PEER REVIEW

efforts to address the root causes of gender inequality and fails to acknowledge the intersectionality of various forms of oppression.

C. 2. Pro-Pornography Feminism

*Ignoring the Realities of the Industry:*Critics argue that pro-pornography feminism overlooks the negative aspects of the industry, including exploitation, coercion, and abuse. While some women may choose to participate willingly, many others are forced into it due to economic or personal circumstances.

*Perpetuating Harmful Stereotypes:*Pornography is criticized for perpetuating harmful stereotypes that objectify women and reinforce gender inequality. Such representations contribute to violence against women and hinder progress toward gender equality.

Neglecting the Demand for Pornography:Pro-pornography feminists often focus on the rights of women to choose participation but fail to address the societal factors driving the demand for pornography, such as objectification and misogyny. Ignoring the demand side of the industry limits a comprehensive analysis of its impact.

Ignoring the Diversity of Women's Experiences:Critics argue that pro-pornography feminism represents a privileged perspective that fails to acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences and perspectives on pornography. Women's views on pornography vary based on race, class, sexuality, and gender identity. Ignoring this diversity hinders understanding and coalition-building within feminist discourse.

Both anti-pornography and pro-pornography feminism face valid critiques. Anti-pornography feminism may risk censorship, overlook women's agency, and downplay the role of patriarchy. Pro-pornography feminism may disregard industry realities, perpetuate harmful stereotypes, neglect the demand side, and fail to acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences. Engaging in nuanced discussions that address these issues can help foster a more comprehensive understanding of pornography's implications for gender equality and women's empowerment.

C. 3. Problem with the Two Camps

Anti-pornography feminism is a movement that opposes pornography on the grounds ~~saying~~ that it contributes to gender inequality, violence against women, and the objectification of women. Some of the problems that have been associated with anti-pornography feminism are:

(1) *Censorship*. Opponents of anti-pornography feminism argue that the movement's attempts to ban pornography amount to censorship and infringe upon freedom of speech and expression.Feminists for Free Expression's mission statement(2012) supported saying that censorship has never lessened violence but has instead been used to silence women and undermine movements for social change (Strossen, 1993). A ban on pornography would not eradicate patriarchal and subordinating portrayals of women since not all viewers relate with pornography in the same way (Adler, 1996; Orlowski, 2012). Anti-censorship supporters also argued that the censorship of pornography could lead to greater oppression of women and could hinder progress toward social equality (Hefner, 1985). Moreover, Kendall (2006), contended that pornography may serve as a release for men and act as a substitute for rape, resulting in a decrease in misogyny and incidences of sexual assault against women;

UNDER PEER REVIEW

(2) *Sex negativity*. Critics of anti-pornography feminism argued that the movement views all forms of sexual expression as inherently negative and harmful, which can lead to a repressive and puritanical attitude towards sexuality. For anti-pornography feminists, sex is viewed as an impulse to be managed and regulated, with heterosexual marriage being the ideal environment for sexual encounters, particularly for the purposes of procreation: other types of sexual connections or expression are viewed as unnatural and endangering public morals and decency (Long, 2012). Women who fulfill the conventional roles of wife and mother are thus regarded as good, whereas women whose sexual conduct extends beyond such limitations or are engaged in pornography are regarded as bad (Long, 2012; Wood, 1998);

(3) *Ignoring women's agency*. Some feminists argued that anti-pornography feminism ignores the agency of women in the industry, assuming that all women in pornography are victims and ignoring those who choose to participate willingly (McElroy, 1995; Strossen, 2000). Ignoring women's agency perpetuates harmful stereotypes about women and limit their ability to fully participate in society (De Beauvoir, 2010; Simons, 2001; Warburton, 2019). Women are not a monolithic group. They come from diverse backgrounds and have a wide range of experiences, beliefs, and values (Klatch, 2010). Ignoring their agency can mean overlooking the unique perspectives and experiences of individual women and treating them as a homogenous group with no ability to make their own choices or act in their lives. Just like men, women are capable of making their own choices and acting in their lives. Ignoring their agency can mean failing to recognize this fundamental aspect of human autonomy and treating women as helpless victims who are incapable of making their own decisions (Strossen, 2000). Ignoring women's agency can perpetuate harmful stereotypes about women, such as the idea that they are emotional, irrational, or incapable of making their own decisions. These stereotypes can limit women's opportunities and contribute to gender inequality (De Beauvoir, 2010; McElroy, 1995; Simons, 2001; Strossen, 2000; Warburton, 2019). Ignoring women's agency can limit women's ability to fully participate in society, such as by denying them access to education, employment, or other opportunities. It can also contribute to sexual violence and harassment by suggesting that women are responsible for the actions of others (Orlowski, 2012);

(4) *Ignoring the role of patriarchy*. Some critics argued that the anti-pornography feminist movement places too much emphasis on pornography as a cause of gender inequality, and ignores other factors, such as economic inequality or the role of patriarchy. The role of patriarchy is a fundamental aspect of many feminist theories and is seen as a key source of gender inequality and oppression (Banet-Weiser, 2019; Becker, 1999; Dworkin, 1981; Wood, 2019). Patriarchy is a systemic issue. Patriarchy refers to a system of social organization in which men hold disproportionate power and privilege. This system affects every aspect of society, from politics and economics to culture and interpersonal relationships (Brubaker, 2021; De Beauvoir, 2010). Ignoring the role of patriarchy can mean overlooking the root causes of gender inequality and the ways in which it is perpetuated. Gender inequality is pervasive (Lorber, 2001). Even in societies that have made significant strides towards gender equality, women and other marginalized genders still face systemic discrimination in many areas of life, such as the workplace, healthcare, and the justice system (Khan & Mir, 2022). Ignoring the role of patriarchy can mean failing to address these ongoing forms of gender inequality and discrimination. Patriarchy intersects with other forms of oppression, other systems of oppression, such as racism, ableism, and homophobia, to create unique forms of discrimination and marginalization for individuals who hold multiple marginalized

UNDER PEER REVIEW

identities(Jackson, 2022). Ignoring the role of patriarchy can mean failing to address the ways in which these intersecting forms of oppression interact and compound one another. Ignoring patriarchy can lead to the exclusion of marginalized voices and marginalized voices within feminist discourse, such as women of color, trans women, and disabled women (Wiens &MacDonald, 2021). These groups may experience patriarchy in different ways or face unique forms of discrimination that are not addressed by a narrower focus on gender alone.

~~Whereas,~~ Pro-pornography feminism, also known as sex-positive feminism, is a movement that views pornography as a potentially empowering form of sexual expression for women. But ~~W~~while some feminists see pornography as inherently harmful to women, pro-pornography feminists argue~~d~~ that it can be a positive force for sexual liberation and empowerment(Banet-Weiser, 2018; Chancer, 1996; Daskalopoulou & Zanette, 2020; Strossen, 2000).

However, there are some problems associated with pro-pornography feminism, including:

(1) *Ignoring therealities of the industry*. Critics of pro-pornography feminism argued that the movement overlooks the negative aspects of the pornography industry, such as exploitation, coercion, and abuse (Cawston, 2019; Mikkola, 2019). They argued further that while some women may choose to participate in pornography willingly, many others are forced into it by economic or personal circumstances (Tong, 2018);

(2) Perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Some critics argued that pornography perpetuates harmful stereotypes about women, such as the idea that women are sexual objects to be used by men. They indicated that this could reinforce gender inequality and contribute to violence against women (Bronstein, 2011; Cawston, 2019);

(3) Not addressing the demand for pornography. Pro-pornography feminists tend to focus on the supply side of the industry, arguing that women should have the right to choose to participate in pornography. However, they do not always address the demand side of the industry and the societal factors that drive the demand for pornography, such as objectification and misogyny(Coleman & Held, 2014; Long, 2012);

(*4) Not acknowledg*ing *the diversity of women's experiences*. Some critics argued that pro-pornography feminism only represents a narrow, privileged perspective on pornography, and does not acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences and perspectives on the issue (Cawston, 2019). Women have diverse experiences and perspectives on pornography, based on factors such as race, class, sexuality, and gender identity (Weeks, 2017). Some women may find pornography empowering or liberating, while others may find it objectifying or harmful. Ignoring this diversity of experiences and perspectives can mean failing to address the ways in which the industry affects different women in different ways. Moreover, ignoring the diversity of women's experiences and perspectives on pornography can limit opportunities for dialogue, understanding, and coalition-building within feminist discourse (Davis, 2019). Failing to acknowledge the ways in which different women are affected by the industry can mean failing to build solidarity and support for those who face harm and exploitation.

D. Postmodern Feminist Perspective

UNDER PEER REVIEW

According to both feminism and postmodernism, the Enlightenment account no longer holds weight. They argue that Western representations are products of power rather than truth (Sim, 2011).

Metaphors and imagery in Western civilization often depict women as symbols of nature, truth, the sublime, and sex, but they are rarely represented in their own right (Owens, 1983). The Western representational systems have predominantly allowed for the constitutive masculine subject, neglecting other perspectives (Owens, 1983).

Feminism and postmodernism critique binarism, and oppose the notion that one element must always be given less weight in oppositions (Sim, 2011; Owens, 1983). Instead, they emphasize "difference and incommensurability" (Owens, 1983) and seek to bridge the gap between theory and practice, as well as between the subject and knowledge (Sim, 2011).

Women are both the subjects and objects of feminist thought, and their concept of self is argued to be more relational than that of men (Chodorow, 1999). Feminism and postmodernism challenge essential, universal conceptions of man or woman and express skepticism toward universal assertions about reason, progress, science, language, and the self (Flax, 1986).

However, the alignment of feminism with postmodernism has created tension. Feminism asserts political claims on behalf of women as a social group with shared interests and as embodied female subjects whose experiences and identities differ from those of males (Sim, 2011). If the term "woman" is replaced with the concept of "myriad of women living in elaborate historical complexities of class, race, and culture" (Harding, 1986), it raises questions about how feminist political practice can still be considered feminist when gender or sexuality are no longer central organizing principles (Di Stefano, 1988).

Feminism may risk its own extinction by aligning itself with postmodernism and agreeing to the end of "metanarratives of emancipation" while women's emancipation is far from complete (Flax, 1987). Feminist theories should urge the interpretation of ambiguity, plurality, and the exposure of desires for imposing structure and order, no matter how arbitrary and oppressive they may be (Flax, 1987). Postmodernism can serve as a counterbalance to feminism's universalizing tendencies, focusing on the historical and cultural manifestations of women's oppression rather than discussing its major contributing factors. It advocates for recognizing gender as one significant aspect of social identity among others such as class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation (Fraser & Nicholson, 1988; Sim, 2011).

Judith Butler takes the idea of gender as a "regulatory fiction" further, asserting that it enforces compulsory heterosexuality, and that gender is constructed through performances rather than based on any inherent essence (Butler, 1991; Sim, 2011). Language and speech convey power in the construction of gender, rather than relying on a notion of objective truth (Sim, 2011). Butler also challenges the authority of pornography and concludes that it does not necessarily degrade women (Langton, 2009).

Comment [E D8]: Further Butler's argument to convince the reader why she thinks pornography does not necessarily degrade women. Remember that you are making a critique of pornography from a postmodernist perspective, which looks at both sides of the divide positively. Your arguments should therefore be convincing enough.

Similarly, Luce Irigaray, influenced by Lacan and Derrida, argues that conceptualizations of "woman" are entangled in phallocentric frameworks (Assiter, 2005; Irigaray & Gill, 1993). She proposes "feminine" philosophical ideas to emancipate feminine philosophy from male philosophies (Irigaray & Gill, 1993). Irigaray argues that women, as they are known, are actually

UNDER PEER REVIEW

"masculine-feminine". This is so because, in masculine discourse, a woman is not actually a woman; rather, she reflects what a man thinks of her to be. Considering this, she argued that it is crucial to recognize other women as "feminine feminine," or as other women perceive them. This woman defies classification. If women wish to see themselves as women, they must go through these three stages. First, women should steer clear of language that is seen as male and uses terminology that is gender-neutral. Second, the development of female sexuality is necessary. Fetishistic and lesbian behaviors can assist women in reaching their full potential. Women will be able to explore the diversity of the body and speak, think, and act in ways that will replace the phallus. Thirdly, women should imitate the mimes that men have made them perform. The perceptions that men hold of women should be extended and reflected to males. Miming enables women to just go overboard and undo the effects of phallocentric discourse (Irigaray & Gill, 1993; Tong, 2009).

E. Analysis of the Postmodern Feminist Perspective

Postmodern feminism challenges the traditional feminist approaches that focus on gender and patriarchy as the sole oppressors of women and instead recognizes the complex interplay of power relations in society. Postmodern feminism rejects the idea of a universal female experience and recognizes the diversity of experiences among women based on their race, class, sexuality, and other social factors. It also critiques the notion of gender as a binary construct and emphasizes the importance of deconstructing gender roles and identities. This perspective also highlights the role of language and discourse in shaping our understanding of gender and power relations. Postmodern feminists argued that language is not just a tool for communication but also a site of power struggles, as language constructs and reinforces social norms and hierarchies.

In addition, postmodern feminism critiques the notion of objective knowledge and emphasizes the importance of subjectivity and personal experience in understanding social issues. It recognizes that knowledge is shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts, and that there are multiple ways of knowing and experiencing the world.

In general, the postmodern feminist perspective offers a nuanced and complex understanding of gender and power relations in society, acknowledging the diversity of experiences and identities among women and the importance of language and discourse in shaping our understanding of social issues.

4. PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

This section explores the philosophical analysis of postmodern feminist perspectives on pornography and presents reasons why women engage in pornography. It also discusses the necessary limits or standards for pornography to be emancipatory for women.

The debate surrounding pornography among feminists is complex, with differing views on its effects. Anti-pornography feminists argue that it perpetuates violence against women and reinforces patriarchal power dynamics, while pro-pornography feminists advocate for its protection as a form of free expression. Postmodern feminists view pornography as a cultural artifact that both reflects and shapes societal norms and power structures. They emphasize the importance of individual agency and subjectivity in understanding its effects.

The study identifies various reasons why women engage in pornography, including financial reasons, sexual empowerment, artistic expression, sexual curiosity, and, unfortunately, coercion

UNDER PEER REVIEW

or exploitation. It emphasizes the complexity of these reasons and the need to respect women's choices and autonomy in relation to their bodies and sexuality.

For pornography to be considered emancipatory for women, the study suggests certain limits or standards. These include informed and enthusiastic consent, positive representation of women, fair compensation, safe working conditions, and anti-oppressive practices. By adhering to these standards, the industry can prioritize women's autonomy, safety, and well-being, and work towards creating a more equitable and just environment.

While the study acknowledges the potential for pornography to empower women in terms of self-expression and sexual freedom, it also recognizes the societal problems associated with the industry. The researcher highlights the issue of sex and human trafficking, particularly the victimization of vulnerable women and children. Addressing these problems requires collaborative efforts from governments, civil society, and the enactment of effective legal frameworks, improved law enforcement, victim support services, and tackling root causes such as poverty and gender inequality.

Generally, the study provides a comprehensive examination of the philosophical, sociological, and ethical aspects of pornography. It acknowledges the potential for both harm and empowerment, emphasizing the importance of women's autonomy, safety, and well-being in navigating this complex issue.

5. Summary

This study aimed to comprehensively understand pornography by examining cultural, religious, legal, and feminist perspectives. It conducted a critique of pornography through the lens of postmodern feminism, aiming to identify boundaries and standards that could empower women in this context. The research found that pornography has both harmful and liberating effects on women. Unregulated pornography can lead to exploitation and subjugation, but it can also provide freedom and autonomy. The study emphasized the importance of women's autonomy to choose their level of engagement with pornography and the need for regulations to mitigate harm. Overall, the research highlights the nuanced nature of pornography and the significance of balancing empowerment and safeguards for women's well-being and agency.

Comment [E D9]: If this is the case, then there is no need to suggest regulations to mitigate pornography.

Conclusion

The feminist discourse surrounding pornography is an ongoing and significant discussion within society. It reflects broader debates about gender, power, and sexuality, and all feminists share the common goal of achieving gender equality and addressing the systemic oppression of women.

Postmodern feminists offer a critical perspective on pornography, highlighting how it both reflects and reinforces broader social structures and power dynamics. While they often critique the harms associated with pornography, they also emphasize the importance of protecting individual rights and freedoms.

Protecting women in the context of pornography requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. It is not solely the responsibility of women but requires the involvement of multiple sectors. Governments can play a crucial role in protecting women by enacting and enforcing laws that criminalize the exploitation of women in pornography. This includes legislation that prohibits

UNDER PEER REVIEW

the production and distribution of pornography depicting violence, coercion, or non-consensual acts.

Education campaigns are also important in raising awareness about the harms of pornography and promoting a healthy attitude towards sexuality. This includes educating young people about healthy sexual relationships, consent, and the potential risks associated with pornography use.

Empowering women through education, economic opportunities, and social empowerment can help reduce their vulnerability to exploitation in pornography. By working together across sectors and prioritizing the safety, well-being, and agency of women, we can strive to create a world where the exploitation within pornography is no longer tolerated.

Regardless of the ongoing debates surrounding the harm or lack thereof in pornography, the key focus should be on providing women with an environment where they feel empowered and free to express themselves without restrictions and to actualize their own sexuality based on their own beliefs.

Recommendation

Women's protection in the context of pornography is a complex subject that necessitates a multifaceted response. It must be a collective effort of all sectors, not just a woman's agenda. Governments can play an important role in women's protection by enacting and implementing laws and policies that make the exploitation of women in pornography illegal. This covers laws that make it illegal to create and distribute pornography depicting violence, coercion, or non-consensual actions. Education sector initiatives can also serve to raise awareness about the dangers of pornography and develop a healthy sexual attitude. This includes teaching young people about healthy sexual relationships, consent, and the dangers of pornography.

Recommendation for Future Studies

The following are the recommended titles of research studies for future researchers:

- *Exploring Intersectionality in Feminist Theory and Activism*: This study aims to delve into the concept of intersectionality within feminist theory and its application in feminist activism. It examines how different dimensions of identity, such as race, class, and sexuality, intersect and influence women's experiences of oppression and empowerment.
- *Examining Gender Representation in Filipino Literature*: This research focuses on analyzing the representation of gender in Filipino literature, exploring the portrayal of women and men, gender stereotypes, and the overall construction of gender identities. It seeks to shed light on the cultural and social dynamics of gender within the context of Philippine literature.
- *Investigating the Impact of the Gender Pay Gap on Women's Economic Empowerment*: This study explores the implications of the gender pay gap on women's economic empowerment. It examines the disparities in wages between men and women, their effects on women's financial independence, career progression, and overall empowerment, and potential strategies for addressing these gaps.
- *Understanding the Role of Men in Promoting Gender Equality*: This research investigates the role of men in advancing gender equality. It explores the attitudes, behaviors, and actions of men towards gender equality, their involvement in feminist movements, and strategies for engaging men as allies and advocates in the fight for gender equality.

Comment [E D10]: I do not think this section of the work is necessary. Besides, you propose topics for further research and present them as reviews/abstracts.

PEER REVIEW

These research topics aim to contribute to the existing knowledge on gender-related issues, promoting a deeper understanding of intersectionality, gender representation in literature, the impact of the gender pay gap, and the involvement of men in advancing gender equality.

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