

# **DIGITAL COCAINE'S THREATS TO INTEGRAL HUMAN DIGNITY**

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## **01.Introduction**

In an era dominated by technological advancement, the digital world has become inseparable from daily human experience. While technology offers unexperienced accessible, connectivity and innovation, it also harbours our darker inner feelings. Among these is the phenomenon often referred to as 'digital cocaine' – social media, video games, pornography – about which I am going to delve in this paper. Just like its narcotic function, digital cocaine manipulates the brain's reward system leading to compulsive behaviour, reduced attention spans and psychological dependence.

This addiction affects not only our individual well-being; but also it poses a profound threat to our human dignity. The integral human dignity which is rooted in philosophical, spiritual and humanistic traditions refers to the full flourishing of the person: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. However, the compulsive usage of digital content often undermines these holistic developments. It fragments attention, promotes shallow relationships, distorts self-perception through present realities and prioritizes virtual importance over genuine self-worth.

The threats posed by digital cocaine are especially alarming among youth. But the crisis transcends age and culture, affecting workers, families and even the structure of the society. These threats in present situation requires not just individual discipline, but a societal reevaluation of how technology is designed, used and regulated. In dealing with the power of digital addiction, we are ultimately defending the dignity of the human person asserting that we are not mere consumers of content, but being with inherent worth, purpose and the capacity for deep, meaningful lives. So, in this paper I try to explore that even though the digital age is rich in potential, it affects the lives of the people and make them addicted to it as we are addicted to drugs.

So, at this juncture it must be our personal and societal commitment to eradicate this digital addiction as well our lives must be navigated with a renewed commitment to preserve human dignity in its fullest sense.

## **02. Drugs by another name**

The term 'digital cocaine' is often used to describe smartphone addiction because of the similar effects that digital devices can have on the brain. While it is not a medical term, it is a metaphor meant to highlight the serious impact of excessive smartphone use. This metaphor is not merely rhetorical but certain time same in the effects, though different in forms. The metaphor helps us to see that misuse of digital technology can act like drugs.

### **2.1. Similar effects between digital and drug addiction**

When we consider about these effects, they are produced on the brain, emotions, behaviour and relationship.

#### **2.1.1. Brain chemistry system**

When we use a smart phone (scrolling social media, playing games, watching pornography, getting notifications) our mind releases dopamine-a chemical, which create a 'feeling of pleasure'. This is the same chemical released when people use drugs like cocaine. So, the brain starts craving more of that pleasure, leading to continuous use.

#### **2.1.2. Emotional and psychological effects**

Both increase symptoms of depression, social anxiety and emotional instability when we are deprived of them (drugs and screen).

#### **2.1.3. Behavioural effects**

Like drug addicts, we repeatedly use the mobile despite wanting to stop, even though we are aware of harmfulness. Smart phone users like us may feel compelled to check their phones constantly even without reason. This compulsive checking becomes hard to control and disturb our sleep, studies, work or family time and relation.

#### **2.1.4. Relational effects**

These addictions become more attractive than real human interaction. Parents, friends, or spouses can notice the changes in us. Both addictions show reduced empathy, interest and availability and make us to be in isolation always.

Here, both-digital and drug- addictions show how they hijack the brain's reward system and erode a person's ability to live freely, joyfully, and relationally.

## 2.2. The metaphorical limits and cautions

Even though the metaphor is powerful, it must be moderated. Because we cannot say screens are social enemies like Drugs even though the effects of the addictions are similar at certain times. Unlike a Drug, Screens are essential tools of work, education, communication, etc. We cannot say that all digital engagement is harmful. Because reading, meaningful connection, creative production are positively human uses on smart phones.

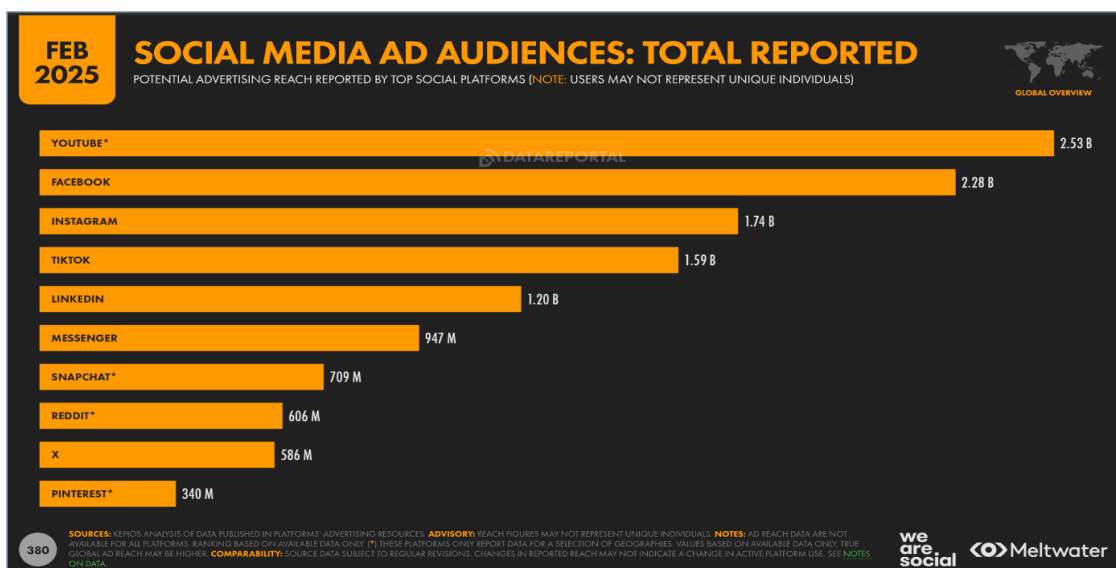
## 03. The Threat of social media

In this third millennium social media became the vast range of platform to connect ourselves with others from one corner to the other corner of the earth.

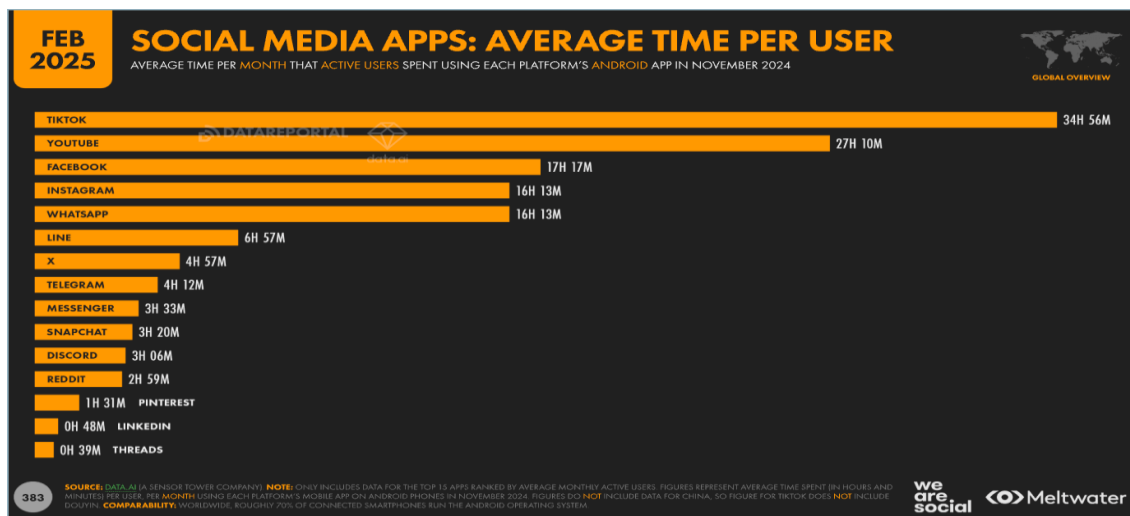
- **Total users-** According to the statistics of 2025, 5.24 billion people actively used social media representing 63.9% of the global population.
- **Time spent daily-** The average user spends approximately 2 hours and 21 minutes per day on social media.
- **Daily engagement-** Tik-Tok leads in daily time spent with users averaging 53.8 minutes per day on the platform. You tube, X and Instagram follow closely while Snapchat and Facebook users spend 30 minutes daily.

Asia is the epicenter of social media growth, accounting for over 57% of the global population of the social media users.

- ❖ The number of the active users for the main social networks are as follows according to the research of global webindex in 2025.



- ❖ The research of global web windows shows the average time per month that active users spend using each platform are as follows.



The primary purpose of the usage of social media is to stay in touch with friends and family and it is about 66%. Other than that, reading and consuming news is a significant purpose for social media users. Some users turned to social media to fill or past the time. The excessive use of the time in social media to past time and spending hours daily scrolling without realizing it are certain symptoms to identify ourselves as getting addicted to it.

#### 04. Video gaming

“A 22-year-old south Korean man was arrested for leaving his 28-month-old son unattended for 10 days while he played online video games at an internet cafe.”

“A 32-year-old gamer in Taiwan died after a three-day video gaming binge. The gamer was a regular at the internet café and staff thought he was just sleeping. It turns out he suffered Cardiac failure while playing combat computer games.”

“20 years-old Chris Staniforth from the UK died from deep vein thrombosis. Chris played video games for up to 12 hours a day. ‘He lived for his Xbox. I never dreamed he was in danger,’ said his father.”

These are not only stories or news they are the unseen moment about human lives and human dignity. This addiction becomes threat to our life and dignity.

A study found there were more patterns of abnormal white matter on brain scans of Internet addicts, compared with scans of non-addicts. Earlier studies showed similar white matter changes in brain scans of people addicted to drugs such as marijuana, alcohol, heroin and

cocaine. Professor Gunter Schumann, biological psychiatry at King's College in London has seen similar findings in brain scans of video game addicts.

The similarity between cocaine and video game addicts is that each of these activities causes a secretion of dopamine in the brain. It is the dopamine that creates the sensation of pleasure as it hits the reward center in the brain. Steve Pope, a counselor and therapist in Garstang, UK said, "spending two hours on a game station is equivalent to taking a line of cocaine in the high that it produces."

So, the parents should not think to limit their child's game play to a half hour or hour per day. Because, is it okay to let your child shoot only a quarter or half of a line of cocaine? If both are in same effect, stop your children from playing the video games.

The video gamers are not only children, teens and adults but also elders over the age of 50 play video games all over the world. The website [greygamers.com](http://greygamers.com) lists several ways computer Games improve the lives of senior citizens: Reduces stress and depression, reduces boredom and loneliness, pain relief, dexterity and coordination, improves brain function, improves vision, and improves social interaction. All of those claims are true. But is the trade-off worth it? It is obvious that it is not.

Here, no one is against elders using smartphones or computers. What a blessing it is when a grandchild is able to spend time with grandma and granddad via social media face to face, who live in another state or even in another country. Does anyone think that it is unwanted and has to be stopped? No way! But the video games, is a different story to handle it and stop them playing.

The signs of video game addiction include following things:

- Preoccupation – being preoccupied with the game when not playing it. Eg. Constantly talking about it.
- Down Playing Computer Use – not being truthful about the actual amount of time spent playing video games and justifying being online.
- Lack of Control- unable to control the amount of time spent on the computer or smartphone.
- Negative impact on other areas of life – growing distant from friends and family not able to complete homework, neglecting personal hygiene.
- Defensiveness – becomes defensive when confronted and denies anything is wrong.

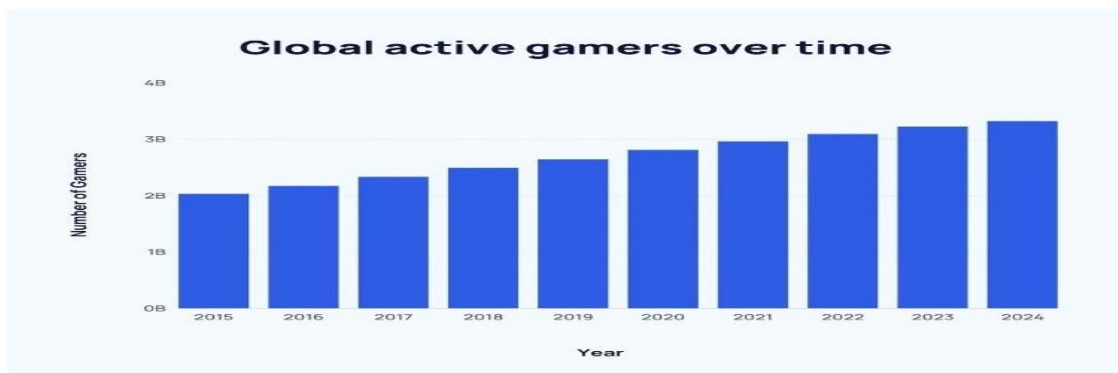
- Misuse of money – someone addicted to gaming might continuously spend large amounts of money for hardware and software upgrades and play online games spending money.

As we know, there are only a handful of positive uses for video game technology. Flight simulator technology is a great tool for pilots and astronauts. Their training is temporary, which limits their chances of becoming addicted. Virtual reality technology is being used successfully to treat soldiers who suffer from PTSD. Doctors are being successfully trained in virtual worlds. These are examples of video game technology being used as tremendously positive tool. Other than these there is no value in video games.

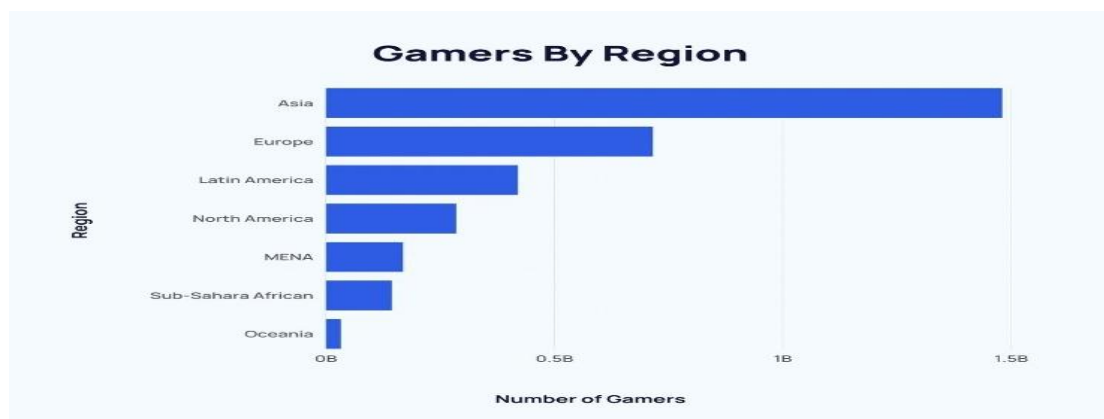
#### 4.1. statistics of video gaming

- Globally there are approximately 3.32 billion active video game players.
- Asia is home to almost 1.5 billion gamers
- 53% of males are gamers
- 52% of gamers subscribe to at least one gaming service

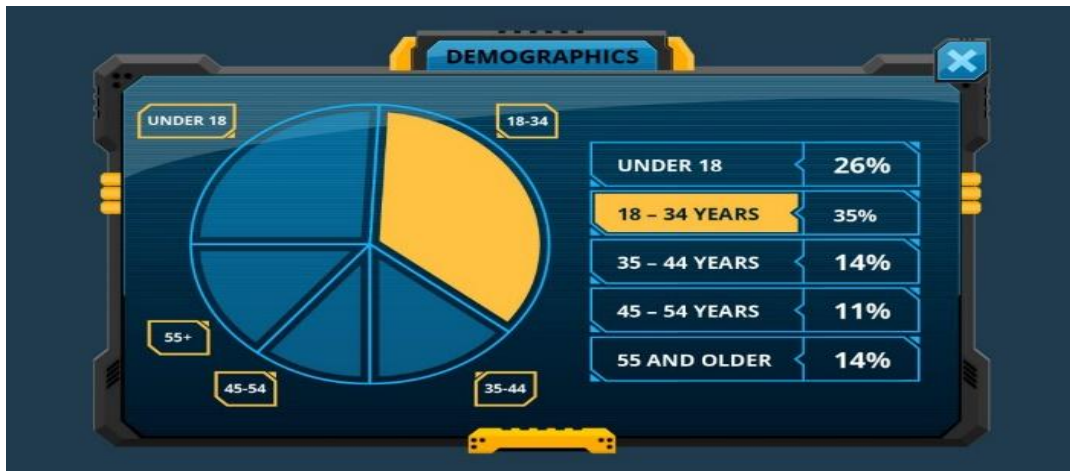
##### ❖ Global active gamers over time



##### ❖ Video gamers by region



❖ Gamers according to age limit



Most downloaded mobile games all the times

1. Subway surfers (2.05 billion)
2. Candy Crush Saga (1.36 billion)
3. Free Fire (1.29 billion)
4. Ro blox (1.23 billion)
5. 8 Ball Pool (1.20 billion)
6. PUBG mobile (1.18 billion)
7. Ludo King (1.14 billion)
8. My talking Tom (978 million)
9. Temple run 2: Endless escape (855million)
10. My talking Tom 2 (847 million)

### 05. Pornography as a pinnacle of digital threat

If digital cocaine is the broad diagnosis, pornography is often its most corrosive and insidious expression. The 'porn Myth' by Matt Fradd gives a sharp, nuanced theological, moral, and neuroscientific critique of pornography, especially in how it threatens dignity. Brad Huddleston marks that porn has its evil tentacles everywhere. It has become the primary mode of sex education among our youth. In the documentary, "Oral sex is the new goodnight kiss", Canadian filmmaker Sharlene shines a bright light on the darkly sexual lives of today's teenagers.

Dr. Bernard Stern, the labiaplasty surgeon clearly states in the documentary, "Sexy baby", that because of porn major life decisions, such as unnecessary surgery, are being made because of negative self-image issues created by one of the most twisted and perverted industries that Satan has ever created. Beauty is now being defined by the pornography industry.

Porn star Nichole Nakita Kash admitted, 'A lot of the stuff that guys do on camera in porn is for the camera because it looks good visually and does not necessarily feel good, for him or the girl... they are doing that for pay'.

Former porn actress Shelley Lubben who became a follower of Jesus Christ, has put together a video titled ‘shocking footage of women abused on the porn set’. It begins with the text ‘the footage shown in this video, the porn industry does not want you to see’.

### **5.1. A brain on Porn**

An article from the ‘Wither spoon Institute’ titled ‘The New Narcotic’ compared how internet pornography addiction is similar to cocaine and heroin addiction combined. It states: “cocaine is considered a stimulant that increases dopamine levels in the brain. Dopamine is the primary neurotransmitter that most addictive substances release, as it causes a ‘high’ and a subsequent craving for a repetition of the high, rather than a subsequent feeling of satisfaction by way of endorphins. Heroin, on the other hand, is an opiate, which has a relaxing effect. Both drugs trigger chemical tolerance, which requires higher quantities of the drug to be used each time to achieve the same intensity of effect.

Pornography, by both arousing (the high effect via dopamine) and causing an orgasm (the release effect via opiates), is a type of polydrug that triggers both types of addictive brain chemicals in one punch, enhancing its addictive propensity as well as its power to instigate a pattern of increasing tolerance.

A news report from Australia found that while most porn consumers are not addicts, at least two-thirds of men occasionally view porn and a huge number of Australians spend up to 35 hours a week watching online porn. It is said that many men get caught in porn’s dopamine loop and end up staying up late at night in the never-ending search for new pleasures, but never being satisfied.

‘The New Narcotic’ article further clearly states: “while pornography activates the appetitive system by way of dopamine, an orgasm caused by pornography does not release endorphins, which are the chemicals that makes us feel satisfied. By contrast, endorphins are released after an orgasm caused by having sex with a real human being. This lack of satisfaction, combined with the brain’s competitive plasticity, causes the brain to require more and more novel and extreme images to get the same chemical result as before.

It is surprise to see that thousands of young, heavy users of internet porn from all over the world are voluntarily giving up porn. The main reason for these guys to voluntarily give up their porn is erectile dysfunction. A survey by the Italian society of Andrology and sexual medicine concluded that Internet porn is killing men’s sexual performance. Because the

frequent overstimulation of the reward circuit in the brain from repeated dopamine spikes while watching porn causes desensitization. This cannot be fixed by any sexual enhancement drugs. Basically, the problem is in the brain.

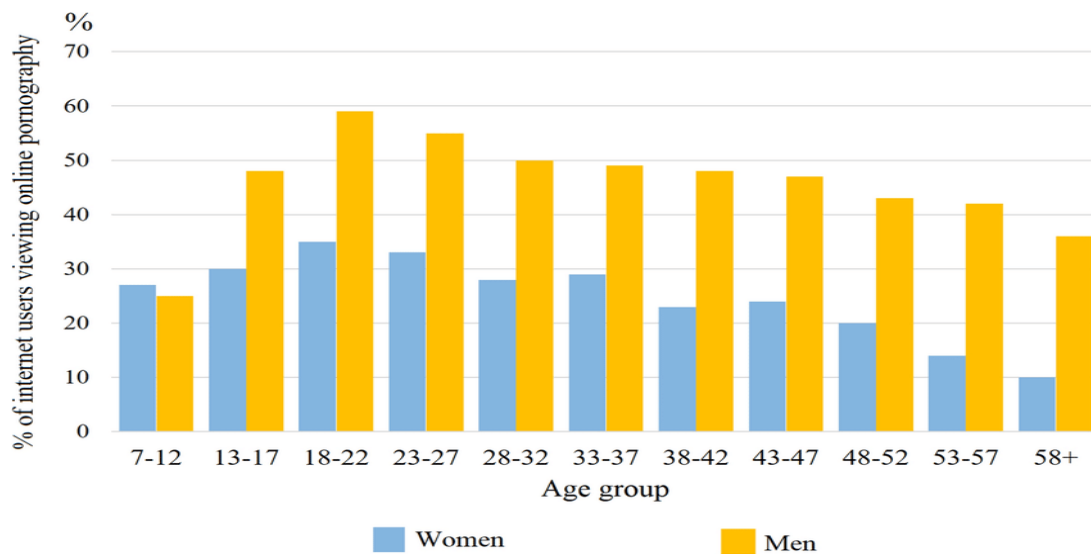
At present, the idea that we are all created in the image of God and that we accept each other unconditionally is all gone from our culture generally. We are in desperate need of a change in our collective hearts and that will only happen by turning to God. (basing on their own religion)

## 5.2. Statistics

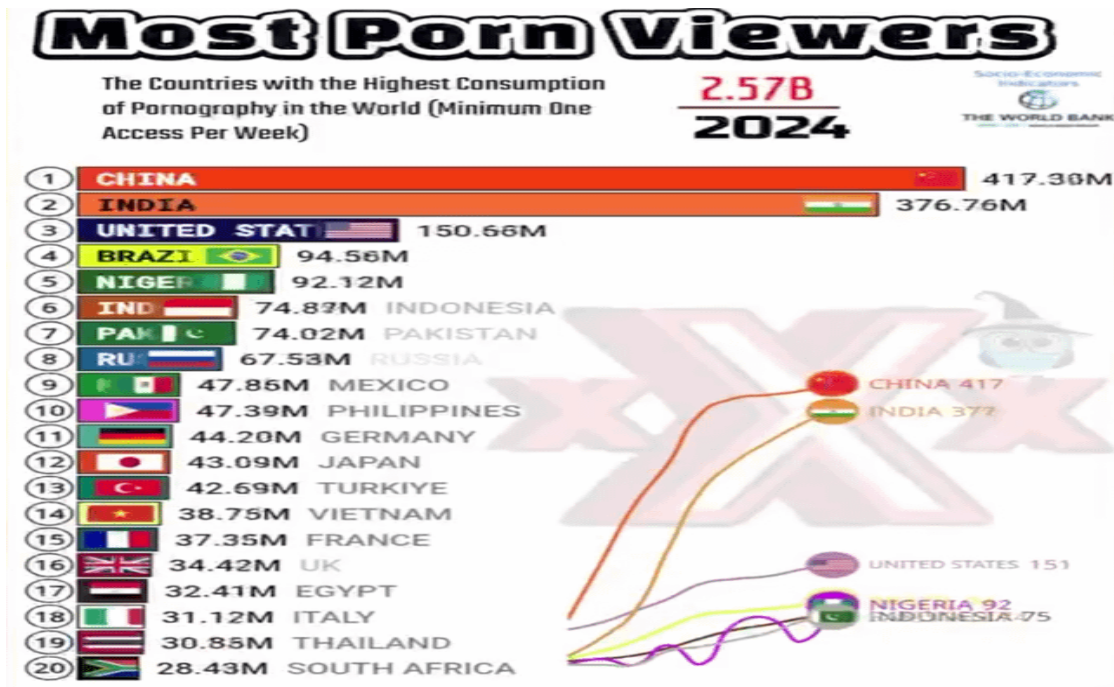
According to the ‘Zipdo’ education report 2025:

- Approximately 70% of men aged 18-30 view porn regularly
- 64% of young men report viewing porn at least weekly.
- The average age of first exposure to porn is 11 years old.
- Porn addiction affects approximately 8-12% of the population.
- 35% of women have viewed porn at least once.
- The majority of porn users report viewing content mostly during late-night hours, around 10pm – 01am.
- Up to 50% of young men and 20% of young women report using porn to learn about sex.

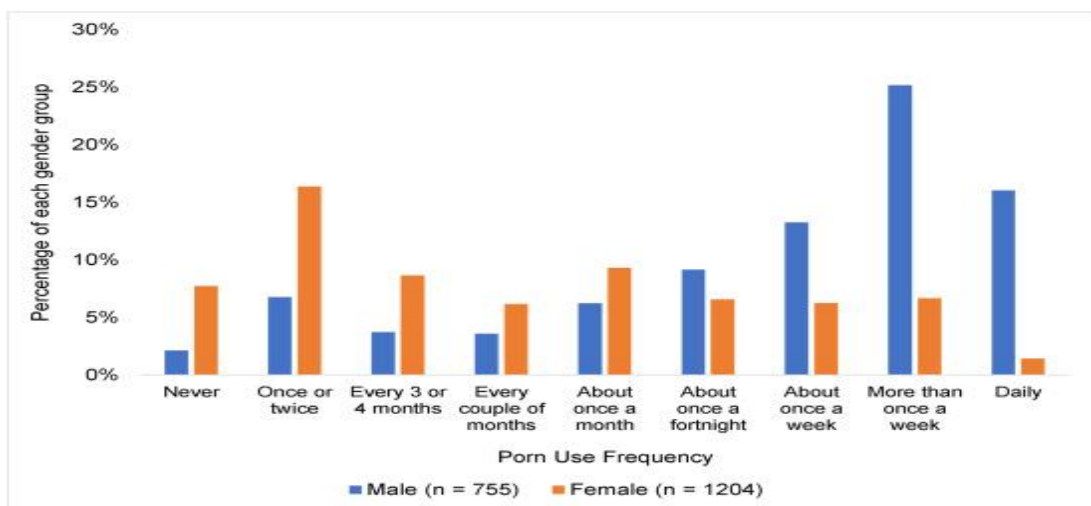
### ❖ Percentage of internet users who viewed pornography online



- ❖ The countries with the highest consumption of pornography in the world.



- ❖ Percentage of each gender group in pornography usage frequency.



### 5.3. Violation of dignity in porn

Math Fradd emphasizes that pornography is more than a compulsive behaviour, it is a relational and moral distortion.

In porn, persons especially women are reduced to objects of sexual gratification. This reduces relational persons to means, thereby violating the inherent dignity of each human. It fosters unrealistic expectations, corrupting real sexual intimacy. It leads the persons to the fantasy world from reality. Especially for those in marriage or relationships, porn use often involves deception, betrayal of trust and collateral emotional harm.

So, it is obvious that pornography is not just a bad habit but a spiritual, moral, and relational assault on dignity.

## **06. Conclusion: Toward a dignified digital future**

In an age filled with digital stimuli, the metaphor of ‘digital cocaine’ illuminates a profound and urgent challenge that is the ways in which compulsive engagement with screens, social media, pornography and endless digital distraction can destroy the very fabric of integral human dignity. As the article elaborates our brain respond to digital inputs in ways that mimic addictive substances: fragmenting attention, disrupting emotional balance, and undermining spiritual depth. This digital dependency shares the features of addiction such as loss of control, craving, withdrawal and relational damage. Pornography as a digital threat highlights a particularly devastating assault on dignity, reducing persons to objects, distorting sexuality, and fostering isolation.

The usage of digital device in everyone’s life is unstoppable. The attentional and worthwhile usage are great comparing with others who are using unnecessarily. It is depended on each person to identify whether he/she is aware about it, then he/she will be able to overcome him/herself or they can approach a pastor or counsellor to place themselves in a correct place. It is the responsibility of parents to restrict their children from video gaming. If Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were able to do who were the great successors in digital devices why can’t you? Adults can stop playing video games and involves in sports activities which is healthy. Only thing they have to be aware about it and replace the addiction with any other good habit. Pornography is the immediate addiction that everyone has to get rid of it. It is a mind game. If they control their mind from watching it, they will be successful. Otherwise, they can get the help of a pastor or a counsellor to get rid of their addiction.

On the whole it is clear that recovery is possible through intentional boundary- setting communal accountability, confession, and spiritual formation. By reclaiming control over technology, reorienting desire toward life-giving practices, and fostering authentic human connection, we can resist digital unwanted usage and restore the integrity of human dignity in a complex digital era.

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