



## ONLINE INFIDELITY: MANIFESTATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY USE

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### ABSTRACT

Internet allow accessing sexual content due its characteristics of anonymous, affordable and accessible. It has become a mediating variable in marital conflict. The present case document the role of pornography in marital relations. The user consulted SHUT clinic for screening of pornography addiction. They were assessed using Clinical interview and General Health questionnaire. The present cases demonstrate the concern related to infidelity due to partner indulgence in accessing pornography. Presence of psychiatric distress in the other partner. It has implications for enhancing technology literacy among partners.

### INTRODUCTION

Recent research has documented the existence and extent of excessive to addictive use of internet use and its association with dysfunctions in personal, social, occupation, relationship and sexual functioning. (Barthakur and Sharma, 2012; Sharma, Benegal, Rao and Thennarasu, 2013; Griffith, 2000) Later two dysfunctions are commonly reported in relation to one's engagement in online sex or pornography. It is one of the factor in relationship breakdown. (Whitty and Quigley 2008) It can be defined as the use of the Internet to create emotional or sexual interaction when a person is already involved in a spousal relationship. Privacy & secrecy are an integral part of these type of engagement and users use variety of strategies to keep it secret for example, by deleting search histories/downloads. (Schneider, 2000). It also opens the door to a variety of forms of online sexual behaviours making online activities as anonymous, affordable and accessible. (Cooper, 2002) Due to these three A's, users can walk out easily from the online relationship, without any significant consequences. The multiplicity of ways to access sexuality can create assort of compulsion to access these type of material. (Jones and Hertlein, 2012) Indulgence in Internet infidelity is being attributed to fulfil the emotional need which he or she is missing in the existing relationship, for example "I am feeling left out in the relationship" or other partner is more engaged in other commitments", or "I use it as way of relieving my distress or to just feel good". Recent years have seen increase in the use of online sexting. It refers to the sending and receiving of sexually explicit photos and/or text messages of a

sexual nature by means of a portable telephone with a built-in digital camera. (Wysocki and Childers, 2011) 71% lose trust in their partner upon revelation that other partner is sexually active on the Internet. (Schneider, Weiss and Samenow, 2012)

Indulgence of partner in cyber sexuality trigger a feelings of betrayal in a spouse upon learning that his or her partner is satisfying sexual needs in other contexts. Though experts state that primary criteria of infidelity is sex, but other consider it in term of emotional intimacy or seeing pornography in secrecy as breach of trust. (Lusterman, 1998) People feel that cheating online can cause as many problems as any other offline extramarital affairs. Due to its characteristics of anonymous, affordable and accessible, the Internet facilitates the indulgence of cyber sexual behaviours. (Wysocki and Childers, 2011) There exists a substantial literature on the topic of online infidelity in the west, whereas we have dearth of published article on this issue in India.

#### Case Report

The present case is going to discuss the partner concern regarding infidelity in relation to other partner indulgence in pornography and decrease in frequency of physical relationship. A young working couple consulted the SHUT clinic (Service for Healthy Use of Technology), NIMHANS, Bangalore, Karnataka, India for screening and management of pornography in the husband. It is India first Tech de-addiction clinic. Both of them were in their late twenties and got a child. They got married six years back. Husband was working for a company and was in a travelling job. Husband started

watching adult heterosexual pornography to release the day's distress, whenever he was travelling. The duration of use was 15-30 minutes per day and followed by masturbation. Subsequently, he started watching porn at home before bedtime. It becomes a regular habit in the previous ten months before seeking consultation. It also led to decreased physical involvement with wife or avoidance of physical intimacy. Wife got the psychiatric distress on General health questionnaire (GHQ). (Goldberg, 1992) Wife attributed it to her concerns regarding infidelity because he was avoiding physical intimacy. Whereas, husband attributed it to his excessive masturbation following watching pornography. Wife caught him while watching pornography on three /four occasions. On confrontation, husband attributed it to his work and as a way to release distress. On clinical interview, he did not meet the criteria of addictive use of pornography; any other substance use and high risk behaviors. Pre morbid personality revealed him to be an introvert. There was no history of online chat and cyber sex. User was in the action stage of motivation. Husband was psycho educated regarding the pattern of pornography use, helping him to learn other relaxing methods (relaxation exercise/taking breaks) to relieve the work distress as well as to methods of reducing the access to pornography materials (i.e users did not want access to net in the late evening; postponement by challenging the idea; engaging himself with kid or other colleagues etc). Couple therapy carried out to increase communication/identification of leisure activities with partner as well as for detriangulation (replacing the technology use with other activities). 15 days & 30 days follow up's showed abstinence from accessing pornography as well as increased involvement in alternative pleasurable activities with partner. Though user acknowledged the presence of desire to access pornography but able to distract by engaging in other tasks.

## CONCLUSIONS

The report document the concern related to infidelity due to partner indulgence in accessing pornography. It led to avoidance of physical intimacy as well as presence of psychiatric distress in other partner. Most spouses feel as betrayed, angry, and hurt by online infidelity as they would if skin-to-skin adultery had taken place. (Schneider, 2002) Its also corroborate the triangulation approach and the role of technology as a third party in marital relationship. (Bowen,1978)

Though literature document the role cybersex & chatting as the reason of internet infidelity, the study implies the role of watching pornography on relationship. It has implication for role of enhancing technology literacy among the users to experience feeling of well being.

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