

# PORNOGRAPHY: DISCOURSE, EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE, AND PUBLIC POLICY—A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

Pornography is a multifaceted global phenomenon, deeply embedded in diverse social, cultural, and political landscapes. This critical analysis synthesizes existing socio-cultural discourses, empirical evidence, and public policies to address the fundamental question of how states can adopt a rational, evidence-based stance on the consumption of pornography. Employing a systematic review of 21st-century academic literature, the study reveals that perspectives on pornography are highly diverse, shaped by religious, political, and gender ideologies. Empirical evidence indicates complex, often contradictory, effects on mental health, brain function, relationships, and youth development, ranging from adverse outcomes in cases of problematic use to potential positive roles in sexual exploration within appropriate contexts. Public policy responses globally demonstrate a broad spectrum, from strict prohibition in religious contexts to liberal regulation. The analysis proposes a nuanced policy framework that prioritizes the protection of vulnerable groups (especially children and those at risk of exploitation and trafficking) through robust age verification, comprehensive sex education, and strict industry oversight. Simultaneously, it advocates for respecting adult liberties, striking a balance between harm reduction and individual freedom, and grounding policies in ongoing, independent, and culturally sensitive research. This study challenges monolithic views of pornography, advocating for context-sensitive interventions that acknowledge its complex realities and diverse impacts.

**Keywords:** Pornography, Public Policy, Empirical Evidence, Discourse Analysis, Exploitation

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