



ACADEMICIANS BOOK OPINION

A Review on “The Porn Trap”

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This book is a co-authorship between Wendy Maltz and Larry Maltz, a wife and husband team who have vast experience in counselling and providing therapy for people who are saddled with their sexual matters. Wendy is a clinical social worker, psychotherapist, author, educator and sex therapist. While her husband Larry is a counsellor who owns the Maltz Counseling Associates.

The book produced by this couple in many ways, I assume, as a groundbreaking work that exposes how porn addiction can destroy the lives of people who are entangled in its vicious circle.

As one familiar with psychology and counselling, I find “The Porn Trap” to be a good resource book for counsellors, teachers, therapists, etc. The first part of the book brings to the awareness of the readers on the history and metamorphosis of the porn industry. Moreover, the first part also explains how porn overtakes the lives of those who intrude into its territory.

The book offers insightful information on how porn works on the human mind. Being less theoretical, the authors gathered firsthand information from a series of interviews conducted with those affected by porn. A classic example of how one can be allured into porn can be seen from this interview excerpt conducted by the authors:

“She (girlfriend) left town for a few days and I decided to look at porn on the internet to satisfy me. Up ’til then I’d never been interested in porn. I began on a Friday afternoon looking at the free peeks. By Saturday I was into sex chats, and by Sunday I had joined a swinger site. One thing led to another- a domino effect. Two weeks later my girlfriend looked in our computer log and saw what I’d been up to. I lied to her about it, said I had been doing government research of all things. A month later she left me. I never realised that porn had the power to upend my life the way that it did” (p.11).

In contrast to the first part, in the second part of the book, the authors equip the readers with the information on how to heal from porn addiction. In this section, they propose some steps and techniques to prevent relapses after healing has taken place.

As to the question, how big is the porn industry, one would be surprised to know that porn is a multi-billion industry. Unlike many countries in the East, porn is an approved thing in America and Europe. In the distant past, porn used to be a hidden thing in many parts of the world. During that time, one has to be clandestine consumer of porn.

But now, with the coming age of internet and social media, porn is finding its way into the privacy of people. They say if you are an internet user, it knocks on the screen persuasively to allure you into its venomous trap. In other words, porn now takes the role of a predator that hunts for its victims. One of their clients, a sixty-five-year-old single man who spoke of his addiction, and to what extent the industry has grown, said the following:

“I’ve seen pornography go from scarcity to abundance in the last fifty years. I used to have to go out of my way, to special stores and theatres, to get it. Nowadays you’d have to be a clam shell on the moon to avoid coming into contact with pornography (p.16)”.

Now there are more than 400 million pages of pornography on the internet, commercial porn web sites, magazines, books, videos, DVDs, television channels,

etc. that generate a revenue of about \$97 billion a year globally. In the U.S. porn brings in more money than the combined revenue from professional football, baseball and basketball. Among all countries, the U.S is the largest producer of porn. Particularly, the San Fernando Valley has become the porn capital of the world. In this valley which is situated in Los Angeles, there are about 200 production companies that produce 4,000 movies a year.

Women Suffer in the Porn Industry

Far from what is being revealed in the porn promotion video clips, the bitter reality behind doors is that women suffer from physical to psychological breakdown. Besides the risk of contracting STD (HIV, chlamydia, genital herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, some forms of hepatitis, syphilis, Trichomoniasis, etc.), women employed in the porn industry experience an immense amount of psychological pain. They are abused and forced to do a lot of scenes which they did not sign up for.

To survive in a male dominated industry that is controlled by mafia and the underworld; women take a cocktail of drugs and hard liquor to numb their senses in order for their bodies to be photographed and filmed. Porn subscribers should be naïve to think that the women in the nude pictures and videos they watched are happy and cheerful enjoying their act. It has been revealed all the background sounds they hear are not real but fake. The motive behind the made-to-sound seductive voices is meant to stir the libido of the viewers and make porn more addictive.

Conversely, women feel shackled by the contracts they signed up and that make it hardly impossible for them to escape from the industry. In some severe cases, porn stars go to the extent of committing suicide. There are a number of reported cases of suicide among porn stars due to work pressure and the aftermath of the regret that sets in after posing for the cameras.

In realising how women suffer in the porn industry, it is about time porn users should say no to porn. This step taken by users can cause the demand for porn to drop and this in turn will decrease porn production in the world.

If the porn industry is a dangerous place to work, why then do women want to be there? Most women who work in the porn business are dropouts who did not perform well in the educational endeavour. Such a situation makes it hard for them to find a decent job for themselves. Sad to state, there are also those who are good looking yet choose to do porn due to poverty.

Quite a number of porn actresses have revealed that they were from troubled families, later ran away from their homes to do drugs and finally, as a means of supporting their addiction, entered the industry. Surprisingly, some well-educated young women are lured into porn in the hope of making it into stardom and earning a lucrative income. With such a big money, they would be able to lead a hedonistic lifestyle surrounded by all sorts of luxury and comfort they dreamt of.

The Evils of Porn

It has been highlighted in the book and in other research works on porn that between the genders, survey reports indicate that the percentage of men users of porn is greater than that of the women. It is an undeniable fact that, the women's body has the natural tendency to attract men's attention. Writing from a Western perspective, the authors highlighted some of the alluring powers of porn to its customers are; like sexually arousing and giving a good feeling, giving the consumer escapism from real life, making men feel powerful and desirable to women, etc. Although porn creates euphoria in the beginning, at the end it causes many social and psychological problems to its users.

Among others, the authors heightened the following:

- conflict with your values, beliefs, and life goals;
- compromise your ability to be honest and open in a relationship,
- upset and compete with an intimate partner,
- harm your physical and mental health,
- make you less attractive as a sexual partner,
- cause sexual desires and functioning difficulties,
- shape your sexual interests in destructive ways, and
- cause a variety of family, work, legal, and spiritual problems (pp.23-24).

Some Good News

In relation to the subject-matter of the book, there are a number of news portals on the internet that share the good news that some porn actors and actresses have left the industry for good to dedicate their lives in the service of God and humanity. They are now doing a wonderful job of exposing what is happening within the porn industry.

Some have authored books, while others go on a campaign to share their horrifying experience working in the porn industry in the hope of educating others who are in dark on what the industry is all about. Personalities like Crystal Bassette, Danielle Williams and Shelley Lubben are now preachers of God to their own Christian community. Lubben who is now a Doctor of Theology runs her own Pink Cross

Foundation, which helps women who are trapped in the porn industry to come out of it.

Some even have converted to Islam and live a dignified life as good Muslims. A particular ex-porn who converted into Islam in one of her interviews claimed that she feels more honoured now ever before, living in the midst of a Muslim community where everyone calls her “Sister”. Although many knew her past in the neighbourhood, they chose to ignore it as that episode of her life is no longer important to them. As Muslims they believe that her new status as a Muslim is similar to that of a “new born child” that comes out from the mother’s womb in the primordial nature without any sin attached to it. More to say, she likes her present look and feels comfortable and secured in observing the Islamic Hijab.

Looking at things from the Islamic Perspective

From the Islamic perspective, women should be modestly dressed when in public. At the same time, it demands men to lower their gaze on women other than their own household with whom marriage is permissible. The holy script of the Muslims demands both men and women to observe their modesty. It also demands men to be the protectors of women.

As such, men have to safeguard women and stand as a shield in protecting them from any kind of danger. In addition, men should also respect women and not to take advantage of the women’s poor economic condition or of their vulnerability by pressurising them into doing immoral acts later to be paid. Women on their part should respect their own bodies.

In Islam, women need to cover their body appropriately. By following the Islamic dress code, they can make men shy away from having any lustful look at them. They should take care of their body and at the same time their personality should resemble the likeness of a ‘holy personality’ and not to display their body like a statue at the amusement park which is put to display.

By dressing in an un-Islamic way, they will be seen cheap in the eyes of men. Moreover, by putting on revealing clothing it will put them in a vulnerable situation, especially when they are alone away from the safety and security of their homes. Another thing that is important is that, they must have self-dignity in them and not let themselves to be abused or exploited, especially if they have to go out into the world to make a living for their families.

Using the internet can be a challenging thing for the masses in the Muslim world. The internet and social media have their own advantages and disadvantages. They should be taught on how to be smart users, particularly children and teenagers who have an inquisitive mind to explore new things on life matters through the use of the internet. They should be well-informed by parents and teachers on the dangers that lurk when they are using internet and social media.

Muslim governments around the globe should introduce some sort of internet censorship on certain websites to prevent their citizens from getting access to the dark side of the internet; where explicit sexual matters, violence and extremism are promoted. With regard to internet and social media usage, below here is a personal quote that I would like share:

“Internet and social media provide information and good communication tools. But our lives should not be enslaved to them. At times, we have to pause and see the world through our own eyes and not through a borrowed vision. Seeing things as they are promises the birth of wisdom.”

Conclusion

“The Porn Trap” is a professionally written book. I recommend it not just for those who are addicted to pornography but also to teachers, students, counsellors and all others. Islamic teachers, counsellors and psychotherapists can use it alongside the Qur’an and other Islamic literature to further enlighten those who struggle to overcome their porn addiction.

If the truth on how porn works on the mind and emotions, and what goes on in the industry is known, I truly believe that our good selves and the next generation of Muslims will be well-equipped with the knowledge on how to ward off the evils of porn. ***

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