

The Salvation Army
International Positional Statement

PORNOGRAPHY

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The Salvation Army believes that all persons are created in God's image and affirms the sanctity of the human body and relationships, based on the teaching of Scripture. Pornography is seen as a violation of these. Therefore, its production, distribution and use should be discouraged.

The Salvation Army abhors the prevalence of and easy accessibility to all forms of pornography, and will make every reasonable effort to stop its production, distribution and use.

The Salvation Army particularly deplores child pornography of any type and strongly opposes the creation, distribution and use of images of children for sexual purposes.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The definition of pornography may differ in various cultural and national contexts, and pornography is to varying degrees subject to censorship and legal restraints. For the purpose of this statement, pornography is defined as print or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate sexual excitement. [1]

The development and widespread acceptance of online communication has created an easy means of distributing and consuming pornography. Exposure to pornography can be described today in many parts of the world as a normal experience. The rapid growth of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) opens new avenues of exploitation of children or adults through web-cameras, phone cameras or sexting (that is, the voluntary sending of sexually explicit messages or images of oneself by cell phone).

Pornography can be extremely damaging to relationships. Research indicates that as a result of viewing pornography, men report being more critical of their partner's body and less interested in actual sex. Women report more negative consequences including lowered body image, a partner critical of their body, increased pressure to perform acts seen in pornographic films and less interest in actual sex. [2] In the context of marriage, the use of pornography to increase sexual excitement violates the sexual relationship between husband and wife by the addition, in the mind, of another individual or activity outside the sphere of the marriage.

There is evidence that, at least for males, pornography consumption can result in more accepting attitudes toward teenage sex, adult premarital sex, and extramarital sex. There is also a correlation between pornography consumption and actually engaging in extramarital sex and paid sex behaviour. [3]

While both men and women are pornographic subjects, pornography frequently denigrates and objectifies women in particular, and as a result devalues their humanity and equality with men. A small percentage of persons can develop a dependence upon pornography characterised by obsessive viewing, reading and thinking about pornography and sexual themes to the detriment of other areas of life, such that the use of pornography resembles addictive behaviour. [4] Internet pornography has been shown to be the activity most likely to lead to such a behaviour. [5]

It is difficult to reliably gauge the size of the pornography industry globally. Nonetheless, and even allowing for the possibility of the industry's self-serving exaggeration of income reports, independent researchers are prepared to accept that it generates tens of billions of dollars annually. [6] In 2005 pornography reportedly accounted for 69 per cent of all Internet pay-per-view. [7]

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF THE SALVATION ARMY

The Bible presents sexual intimacy, ordained and blessed by God, as good (Genesis 2:23-24). The Salvation Army affirms the sanctity of sexual relationships based on the teaching of Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:13b, 18-20; Matthew 5:27-28). As Christians, we are called to care for the vulnerable, uphold human dignity and maintain family integrity.

Pornography attacks and distorts God's purposes for human relationships

Pornography depersonalises sexuality, emphasising the carnal to the neglect of loving relationships and commitment. Instead of providing intimacy, pornography only intensifies lust based on fantasy. Pornography can raise expectations in human sexual relationships that are not achievable within the committed relationship of a couple and, as such, can be extremely damaging.

Pornography is not simply an issue of private morality but an issue of immoral industry practices

The pornography industry is extensive and significant revenue is generated globally through the distribution of pornography. The Salvation Army believes that all people have the right to protection from commercial exploitation that degrades individuals for economic gain, and is opposed to the commodification of both male and female sexuality that the pornography industry represents.

There is also evidence to suggest links between the pornography industry and the issue of human trafficking, [8] including documentation of cases of trafficking in persons for the purposes of production of pornographic material. [9] The correlation between pornography consumption and paid sex behaviour feeds into the demand for commercial sex acts, with recognised links to the issue of sex trafficking. [10] The Salvation Army sees human trafficking as contrary to the principles of freedom and dignity, and is deeply committed to fighting it however it may be manifested. [11]

Pornography distorts sexual ethics

The easy access to hard-core pornography promotes a shift in the perception regarding what is right and what is wrong in sexual relationships. Pornography can foster the belief that anything at all is permissible in a sexual relationship so long as it is consensual; this is a view to which The Salvation Army does not subscribe.

PRACTICAL RESPONSES

1. The Salvation Army will not knowingly support (including by way of our investment portfolios) any commercial enterprises that provide access to or promote pornographic material in marketing or sales. Upon having knowledge of their involvement, we will encourage disinvestment from any enterprise connected with the pornography industry.
2. The Salvation Army will support public legislation which justly regulates the production of and access to pornographic material.
3. The Salvation Army will raise the public conscience against the pervasive acceptance of pornography in easily accessible public spaces.
4. The Salvation Army will work with those struggling to disengage from the use of pornography, understanding that such assistance may at times include the provision of professional counselling and support.
5. The Salvation Army supports sex education for youth which emphasises the beauty of human sexuality in accordance with biblical ideals.
6. The Salvation Army supports efforts using any media to ensure that more people, especially the young, have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the differences between what may be beneficial and what may prove harmful in terms of sexual content.
7. The Salvation Army will oppose the sexual exploitation of all people in any form.
8. The Salvation Army will continue to maintain policies and procedures that prohibit access to pornography in any programme or office site under its control.

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Approved by the General, November 2014.

The views expressed in this international positional statement constitute the official position of The Salvation Army on the issue addressed, and they may not be modified or adapted in any way without the express written permission of International Headquarters.

[1] Oxford Dictionary. Pornography.

[2] Julie M. Albright. Sex in America Online: An Exploration of Sex, Marital Status, and Sexual Identity in Internet Sex Seeking and Its Impacts.

[3] P.J. Wright. U.S. Males and Pornography.1973–2010: Consumption, Predictors, Correlates.

[4] M.W. Ross, S.A. Mansson, & K. Daneback. Prevalence, Severity, and Correlates of Problematic Sexual Internet Use in Swedish Men and Women.

[5] Rory Reid et. al. Prevalence, Severity, and Correlates of Problematic Sexual Internet Use in Swedish Men and Women.

[6] D.C Johnson. Indications of a slowdown in sex entertainment trade

[7] A. Forgione. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: the Frontiers of Internet Law.

[8] Arizona State News. Human trafficking activity on adult entertainment website more pervasive than expected.

[9] M. Eberstadt & M.A. Layden. The Social Costs of Pornography: A Statement of Findings and Recommendations.

[10] USA Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report.

[11] The Salvation Army. International Positional Statement on Human Trafficking.