



# **The Influence of Exposure to Pornography among the Youth in Addis Ababa**

Thesis Submitted to Addis Ababa University  
School of Graduate Studies

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts (MA)  
in Journalism

**BY  
AMANUEL TEFERI**

**August 2007**

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## Acronyms

AA	Addis Ababa
AAU	Addis Ababa University
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
BCC	Behavioural Change Communication
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETV	Ethiopian Television
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FJC	Faculty of Journalism and Communications
GSJC	Graduate School of Journalism and Communications
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
LOC	Library of Congress
MYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
NYP	National Youth Policy
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education Science & Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

*Note: unless it is described, all the years mentioned in this research document are in European calendar, but not Ethiopian.*

## Dedication

*This Thesis is dedicated to my father Teferi Mamo  
and my mother Yadete Wodajo,  
with due respect, love, indebtedness and with all the best wishes;  
as a tribute for what they have done for me  
through out my life, and  
particularly during the course of my postgraduate study.  
Mam and dad, I know the prices you paid.  
You will be in my heart always! I love you!*

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Amanuel Teferi  
10, August 2007  
Addis Ababa University

## **Abstract**

*This study intends to find out the influences of exposure to pornography among young people in Addis Ababa. It envisioned examining how young people respond to sexually explicit media, thereby identifying how the youth perceive and interpret pornography in their daily life activities.*

*Qualitative research method is used and focus group discussion and in-depth individual interview were the major instruments used to collect data for the study.*

*The result of the study showed that young pornography viewers are influenced in many ways, both positively and negatively: such as rushing to early and unsafe sexual practices, arousal, distorting value and image of women, imitating Western sexual acts and practices, among others. It is also demonstrated that for few pornography viewing youth, the material has an educative role in informing viewers how to gratify sexual partners using different sexual acts, besides enabling them 'to break the silence' about sex.*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Background

Ethiopia is unique among African countries, mainly because the country was not colonized, except the Italian occupation of 1936-41, during World War II. Therefore, Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa and one of the oldest in the world - at least 2,000 years. (CIA World Fact Book, May 2007)

Ethiopia is an ethnically, linguistically, and geographically diverse nation. The largest Semitic-speaking groups are the Amhara, who speak Amharic [also official national language] and who constitute perhaps 25% of Ethiopia's people. The Tigray, who speak *Tigrinya* and accounts for perhaps 14% of Ethiopia's people. The Cushitic-speakers include a larger number of groups; among them is the largest and most widespread of all of Ethiopian's ethnic groups- the Oromo, perhaps 40% of the population. The Oromo language consists of a number of dialects. (LOC, 2005: 6-7) According to the 1994 National Census Report, cited by CIA Country Profile (2007), the Somalie constitute 5.9%, Guragie 4.3%, Sidama 3.5%, Welaita 2.4%, other 15.4% (CIA, 2007)

Ethiopia is also known for her religious diversity and tolerance. The 1994 census report also indicates that, in Ethiopia, Christian's comprise 60.8% (Orthodox 50.6%, Protestant 10.2%), while Muslim 32.8%, traditional 4.6%, and other 1.8%. (CIA World Fact Book, May 2007)

According to tradition, the Kingdom of Ethiopia was founded by Solomon's first son, Menelik I, (whom the Queen of Sheba is supposed to have born) in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC. According to Alvarez, (1961) cited in Assefa, (2005), some documented evidences, however, show that the Kingdom of Axum which probably emerged in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D. makes Ethiopia one of the most ancient country in the world. (2005:30)

Thus, Ethiopia is a country with a long history; however, its contact with the outside world has been limited. Alvarez, (1961) cited by Assefa, (2005) noted that Ethiopia's isolation from the outside world can be traced back as early as 7<sup>th</sup> century when the Kingdom of Axum declined and it was largely cut off from the outside world. (2005:30) Besides, the fact that Ethiopia has never been colonized like that of the rest of African countries, has also contributed for its isolation. Furthermore, Bahiru Zewde (1991) cited by Assefa, (2005) also noted that the isolation of the country is advanced during the Derg regime (1974-1991) when the 'Iron Curtain' was introduced. (2005:31)

As a result, Assefa, (2005) argued that Ethiopian youths' first experience with the American or Western media in the early 1990s has been significant phenomena. Thus, Assefa noted that contemporary Ethiopians experienced foreign, mainly American, media availability and consumption since early 1990s. (2005:30)

One of the significant historical phenomena is also the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie I, in September 1974 which was caused by the inadequate measures taken to tackle the long-term drought in the North Ethiopia in 1973-1974. Bevan, (2004) cited by Assefa, (2005) noted that when Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam took over the leadership after the Emperor, he introduced the abolishing of private ownership and the land reform. (Assefa, 2005: 31) As a result, private properties were confiscated and nationalized by the proto-Marxist military government. Assefa, (2005) noted that this period turned the country from a relatively capitalist and Western-oriented society to a socialist country. This is relevant in relation to this study because the becoming of socialist republic based on the model of former Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, USSR) caused the introduction of the 'Iron Curtain' in the country. (2005:31)

Now, Ethiopia has a Federal government system with nine ethnic based Regional States and two Administrative Councils, ruled by Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

## 1.2 Ethiopian Contemporary History

Assefa, (2005) citing a phrase Winston Churchill (1946) used, namely, '*Iron Curtain*' to describe the division between Western powers and the area controlled by the former Soviet Union that Ethiopia has been behind an '*Iron Curtain*' during 1974-1991. (2005:31) The phrase, therefore, indicates the fact that the country has suffered a lot from a total censorship of Western cultural products including newspapers, magazines, movies, documentaries and books during those years. (2005:31)

However, since the downfall of the socialist regime in 1991, Ethiopia started to experience an overflow of Western films and videos and the '*Iron Curtain*' ended. The potential influences of the arrival of Western cultural products can be seen as significant phenomena in relation with this study. As it has been briefly discussed above, it can be argued that, the fact that Ethiopia has never been colonized and was isolated from the Western world resulted in a relatively little foreign influence on the identity of the nation at large and the youth in particular.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that the change of several governments in Ethiopia may not only have involved a change in the socioeconomic and political sphere but also in the area of sexual values and norms in addition to varying interest, access and alternatives of global media to be consumed by the general public, and the youth in particular.

## 1.3 Demography

Ethiopia's total projected population for July 2006 is estimated to be 75 million persons (Central Statistical Agency, 2006:20) and is expected to grow by over 2.0% annually through 2025. (AIDS in Ethiopia, 2006:7) In addition, Scholl, (2002) cited by Assefa, (2005) notes that Ethiopia's current population is projected to increase to 173 million by 2050, becoming Africa's second most populous nation next to Nigeria. (2005:33)

Ethiopia's population is young with 43% under the age of 15 years; and 84% of the population lives in rural part of the country. It is estimated that there are 21,162,805 people who are from

15-29 years in 2006, according to the Central Statistical Agency. (2006:25) The capital city of Ethiopia is Addis Ababa, the country's largest city, populated by over 3 million people.

According to available data, 44% of the Ethiopian's population is below the absolute poverty line. From the abovementioned figures it is known that under this situation of poverty, the youth is the hardest hit segment of society. In addition, according to the National Labour Force Survey conducted in 1999 by the Central Statistical Authority indicates that 1,890,249 persons in the age range of 15-64 were unemployed while 1,260,177 (67%) of them were the youth. (National Youth Policy, 2005)

## **1.4 Defining Youth**

There is no single universal definition for the word "Youth". Some define it as persons whose age bracket ranges between the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood, while others fix age limits to express it. On the other hand, there are also others who define the term 'youth' from biological and psychological developmental perspectives as well as by considering both physical development and maturity.

Therefore, it is important to define the "youth" in order to provide the framework of this research. In doing so, Strelitz, (2005) notes that "the concept of childhood and adulthood do not [necessarily] refer to fixed points on a continuum as they are not physiological facts but social constructions." (2005:52)

On the other hand, Swedish youth researcher Fornas cited by Strelitz (2005) pointed that there is little agreement among researchers on an exact definition of the term youth. Fornas, however, pointed to three different discourses that frame the concept as,

Firstly, youth refers to a particular stage in physiological development; secondly, it is a social category framed by particular social institutions and rituals, and thirdly, youth is culturally determined by its interplay with musical, visual and verbal signs that mark this stage as being different from that of the child or adult. (Strelitz, 2005:53)

However, Strelitz, (2005) noted that “much of the literature on youth points to the centrality of the media to the creation and sustenance of individual and group identities.” (2005:55) It is widely acceptable that the youth express themselves to an unusual degree in texts, pictures, music and styles. These are important points because, it is in the assumption that pornographic media would potentially create youth identity.

On the other hand, Jennings, (1997) cited by Assefa, (2005) stated that the most commonly used international definition of youth is between the age of 16-24. (2005:34) According to Bonfadellie, (1993) cited in Assefa, (2005), “adolescence is a very dynamic and unstable phase where the individual has to acquire the skills to fulfil adult roles and norms and has to search for and develop an identity. It is a period of rapid physical and intellectual development and emotional intensity.” (2005:34) In addition, Fornas, (1995) cited in Assefa, (2005) argues that “youth is a period of socially and culturally-conditioned flexibility.” (2005:34) Therefore, it is these kinds of characteristics that make the youth in Ethiopia focal point for this study; in relation to their interaction with pornographic messages.

Generally, different international organizations use different figures to define ‘youth’. For example, the UN defines youth as persons whose age are between 15-24, while it is 10-24 for WHO, and 15-24 according to Ethiopian Social Security and Development Policy. In different countries the figure remains varied. For example, in Uganda it is 12-30, Mauritius 14-29, South Africa 14-28, Nigeria 18-35 and Djibouti 16-30. However, the Ethiopian National Youth Policy (NYP) defines ‘youth’ as “... part of the society between 15-29 years of age.” (National Youth Policy, 2005) Accordingly, “youth” in the context of this study means, Ethiopian citizens between the ages of 15-29, as per the NYP.

## **1.5 Developmental Characteristics of the Youth**

Psychologists recognized that young people are affected by the variety of transitions they go through: physically, cognitively and socially. The physical transition includes changing hormonal levels, rapid gains in height and weight, and continued brain development. Young people in their teens and early twenties seem to be inconsistent in controlling their emotions, impulses, and

judgments. As a result, they usually equate intimacy with sex, rather than exploring a deep emotional attachment first. (Huebner, 2000)

Young boys and girls want to establish an identity, autonomy, intimacy, and becoming comfortable with one's sexuality; which are generally recognized as an indication of psychosocial development. (Huebner, 2000)

Issue of sexuality is one of the significant changes that the youth experience. An important part of youth sexuality is resulted from both physical and cognitive changes that they go through. For example, for boys this can be physically observed during puberty, while it includes the onset of the first menstrual period for girls, as well as the first emission of semen for boys. Because of changes in nutrition, these changes in youngsters' bodies occur at earlier ages than they did for their parents.

With regards to the pressing issues of sexuality for young people, Papalia, (2004) notes that;

Seeing oneself as a sexual being, recognizing one's sexual orientation, coming to terms with sexual stirrings, and forming romantic or sexual attachments all are parts of achieving sexual identity. The urgent awareness of sexuality is an important aspect of identity formation, profoundly affecting self-image and relationships. Although this process is biologically driven, its expression is in part culturally defined. (2004:430)

As a result, young people are curious and enthusiastic: they do have the urge to try and explore new things. As a result significant numbers of young people have become addicted to alcohol, smoking, chat, dangerous medical drugs and narcotics drugs; all of which are injurious to health. These and many similar health hazards challenge the youth's proper physical, mental and psychological development. As a result, the youth are being exposed to unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, STI and most of all HIV/AIDS. Most in danger are those who start sexual intercourse early or those who do not have ample information.

There are many factors that influence the developmental characteristics of the youth. Social, cultural, and economic factors greatly influence young people's ability to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. Mass media, materialism, migration and/or



urbanization may increase both the desire and opportunity for sexual activity, and many young people feel strong peer group pressure to engage in sexual intercourse. On the other hand, some cultures may promote early sexual intercourse, unsafe sex, sex outside of marriage, and homosexuality.

In Ethiopia, due to their emotional and psychological setup, young people are commonly considered by adults and elderly people as ‘immature’ part of the society. That means they are considered for not having an advanced reasoning skills, including the ability to think about multiple options and possibilities regarding certain issues. For example, when a person needs to do something, s/he requires to logically thinking about the process and the things hypothetically. This involves asking and answering the question: Why? What? Who? When? Where? and How? In Ethiopia, most adults and elderly people accuse the youth for lacking these qualities.

Given this, young people live in the ages for the development of sexuality. How these young people are educated about and exposed to sexuality will largely determine whether or not they develop a healthy sexual identity in the future. Huebner, (2000) mentioned that many experts agree that the mixed messages the youth receive about sexuality contribute to problems such as unplanned pregnancy, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases; including HIV/AIDS.

Therefore, in a third world country like Ethiopia, where discussion of sex is not liberated [is taboo] and where there is no formal sexuality education at school, it can be argued that young people potentially welcome any kind of media products that seem to provide information about sex.

## **1.6 The Youth in Ethiopia**

Scholl, (2002) cited by Assefa, (2005) noted that over 65% of Ethiopia’s population is young people under the age of 25. (2005:33) However, Govindasamy, (2002) cited by Assefa, (2005) noted that Ethiopian youth suffer from poverty that is aggravated by the lack of education, unemployment, and unsustainable population growth. (2005:33) According to Ethiopian Census Report (1998) 40% of the Ethiopian population is unemployed and the majority are young people.

The EPRDF lead government of Ethiopia has recognized the problems the younger generation is facing today that Ministry of Youth and Sports was established to follow-up, direct and coordinate youth affairs at federal level. As a result, youth bureaus have also been organized in regional states. Among the primary duties and responsibilities of the Ministry was preparing a National Youth Policy. Accordingly, the policy was endorsed at the 100th FDRE Council of Ministers regular meeting that was held on March 12, 2004.

Children and Youth Affairs Organization (CYAO, 1995) cited by Getnet Tadele, (2006) on the other hand, mentioned that “many young people with a secondary education end up as street vendors or simply hang around. This indicates that they are under great economic stress, the precursor of helplessness, occasional depression, self-hatred, and involvement in activities that are commonly known as ‘sexual deviance’ and other deviant behaviours (the sale of sexual labour [girls], drugs (*chat*), alcohol, theft, rape and the like.” (2006:34)

## **1.7 Sexuality and Young People in Ethiopia**

According Lucas, (2001) cited in Getnet Tadele, (2006) “though the family is the primary socializing unit that influences the lives of its members, non-familial institutions, including religion, education, and the state are influential in shaping belief systems, including sexual behaviour.” (2006:233) In addition, Reiss, (1967) Moore and Rosenthal, (1993) cited in Getnet Tadele, (2006) also mention studies report that those young people who observe religious customs and teachings are less likely to engage in premarital sex than their less devout peers. (2006:233)

Getnet Tadele, (2006) further argues that religious institutions are facing challenges in dealing with sexuality in general and young people’s sexuality in particular. He notes that “Churches or Mosques appear to have failed to provide sermons or health education that can attract the younger generation, in which they might have included religious values and norms. In other words, both Churches and Mosques seem to have not yet fully begun to meet the spiritual needs of today’s younger generation beyond telling them to fast, pray, and observe other religious duties.” (2006:234) However, this does not mean there are many young devout religious people

who respect the laws of their faith with regard to sexuality and abstain from sex before marriage or out side of marriage.

Therefore, religion is an important aspect of social, economic, political and cultural life of the youth in Ethiopia in general, which is also relevant issue to understand the issue of sexuality and the youth, to achieve the purpose of this study as well.

The rise in practice of premarital sex or unprotected sex outside marriage is said to be one of the reasons for the spread of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. In relation to this, Getnet Tadele (2006) demonstrated that,

A quantitative study of adolescent fertility and reproductive behaviour and employment status of the youth population in urban Ethiopia indicated that 50.2 percent of males and 21.2 percent of females in the 15-29 years age category had experienced [premarital] sexual intercourse. (Getnet Tadele, 2006:86)

As a result of the limited job opportunities in the urban areas of the country, many young people are exposed to various social evils and HIV/AIDS pandemic. HIV/AIDS has become one of the serious threats for the well-being of the youth. In 2005, the fitted national HIV prevalence was 3.5% (10% for urban and 1.9% for rural areas). A total of 1,320,000 (590,000 males and 730,000 female) persons were living with HIV/AIDS in the country in 2005. In the year 2005, it is estimated that there were 134,450 AIDS deaths (that is 368 a day) in the country including 20,929 children. If the present trends continue, the current 1.2 million death due to AIDS is projected to reach 1.9 million by 2010. (AIDS in Ethiopia, 2006:20) Regarding this hazardous pandemic, a report by the Federal Ministry of Health/National HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office indicates that,

There are many factors that promote the spread of the disease including the presence of sexually transmitted infections, gender inequality, multiple sexual partners, prostitution, men with disposable income, alcohol ... (AIDS in Ethiopia, 2006:8)

On the other hand, the prevalence of premarital sex decreased in all age groups and among both men and women. Specifically, prevalence went from 7.8% to 3.9% among men with 15-19 years of age; from 20.8% to 13.4% among men with 20-24 years of age; from 4.0% to 1% among

women 15-19; and from 16.5% to 3.1% among women with 20-24 years of age. (AIDS in Ethiopia, 2006:47)

Getnet Tadele, (2006) notes that “worldwide, 50 percent of HIV infections occur among young people (15-24 years), and as a result young people are considered (in almost every country) the most vulnerable age group; they are viewed as a target- for prevention, education, and for potential HIV transmission.” (2006:8) Getnet Tadele further mentioned that in Ethiopia, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS rises sharply from the age of incipient sexual activity and peaks among those age 20-29. (2006:9)

Gebre Kidan and Azeze (1995), Mulatu, (2000) and Fantahun and Chala (1996) cited by Getnet (2006) noted that many of previous researches on young people in relation to sexuality studies seems to have been focused on quantifying patterns of sexual behaviour, but ignored or paid only a little attention to the macro social and economic circumstances that shape the lives of young people. (2006:9)

The Amharic phrase '*Balege Neger*' (literally means 'an indecent thing') that is used to name 'sex' is a good illustration that shows the subject of sexuality is taboo (*in Amharic 'newer'*) among Ethiopian society.

The issue of female virginity should be raised here in relation to the practice of sex before marriage. According to Getnet Tadele, (2006) some Ethiopians jokingly say that these days the *Virgin Mary has decided to create women without hymens* [sign of virginity]. (2006:85) Others according to Getnet Tadele make fun of it by drawing an analogy between female virginity and smallpox, remarking that both smallpox and female virginity were eradicated from Ethiopia years ago. (2006:85)

Getnet Tadele, (2006) further notes that “the public discourse on sexuality... in Ethiopia is based on the assumption that sexual values have become 'destabilized' through time, and reference is always made to 'the good old days'. (2006:85) According to Getnet Tadele, “the public argues that there has been a drastic change in attitude towards liberalizing sexual norms in tandem with

modernization. It is common to hear people say that ‘modernization made society permissive’”. (2006:85) Female virginity, which used to be considered as sacred before marriage is an issue here. These days, girls became pregnant before marriage by breaking the old tradition that requires girls to remain virgin until their wedding and these phenomena are now becoming usual and normal. (2006:85)

Getnet Tadele, (2006) argues that “like any other developing nation, the very fabric of Ethiopian society is changing because of unremitting urbanization and globalization, boosted by mass communication, and formal education.” (2006:86)

On the other hand, Azeb Hailesilasie, Monitoring and Regulation Expert at Press, Film Shooting Licence Division of the Federal Ministry of Information, said that there were 34 licensed sex and gender focused newspapers and magazines in the country during 1985-1995 EC. The rise of sex and gender focused newspaper/magazines was followed by the downfall of the Derg regime, however many are not functioning today. She said, for example “*Liblelib*” and “*Median*” were couple of the papers whose licence was banned by the Ministry of Information as a result of publishing unethical and culturally taboo sexual explicit subjects for the public. “Currently, there is one newspaper and one magazine, [gender and sex focused] namely, “*kalkidan*” and “*fikir*”, respectively, which are functioning in the country.” (Azeb Hailesilasie, 2007)

It is reasonable to mention the show aired on ETV on *Senie 24, 1999* [July 1, 2007, Sunday afternoon entertainment program] regarding the standard of the contemporary Ethiopian music video clips. ETV journalist Eden Gebrehiwot on the show said that many people give a call to ETV and complain about some of the music video clips because they are becoming culturally deviating: for becoming more and more naked [to the level of exposing nipple and buttock publicly], sexually arousing and for imitating Western lifestyle. Eden said that ETV informs the musicians to reduce ‘nakedness’ from their music video clips. [New music video clips are flooding the city: a few of them contain extremely nakedly dancing females, sexually arousing and culturally unacceptable.]

## 1.8 Pornography Consumption in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

At the moment the EPRDF lead government took power in 1991, there were no private and commercial print or electronic media in Ethiopia. But in 1992-93 private newspapers and magazines started to flood the market in Addis Ababa. Ararssu Amenu, (May 2007), Head of Library and Documentation Service at Ministry of Information, Press Licence Office, said “among those were some pornographic magazines, namely, *Zibad*, *Yefikir-Enken*, *Yefikir-Chawota*, *Affrodait*, *Eyor*, *Emagn* and *Afla-Fikir* were magazines that have been published between 1985-1987 EC.” These magazines are not on the market today. Ararssu described these magazines as “rubbish” because they have been damaging and polluting psychological, mental, emotional, behavioural and sexual health of the youth and children in the city. Ararssu said, the ‘good thing’ is that these papers are not on the market today.

On the other hand, Gideon Ashenafi, (May 2007), Sales & Marketing Representative of Multi-choice Ethiopia, said many of pornographic movies came to Ethiopia through smuggling. For example, people who travel to Bangkok, Paris, Delhi or other counties in the Far East, Europe, Asia or the USA for trade, meeting, and visiting purposes bring pornographic movies into the country. After it enters the country, it is possible to get it either in the hands of on the street electronic material vendors, video shops or internet cafés for rent or informal public use. Gideon said, Multi-Choice Ethiopia does not subscribe pornographic channels for its customers because it is restricted by the government. He said, due to the development in media, communication and information technology, it is almost impossible to totally restrict the dissemination of pornographic messages within the country.

According to Asfaw Fekade, (May 2007), Amharic Program Coordinator at Ethiopian Television (ETV), the station edits foreign movies before airing it. For example, explicit sexual scenes are cutoff before airing, not only to protect the youth but also the adults. [However, according to Asfaw, young people are not comfortable about the editing. They often complain about it saying this kind of censoring minimizes the message the movie is intended to communicate. However, ETV’s concern is protecting young people as well as adult’s culture and health.] Asfaw also said

that “the editorial policy of Ethiopian Television does not allow us to air taboos that violate the society’s cultural values.” (Asfaw Fekade, Interview, May 2007)

The government’s mass-media editorial policy that was created in June 2002 (*Senei 1994 EC*) further showed how ETV or other government mass media should take care for the well being of the youth and children in particular and the society in general. Article 4/94 of the editorial policy is about ‘respect’ and sub-article 3.1.4/94 says, any kind of shows [including movies] “shall not undermine the dignity of mankind and cause psychological damage,” as transcribed from the Amharic version that says; ባርህነት ለሰው ግብዓት ማሳደግ ለህይወት ማደግ ማረጋገጥ... ማሳደግ ማቆየት ማለት። There are also other articles that forbid the airing of unethical and culturally taboo shows. For example; [the following are the original Amharic versions of the articles literally transcribed one after the other]

ሀገርን ለሕይወት ማረጋገጥ ለሰው ግብዓት ማሳደግ ለህይወት ማደግ ማረጋገጥ... ማሳደግ ማቆየት ማለት። (3.1.4.4/94)

*Photographs, pictures or cartoons, and articles that are categorized as taboos by the society and any kind of messages that can cause harm to children are not permitted to be disseminated... (3.1.4.4/94)*

ህግ ለሰው ግብዓት ማሳደግ ለህይወት ማደግ ማረጋገጥ... ማሳደግ ማቆየት ማለት። (4.4.4/94)

*The dissemination of [Advertisements with] ...ordinary languages, and unacceptable nakedness...shall be strictly controlled. (4.4.4/94)*

... ለሰው ግብዓት ማሳደግ ለህይወት ማደግ ማረጋገጥ... ማሳደግ ማቆየት ማለት። (9.1/94)

*Foreign movies that are contradictory with the culture of the society, that are not decent and extreme are not welcomed or aired. (9.1/94)*

From the abovementioned quotes from the editorial policy of ETV (2002), it is easy to understand that there is a fear that Western [foreign] media products [especially movies] are considered to have an influence over the society at large. Therefore, ETV is playing its own role in protecting the wellbeing of the society, especially of the youth and children by forbidding the airing of foreign movies that are socially and culturally considered as ‘unhealthy’. (Asfaw Fekade, May 2007)

Since ETV was launched its broadcasting services some 42 years ago, 80% of the air time was utilized to air foreign films. However, now this has changed and 75-80% of the airtime focuses on national agendas. From the total airtime, only not more than 20-25% is covered by foreign movies currently. According to the editorial policy of ETV, this is done to protect the society from the influence of foreign media products and to protect the society to pay attention to national/local affairs rather than becoming influenced by foreign media products. (ETV Editorial Policy, 2002)

There is theoretical claim that media is powerful to shape up worldviews of consumers and therefore, ETV's presupposition is supported by Kellner (1995) cited in Strelitz, (2002) as;

Radio, television, film, and the other products of the culture industries provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless. Media culture also provide the materials out of which many people construct their sense of class of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality, of 'us' and 'them'. Media culture helps shape the prevalent view of the world and deepest values: it defines what is considered good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media stories and images provide the symbols, myths, and resources which help constitute a common culture for the majority of individuals in many parts of the world today. (Strelitz, 2002:87-88)

Maria and Genanow, (2000) cited by Assefa, (2005) noted that electronic audio-visual access to information and entertainment for the majority of Ethiopians is mainly the state-owned and state-run Ethiopian Television (ETV). (2005:36) Thus, many people enjoy watching Western movies aired on ETV during weekends. According to Population Concern, a UNDP website (2004) cited by Assefa, (2005) there are only four television sets per thousand people in Ethiopia. (2005:37) Moreover, *World Almanac* (2005) cited by Assefa, (2005) points that Ethiopia "has 231,900 telephone lines, 17,800 mobile cellular users, 15.2 million radios, one television broadcast station , 682,000 television sets, one Internet Service Provider (ISP) and 40,000 Internet users." (2005:37) [However, the CIA World Fact Book, updated on May 2007 indicates that there are 113,000 internet users in Ethiopia for the year 2005.]

However, there is an alternative to watch satellite TV operated by the South African-owned MNET/DSTV by those who can afford its high subscription fee. Assefa, (2005) citing BBC Report 2004 mentioned currently, like that of Nigeria, Ethiopia is known for its thriving and



expanding home-video watching audience. (2005:38) According to Assefa, “the expanding interest in home videos and the rise of the video houses correspond with the influx of American films into the country.” (2005:38) According to the Addis Ababa Trade and Tourism Bureau, the body responsible for granting licences to video houses, there are 98 video houses currently operating in Addis Ababa, down from 243 in the early 1990s. (Assefa, 2005:39) Assefa, citing *Addis Lisan* 1996, mentioned that the immediate declination of the number is the result of an intensive action of the City Administration’s authorities to close down most of the illegal video houses in the city (2005:39) that were screening pornographic movies.

Getnet Tadele (2006) mentioned that,

Indubitably, with the coming of Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) into power in 1991, new laws allowed the proliferation of love/erotic magazines and tabloids, thereby providing young people with alternative sources of information about sexuality. More importantly, illegal video houses mushroomed everywhere when the current government came to power, although such films had been available...elsewhere in the country long before. (2006:30)

According to the National Census Report (1998), for a population of over 2.7 million people in Addis Ababa, there are only seven movie theatres in the city (Assefa, 2005:38) while the entrance fee ranging from 5-22 birr is unaffordable for the majority of young people in the city who need to go to cinema to spend their spare time. However, many poor youngsters prefer to visit informal video houses by only paying from 0.50 cents up to one Birr<sup>1</sup>, where they are exposed to see variety of Western movies including sexually explicit ones, obviously in the context of chewing ‘*chat*’, (local drug that has green leaves) and smoking. In some of the informal video houses, a place to sleep overnight is provided by charging extra 0.50 cents, where all sorts of people spend the night in a group.

The lack of youth centres, affordable cinemas and the uncontrollable nature of the underground movie houses in the city contributes to the threats surrounding the well-being of the youth in the city.

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<sup>1</sup> One US Dollar is approximately 8.60 Ethiopian currency notes which is called Birr.

The most common place to purchase pornographic movies in Addis Ababa is on the street, from mobile electronic retailers. For example, for the purpose of presenting on my focus group discussion/interviews I have also bought two pornographic DVDs for six Ethiopian Birr each, around 6 kilo area, in Addis Ababa.

Getnet Tadele, (2006) noted that in Ethiopia, “young people cannot readily acquire information about sex, sexual health, and bodily functions, partly because of strong taboos around adolescent sexuality.” (2006:33) Therefore, they “glean titillating information from pornographic films, sex-workers, and erotic magazines, which often may lead them to engage in risky sexual behaviour.” (2006:33)

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The availability and dissemination of pornographic movies and secretly screening it in some video houses in Addis Ababa, (Assefa, 2005:108) combined with the vulnerable sexual nature of young people in relation with their exposure to sexually explicit media messages as well as the lack of studies as to how these phenomenon may influences the youth; are the problem that initiated this study to be undertaken. Therefore, this study envisions filling the abovementioned gaps and provides explanatory results regarding how electronic pornography is influential on young viewers.

## **2.1 Justification**

In the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the booming of pornographic industry is significantly made possible via the development in information and communication technologies. Currently pornography is one of the most controversial forms of media sex. (Gunter, 2002:14)

The Volume of information conveyed via new media technologies continue to expand. Digitalization is advancing into new phases of development, which have palpable effect on our culture and tradition. Digital technology changes the condition of media consumption. Internet is often considered the most salient example of the digital revolution. Moreover, Internet is in many respects considered to be a young people's medium. (Carlsson, 2000:9)

Since couple of decades ago, the rise of some 'unsafe zones' on the digitalized media has become among the major global issues of concern in relation to the well-being of the youth and children. Researchers state that, "consumption of pornography is on the rise, due to in part to the *medialization* of sexuality" (Carlsson, 2006:280) as well as the expansion of new media technology.

Accordingly, there is a tendency that governments around the world are exerting their utmost effort to eradicate harmful and illegal media contents like pornography, which particularly threatens the well-being of the youth and children. However, some scholars argue that "as they [the governments] do so they must be careful not to undermine fundamental freedoms: in particular,

the right of citizens to communicate freely, the right to freedom of expression, the right to privacy.” (White, 1999:1)

White, (1999) mention that many might agree about the potential damage the irresponsible usage of Internet, irresponsible offline usage of CD-ROM, illegal online communication might cause to the youth. Thus, some people around the world argue that the coverage of pornography should be subjected to law enforcement.

On the other hand, there are two extreme facts worldwide regarding the regulation and censorship of pornographic materials. White, (1999) argue that “while the developed nations wrestle with the dilemma of Internet and other digital media content control in defense of the rights of the child and youth against the need to protect free expression, the rest of the world [global South] struggles to gain access to the Internet itself.” (1999:3)

In Ethiopian context, the young generation in Addis Ababa, is near to the new media technology with potential access to global media messages. Even if pornography is considered to be illegal in Ethiopia, I have observed the availability of illegally operating video houses in shanty areas of the city that screen pornographic movies, usually for young students, vagabonds, and unemployed young viewers.

Therefore, it can be argued that globalization has direct or indirect impact on the lifestyle of the youth in Addis Ababa. Therefore, since there is no other study about pornography consumption in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, this study is engaged to provide a starting point for further studies on related issues.

Some scholars argue that pornography as well as any other motion movie consumption has a tendency to bring change in attitudes, emotions, health, moral standards, and conducts. These changes includes; arousal (stimulation), harming of health, erosion of moral standards, worse academic work, less positive reputation and the like. (Lowery, 1988: 37) Therefore, this study envisages investigating which one of these immediate or prolonged changes happen to young Ethiopians who consume pornographic messages.

The other challenge related to porn viewing is that “the potential consequence of sexual intercourse is rarely addressed [in pornography]; issues like pregnancy, contraception, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases are generally absent; character dialogue and portrayals are superficial when they are discussed. According to Ward, (1995) cited in Wartella, (2000), in pornographic media, *‘physical attractiveness is an asset’* and is emphasized for both male and female, rather than mutual understanding and relationship between ‘partners’. (Wartella, 2000:142)

Generally, scholars argue that, sexual images in the mass media can have both immediate and long-term effects. (Wartella, 2000:144). It can lead to aggression, arousal, altruism homosexuality, prostitution, abusive sexual attitude, premarital sex, unprotected sexual practice and other abusive behaviour (Wartella, 2000:144-145) and may lead to HIV/AIDS infection as well.

However, others argue that, how sex on media affects young people may depend on age, gender, parental involvement, perceptions of reality and reasons for the media use. (Wartella, 2000:147)

The developmental characteristics of the youth combined with the relative growth in new media technology as well as the wide variety of access to global media messages like pornographic messages and the lack of similar studies in this area, among others, are the reasons for envisioning this particular study.

## **2.2 Significance of the Study**

In Ethiopia, with the removal of socialist administration in 1991, the EPRDF lead administration and the new political and economic policies allowed the entrance of variety of Western media and cultural products, including pornography [via smuggling or the Internet].

Globally, pornography revenue exceeded \$ USD 97 billion in the year 2006, larger than the combined income of Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple, Netflix and EarthLink put together. In addition, pornography viewers have remarkably increased worldwide. (Ropelato, 2007)

However, there are only few studies that have been conducted in the area of pornography consumption in Ethiopia. Therefore, this research might be the first of its kind and initial study for other related researches that would be undertaken in the future.

Therefore, the research will benefit mainly ‘youth’ focused organizations, policy makers and program implementers, as well as organizations engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. Pertaining stakeholders, researchers, media institutions, government and non governmental organizations that are involved in sex education and reproductive health communication shall get supplementing explanatory facts and recommendations from the findings of this study.

Therefore, this study will help to better understand the youth and their interaction with pornographic messages and proofs the possible influence of their encounter with pornography: and this will help youth focused policy makers and program implementers to better identify the needs and challenges of the youth, especially in relation to reproductive health, HIV/AIDS education.

## **2.3 Objective of the Study**

### **2.3.1 General Objective**

The objective of the research is to investigate the influences of exposure to electronic pornography among the youth in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### **2.3.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To examine how the youth respond (react) to sexually explicit media,
2. To identify how the youth perceive and interpret pornography, and also
3. To find out the influential role of pornography on actual sexual practice of the participants.

It is believed that people obviously react to what they see and hear, in some way or the other. The type, nature and degree of their reaction might be different depending on the age, background, culture, personality and education of the consumer, among other potential factors. Thus, the objectives of the study will enable me to find out how the youth respond or react to pornography after they are exposed to it.

In addition, there is a tendency that the youth might be influenced or driven by sexually explicit materials due to their biological-psychological characteristics. The influence might have a positive or negative end. That means, some consumers may use the material as an educative resource about sexual acts while others will be driven to unsafe, violent and literally open sex practice as seen on pornography. Some may interpret it 'positively', and others 'negatively'. Thus, I will try to find out how and to what ends it influences the youth in this regard.

More specifically, some young people may not want to practice what they see in pornography. Or some might be interested to practice what they consume. However, some may watch it; enjoy having fun with it as an entertainment medium, but nothing more happen. How about others? I want to find out if pornography consumers go-out and make use of what they have seen/watched in sexually explicit media. If they do so, I want to find out if they protect themselves from challenges like: HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and STIs by safely practicing the sexual acts learned from pornography.

## **2.4 Research Questions**

1. How, Where, When and Why the youth are exposed to pornography?

As it has been said before, studies were not undertaken regarding how, where, when and why the youth are exposed to pornography. But the availability of Internet cafes, video shops, street CD-ROMS (DVD/VCD) sells, email, Internet, and computer- plays a vital role in providing access to view sexually explicit materials. Possible arguments here will be: - exposure to pornography for some of the youth might be a matter of entertainment while it is of addiction for others. Some

may view porn for curiosity; -to learn sexual acts while others to intentionally misuse it. Therefore, this study attempts to find out which one of these happen on pornography viewing young people in Addis Ababa, and find out why, how, when and where young people view sexually explicit materials.

## 2. How do young people interpret and use pornography in their daily life?

If young people are exposed to pornography, surely there will be some kind of meanings or interpretations provided to what they view. The interpretations vary. People differently interpret what they see. They also make use of the material differently. Therefore, I want to investigate these things -what *meanings* the youth give to what they see in pornography and how they act on it in their daily life.

## 3. How does pornography influence the youth?

Exposure to any kind of media has got some kind of (positive or negative) influence attached to it. Some young people may use porn as educative materials while the misuse of the material will result in some kinds of dangers that comprise unsafe sexual practice, unwanted pregnancy, multiple sexual partners, and infection with HIV/AIDS and STDs; among others. Therefore, I will try to find out in what direction/ends and how exposure to porn drives/influences young people, with especial emphasis on HIV/AIDS.

## 2.5 Limitations of the Study

In Ethiopia, sex is surrounded by taboos, morals and restrictions that most of my respondents did not fully communicate what they know and practice regarding pornography consumption. In relation, Papalia, (2004) argued that “also a discrepancy often exists between what people say about sex and what they do, and there is no way to corroborate what people say. Some may conceal sexual activity; others may exaggerate.” (2004:431)



Another challenge faced during the course of undertaking this research was the lack of related foundational research that has been done previously; in addition to the lack of reference books related to pornographic media consumption and the culturally uncomfortable nature of the community to discuss about human sexuality in particular. In addition, my gender has limited me to do interviews with female respondents because discussing sex is considered very private and taboo.

Therefore, I would like to stress the scarcity of resources to undertake this research in addition to the limited oral data collected from the informants due to the cultural and ethical issues that involve pornography and sexuality. However, through repeated efforts and through becoming approachable friend and researcher, it was possible to manage to collect reach data.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The historical background of reception studies starts by the attempt of speakers to find out what their listeners might understand from the messages of their speech; primarily for the purpose of identifying if their intentions matched with the interpretations produced by other people.

Strelitz, (2002) noted that “reception research is the empirical study of the social production of meaning in peoples’ encounter with media discourses.” (2002:4) In addition, Schroder, (2003) cited in Strelitz (2002) noted that reception research “does not study media use as it happens in natural situation of everyday life like ethnography, though in some instance the two research approaches have been seen as related to a point where they have been used interchangeably.” (2002:4)

Therefore, reception study asks what a text means, for whom, in what circumstances and identifying what values change over time. It also asks if the meanings learned have any emotional, social, political or cognitive effect on the consumer. Reception study, on the other hand, is not only about the consumption of media messages, but also about the access to producing them. (Staiger, 2005:4)

Strelitz, (2002), mentioned that in reception research, “the data and findings of a reception study should be seen as discursive constructions produced jointly by the researcher and informant’s interaction in the research encounter and by the researcher interpreting the interview transcript.” (2002:4) In addition, according to Jensen & Rosengren, (1990) cited in Strelitz, (2002), “the interpretation of data is done with reference to the surrounding socio-cultural system, which again is conceptualized as a historical configuration of social practices, context of use, and interpretative communities.” (2002:4)

#### **3.1.1 The Ethnographic Audience Study**

The media/cultural imperialism thesis is criticized for its limited explanation about the text/audience encounter with the message of global media. However, the ethnographic audience

research gives due emphasis on how global media messages are consumed by the lived culture of local audience.

Assefa, (2005) citing Algan, (2003) pointed out that there is strong scholarly agreement that the study of everyday life is central to the study of media. However, studies are not done accordingly because “reception studies have always focused on how a particular text is received.” (2005:15)

Algan, (2003) cited in Assefa, (2005) further argues that,

It is essential to illustrate the need for an ethnographic approach that prioritizes the audience in its unique geographic, cultural, and social environment rather than the media text or genre. (2005:15)

Therefore, the shift of focus from a media text to audience is called ethnographic audience research approach. The approach takes into account the description of culture, social system, beliefs and experiences and contextual understanding of events and behaviour.

Ang (1990), cited in Assefa, (2005), pointed that ethnographic study of media audience emphasizes “the capability of audience groups to construct their own meaning and thus their own local cultures and identities, even in the face of their virtually complete dependence on the image flows distributed by the transnational culture industries.” (2005:16) Therefore, the meanings local audiences make out of global media messages is impacted by the context of the consumer. (2005:17)

Strelitz, (2005) mentioned Thompson who focuses on the ongoing subjective ‘use’ of media products by consumers to critique the media imperialism thesis. According to Thompson, cited in Strelitz, (2005) media imperialism thesis:

fails to take account of the fact that the reception and appropriation of cultural phenomena are fundamentally hermeneutical process in which individuals draw on material and symbolic resources available to them, as well as on the interpretative assistance offered by those with whom they interact in their day-to-day lives, in order to make sense of the messages they receive and to find some way relating to them. (2005:40)

According to youth researcher Bo Reimer, who is referred in Strelitz, (2005) “a central insight emerging from ethnographic research into media consumption is that while the media play a

crucial role in young people's lives, what they have on offer is of an ambivalent character: it cannot possibly be reduced to any one single common denominator, and, depending on social situation, the same material can be used and interpreted in several different ways." (2005:40)

One of the missing things in media imperialism thesis, on the other hand, is the fact that it does not investigate into what kind of meanings local audiences take from the global media during exposure to it. (Assefa, 2005:14)

Therefore, it can be noted that the ethnographic criticism argues the media imperialism thesis is so quiet on the reception of texts by local audiences while it gives strong attention on the production, dissemination and content of global media.

Fiske (1987b:15), cited by Assefa (2005) argues that "audience bring in their own social experience to the text when decoding it." (2005:20) On the other hand, theorists like Berger (1976) and Schou (1992) cited by Assefa (2005) points about the role of media as a 'carrier of modernity'.

### **3.2 Pornography: Historical View**

The key problem in the study and debate over pornography is its definition. There is no absolute definition for the term 'pornography'. It may mean different things for different people. Several researchers depending on their view (individual, institutional or group interest) towards 'pornography' have defined the term in different ways. Some of the prominent meanings given to pornography are as follows.

Some scholars like McNair, (1996) go to the root word of 'pornography' in order to define it. They note that the word 'pornography' is derived from the Greek word *porne* and *graphe*, which form '*pornographos*'. For McNair, '*pornographos*' as used by the ancient Greeks did not have the current meanings given to 'pornography', but it is referred to "a specific subcategory of biography-tales of the lives of courtesans-which many not contain any obscene material at all." (1996:44)

On the other hand, McNair, (1996) mentioned that “by the late eighteen century *pornography* was being used in France to refer to ‘writing about prostitutes.’” (1996:45)

Smith, (1976) further explained pornography by giving background information from its Greek roots. He asserted “some Greeks considered prostitution a sacerdotal act to be practiced in temples. They called its description *pornography*. Sacred or profane, venerable or heretical, sexual expression has always been a function of the society that channelled and authorized its ‘proper uses.’” (1976:14)

On the other hand, U.S. feminist Steinem (1998) cited in Carter & Weaver (2003) says that “pornography’s etymological root ‘porn’ means ‘*prostitution*’ or ‘*female captives*’, suggesting not mutual love, or love at all, but domination and violence against women.” (2003:97)

However, contemporary views are quite different from the classical ones. For example, for Caputi, (2003), ‘pornography is material developed around exploitation, objectification, and *denigration* of women and a fear and hatred of female body.’ He also defines the term as “sexually explicit subordination of women.” (2003: 434)

Boyle, (2003) has stated citing its most commonly used characterization which Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon (1988) states as follows:

Pornography is the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through picture and/or words that also includes one or many of the following: (i) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities; or (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped or (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or (iv) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or (v) women are presented in postures or display; or (vi) women’s body parts including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, or buttocks-are exhibited such that women are reduced to these parts; or (vii) women are presented as whores by nature; or (viii) women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals; or (ix) women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as

filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual. (Boyle, 2003:411)

For Sparks, G. (2002), “the term pornography seems to have become associated with material that features explicit sexual behaviour and nudity in a context frequently characterized by depictions of one character exerting physical or psychological dominance over another.” (2002:92)

Carter and Weaver (2003) also mentioned U.S. radical feminist Russell (2000) who defines pornography as “material that combines sex and/or that exposure of genitals with the abuse or degradation in a manner that appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behaviour.” (2003:97)

However, in spite of all these definitions, there is an observable disagreement between scholars who define pornography depending on their views, interests, religious affiliation, or institutional interests; which has also become one of the sources of controversy over pornography debate. Given this, it is beyond doubt that the majority agree on sexually explicitness of pornographic materials.

Generally, views of ‘pornography’ that are adopted in various academic writings are discussed by Boyle, (2005). The first view is related to anti-pornography feminists that define pornography as “material that is sexually explicit and sexist, violent, degrading, dehumanizing and/or sexually objectifying.” (2005:205)

The second view is often used by the anti-censorship writers who define pornography as “sexually explicit material designed for arousal and/or for fantasy.” (2005:205) For anti-censorship writers, violence is not a component of this definition.

According to the third definition, a number of writers have defined ‘pornography’ as “material identified by producers, distributors and consumers as *pornography*.” (2005:205)

McNair, B. (1996) argues that it is difficult to precisely define pornography, which would satisfy everyone. He mentioned the United States Justice Potter Stewart who famously reported to have said, “*But I know it when I see it.*” (1996:41)

The Oxford English Dictionary included the term *pornography* for the first time in 1857 and today it is listed as “sexually explicit material...intended to arouse.” (1996:45)

Pornography is of different type. There are filmed and written pornographies. In the filmed pornography, real women, men and children exist to perform sexual acts in front of a camera; while sex is only fantasy in written pornography. (Boyle, 2003: 409)

### **3.3 The Pornography Debate**

As it has been briefly discussed earlier, the debate over pornography on one hand indicates various views that differ regarding the nature of sexuality and its representation, the sources of violence against women, as well as the legitimacy of dominant social and political institution, (Berger, J.; and Searles, P. 1990:30) On the other hand it reflects differences in the meanings given to the term ‘*pornography*’ itself.

#### **3.3.1 The Feminists Perspective**

Historically, anti-pornography arguments were basically based upon the potential effects that would be caused by viewing pornographic materials. The debate on pornography among feminists has been extremely divided since 1983.

For anti-pornography feminists, “pornography is violence against women and it is this assertion that has made pornography central to media/violence debates.” (Boyle, 2005:29)

The current feminists theorizing (e.g., Dworkin, 1988; Hill, 1987; MacKinnon, 1986; Millett, 1970; Russell, 1998) argues that ‘virtually all sexually explicit materials has detrimental effects on women.’ (Garos, & Beggan, 2004:70)

However, other feminists who are concerned about censorship and freedom of speech emphasize the danger of censorship as well as the potential benefiting effects of pornography. Accordingly, anti-pornography feminists accuse the anti-censorship feminists of alliance with pornographers; while the anti censorship feminists accuse the anti-pornography feminists for associating with religious conservatives who have an antifeminist social and political agenda. (Berger, and Searles, 1990:30)

Boyle, (2005) mentioned the most well-known anti-pornography feminists, Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, who explains pornography as a material that subordinates, dehumanizes, objectifies, abuses, sexualize and degrades women. (2005:29)

On the other hand, the radical feminist perspective focuses on the violent, oppressive nature of pornographic materials. This perspective in broad terms accepts definition of pornography as “sexually explicit, intentionally arousing material.” (McNair, 1996:47-48)

The radical feminist anti-pornography critique views pornography as a kind of “sexist hate literature, the expression of a male sexuality rooted in the subordination of women that endorses the sexual objectification of, and sexual violence against, women.” (Jensen, 2004:247)

### **3.3.2 The Moral Conservative Perspective**

From the moral conservative perspective, pornography is distinguished by the de-contextualized, morally subversive character of its images. (McNair, 1996:49) McNair mentioned the Longford Report (1980) that was driven by the moral conservative perspective to have argued that pornography separates sexual activity from the real social context. (1996:49)

The moral conservatives in the Western societies argue that pornography violates the Judeo-Christian family values, that is, it breaks and abuses the value of monogamous sexual relationships within marriage, and it does not stress on the reproductive function of sex but on its



recreational aspect. (1996:49) In this respect, the moral conservatives share the burden of the religious conservatives, that will be discussed afterwards.

### **3.3.3 The Civil Libertarian Perspective**

According to the civil libertarian viewpoint, the central issue over pornography debate is the freedom from the state interference; that is censorship and freedom to engage in sexual self-fulfilment. The civil libertarians are against any kind of censorship. Their two reasons for arguing against censorship are: - (1) it is impossible to come up with a definition of pornography on which everyone will be in agreement; and (2) pornography continues to go underground. (Berger, and Searles, 1990:32)

Therefore, why and when should the state involve in the regulation and dissemination of materials like pornography? It is argued that,

In liberal political theory, restrictions upon individual freedom and the right to privacy are governed largely by John Stuart Mill's "harm principle"-the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. (Berger, and Searles, 1990:32)

Generally, there are some civil libertarians who show concern about the potential harms of pornography while others refuse the belief that pornography is harmful.

### **3.3.4 The Liberal Perspective**

For the liberal perspectives, the arousing effect of pornographic materials is harmless when the arousal occurs. On the other hand, the liberals view sexuality as a private experience that should be separated from any public social control. Therefore, they suppose that the marketplace should regulate and distribute cultural products associated with sexuality; but not the state. (Berger, and Searles, 1990:32)

### **3.3.5 The Religious Conservatives Perspective**

The religious conservatives fear that the exposure to pornography endangers the well being of the youth in particular and the family in general. Pornography influences Christian family life to be corrupted; in corrupting the moral development of children, in encouraging premarital sex, adultery and in discouraging the traditional monogamous marriage and family life. The religious conservatives also associates pornography with addictive, abnormal sexual behavior; including homosexuality. Moreover, they believe that pornography is sin, an offense against God. (Berger, J.; and Searles, P. 1990:31)

### **3.3.6 Pro-pornography Debate**

Defenders of pornography points to various aspects of using pornographic media that has a tendency for the use of sexual arousal, enhancing sexual fantasy for couples, provide information about sexual acts. (Boyle, 2005:37)

According to Caputi, (2003), “many defenders of pornography argue that porn, which is sexually explicit and often a turnon, is therefore automatically liberating and ‘sex positive.’” (2003:435)

During the anti-pornography movement that commenced during a conference at Barnard College in 1982, anti-antipornography advocates raised an issue that antipornography criticism did not take into account the potential uses of sexually explicit materials, and also it did not give value for women who enjoy pornography. (Staiger, 2005:182-183)

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

## **4.1 The Research Design**

This research uses a qualitative method of data analysis. The study focuses on digital media made pornography consumption (i.e. porn via the computer, Internet, CD-ROM, (DVD/VCD), videos and satellite TV channels) among the youth in Addis Ababa.

The research tools used are the most widely used methods of qualitative data collecting methods in reception studies such as: close private conversation/Interview; i.e. in-depth individual interview and observation. The most commonly used method in qualitative research is interviewing. (2004:62)

Qualitative research method is selected to do this research because it enables the researcher to use different techniques to grasp the social phenomenon as well as to see into the phenomenon of media consumption from the viewpoint of the researched group of people. Accordingly, for the purpose of gaining detailed narratives into the influences of exposure to pornographic messages, I have conducted in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussion/interview with young people in some selected areas of the city of Addis Ababa.

Thus, this study focuses on electronic (filmed) pornography, (that are visually accessible via CD-ROM, DVD/VCD, video, satellite television channels and computer-internet/email).

## **4.2 Informants**

During the course of recruiting informants, qualitative snowball sampling is used, because there is seemingly limited resource for the study. Accordingly, initial contacts suggested further people to be approached for interview or discussion and in turn may provide further.

During the focus group discussion and interviews, participants were asked to discuss on topics related to the influences of pornography consumption. For example; how, why, and where they consume sexually explicit material, its influence in their life, how they interpret pornography, how they react to it or if they practice it, and the positive and negative influences of pornography consumption are the major themes of the discussion.

### **4.3 Sample Selection and Size**

Since the subject area of this research evolves human sexuality, [an issue that is taboo to discuss publicly,] it has been difficult part of the research to find willing respondents. In order to find relevant respondents, I had to choose ‘snowball’ sampling. Snowball sampling depends on initial contacts suggesting further people to be contacted by the researcher. Therefore, snowball sampling helped me to select the participants for the group discussion and in-depth individual interviews. All the young people who participated in the study fall under the age of 15-29, and recruited based on their relevant relationship with the study subject as well as their availability and willingness. Thus, 19 people participated in the focus group discussions and 15 people participated in an in-depth individual interview, i.e. a total of 34 people took part in this study.

Some of the young respondents represent the working class, (educated and employed) while others represent students, unemployed and marginalized youth like ‘*duriyees*’ (dangerous and wandering youth). All the respondents are from Piazza, 6 Kilo and Megenagna area in Addis Ababa City Administration. I have got the access to several of these respondents through ‘snowball sampling’ while I personally knew few of them about their practice of consuming pornographic movies.

### **4.4 Physical Location of the Study**

The study was conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at three selected areas, namely, Piazza, 6 Kilo and Megenagna. These locations were intentionally selected because of the availability of wide range of young students, internet cafés, video houses as well as concentration of variety of people in the area as well.

### **4.5 Data Collecting Tools**

I have used snowball sampling, (semi-structured) in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussion/interviews in the process of collecting data for this study between April-May 2007. Accordingly, as per the adopted research methods, the study went through two main stages of

data collection method, namely, focus group discussion/interview and individual in-depth interviews. Observation is also another method used to collect data for the study.

#### **4.6 Focus Group Discussion**

My focus groups comprise both homogeneous groups and heterogeneous groups. The homogenous group members do have similar background (including age, sex, education and economic status) while the heterogeneous group members are of different backgrounds and characteristics. Therefore, it can be argued that this technique has made the atmosphere of the discussion free and understandable. It also made easy the role of moderator to facilitate the discussion using language and vocabulary which are commonly understood by the group members.

In order to make focus group discussion more useful, it requires active input and structuring from the side of the moderator. Accordingly, I prepared an outline of my interview guide that helped me run the discussion in line with the purpose of the study. Before each and every focus group discussion 15-30 minutes long presentation of pornographic movie was made to the informants, including the briefings about the purpose of the study, the anonymity of their identity [that has built their confidence to discuss well] and the introductions were undertaken.

The three focus groups discussions were administered for this study between April 05-May 20, 2007. The first focus group discussion comprised 6 persons who view pornography, the second group 8 members who do not view pornography and the third group with 5 members who view pornography. Therefore, a total of 19 discussants were included in the focus group discussions. Out of the 19 individuals who were part of the focus group discussions, 14 of them were men while 5 of them were women. All the participants/informants are young people between 15-29 years of age.

Each of the three groups took one hour and forty five minutes to two hours long discussions. Therefore, the entire group discussion is nearly a six hours long. The focus group discussion included young boys, girls, high school students, university students, employed and unemployed

youth, graduates, and young persons who are from relatively poor and also wealthy family background.

#### **4.7 In-depth Individual Interview**

An in-depth individual interview was conducted with a total of 15 persons. Among the 15 respondents, 4 of them were women while the 11 were men. These individuals includes: pornography viewing youth, non-pornography viewing youth, internet café owners and clients, mobile electronic media sellers on the street of Addis Ababa as well as pertaining experts and officials from Ethiopian Television, MultiChoice Ethiopia and Ministry of Information.

Accordingly, there were 2 women who do not view pornography, 1 person who do not view pornography, 1 girl who view pornography and 3 men who view pornography. The rest of the respondents are relevant individuals, experts and officials from different organizations; who are not necessarily young people [15-29 years of age].

An in-depth individual interview was conducted concurrently with the focus group discussion, between April 05-May 20, 2007. The venues for the in-depth individual interviews were café's and restaurants that were convenient for the informants, in addition to my office and the premises of Addis Ababa University main campus. During the course of commencing the in-depth individual interview, the researcher introduced the purpose of the study and the anonymity of the informant, for the purpose of building confidence for thorough discussions. I also asked for their permission to record the interview on my audio tape recorder, before commencing the interview.

#### **4.8 Interview/Discussion Setting**

I have tired all my best to find the most neutral places to conduct the interviews and focus groups. Accordingly, an in-depth individual interviews were mostly conducted in different café's and restaurants in the city, at the researcher's office and on the premises of Addis Ababa University, main campus.

## **4.9 Data Recording**

Data recording involves some moral issues. Therefore, before conducting each interviews and discussions, I asked my interviewees and focus group participant's permission to record their responses on audio cassette tape.

Since the verbal messages are the principal data produced by focus groups and during in-depth individual interviews, the verbal responses, statements, opinions, arguments and interactions of the participants are recorded by the researcher, with each participant's proper introduction of him/herself for voice-identification during transcription. Accordingly, all the focus group discussions and individual interviews are recorded on audio cassette tape and kept confidentially and anonymously. At the same time, written short notes are taken during the discussion by the moderator. In the reports, the full account of the participants as well as the nature and format of the group discussion are well taken care of.

## **4.10 Data Processing and Analysis**

The textual data that are produced during the group discussion and in-depth individual interview are of a large amount. Some of the tasks to analyze this data is to examine, label and categorize the responses generated; that is the statements, arguments recorded in the interview transcripts.

In an attempt to maintaining the sense of meaning that would emerge during the data collection process, after the encounter with my respondents, all the interviews and discussions were transcribed into English and thematically arranged. It is the task to interpret the meaning of these data and present their most important features in critical and coherent form.

Therefore, the data was written in narrative form with pertinent quotations used by respondents to illustrate major findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Presentation and Analysis of Results**



When I asked my respondents about why they watch pornographic movies at informal video houses during an in-depth interview and focus groups, eleven (11) of them have responded that it is due to the lack of alternative opportunities and affordable means of entertainment as well, in addition to the absolute freedom they experience in such kind of places.

All of the respondents share the concern that young Ethiopians are living in the same 'boat', the same global village, with the other countries in the world due to globalization. Therefore, the growth in information and communication technologies contributes for the dissemination of the Western media and cultural products into our country, including pornographic media. I have observed during the course of the study that the circulation of pornographic messages is not controllable. Pornographic media products are still on the 'underground' market, but it is not publicly visible.

My pornography viewing and non-viewing informants fear is that those pornographic movies that come to Ethiopia via smuggling or through the internet/email are very dangerous for the well-being of the youth. It further introduces homosexuality: gay marriage and lesbianism. From the abovementioned testimonies, therefore, it can be argued that most of the informants believe that pornography contradicts with the moral, cultural, ethical, and religious values of Ethiopia, besides putting the physical health of the youth at risk. However, this belief did not restrict some of them to practice sexual acts learned from pornography.

Generally, there are two different pornography viewing settings observed in this study. The first setting for unemployed and relatively poor school dropout young viewers is found to be informal video houses in shanty areas of the city, while for the second group, [employed, educated and relatively well-to-dos] access pornography via email, internet, renting porno VCD/DVD, and videos to be consumed at home or office.

I have found that several young Ethiopians (comprising who are employed, educated, men and women, married and unmarried) to have received and/or send pornographic E-mail messages and porn cartoons, from and with friends and/or to friends either here at Addis Ababa or the USA and

Europe. For most of them exchanging such kind of emails and forwarding it to friends is like a hobby and fun.

My informants have shared with me their personal experiences as well as what they know about the subject matter. Responses during the course of focus group discussion as well as in-depth individual interview can be categorized into some 8 themes. Therefore, here underneath I will discuss the significant issues thematically.

Therefore, I have divided the discussion of results in to three major parts: discussion of pornography viewing unemployed youth, discussion of pornography viewing employed [educated] youth as well as discussion of non-pornography viewing youth. This helped me to contrast the nature and process of pornography viewing trends between these groups of young people. Under each of the three major classifications there are about eight thematic issues to be identified and discussed. Therefore, here underneath, results shall be presented in comparison with the theoretical framework of the study.

### **5.1.1 Pornography Viewing by Unemployed Youth**

#### **5.1.1.1 New Sexual Practices**

I have asked 11 of my respondents in this category to explain for me their experience as to how viewing pornography might have influenced them, their immediate as well as prolonged response to the viewed pornography, and particularly if they literally practice what they have seen in the pornography, among other important questions.

According to Informant 2, 5 and 7, pornographic messages helped them to have the knowledge of new and ‘unusual’ sexual practices. They have described these ‘new’ sexual practices as ‘the whites’ or ‘Western’ things. With this regard, informant 2 said;

There are a lot of new things I saw in pornography. I have come to know about anal and oral sex. Culturally, it is not common and acceptable thing. Once I have also seen sex between the same sexes. I do not like when I see sexual activity between similar

sexes. This is not totally inline with Ethiopian culture. It is unacceptable thing. It is ugly. I can not tolerate such kind of movies. I remember once when I left the video house because I was not comfortable with it. But I do not have a problem to see prolonged sexual intercourses between men and women. But it is a new thing to see when the ‘whites’ do sex orally and anally. (Informant 2, Male, Age 24)

From the abovementioned responses, it can be argued that informant 2 has a limit or a boundary to tolerate ‘new’ things he saw in the pornography. He interpreted what he saw in line with his context and lived culture, rather than mimicking it literally. He culturally evaluated what he saw and discarded, for example, the same sex intercourse, but tolerated the different styles of sexual intercourse. Therefore, he is able to filter Western media: accept some parts and reject others, in line with the traditional value he is surrounded with. He is to some extent in ‘control’ of pornographic media.

However, informant 4 and 11 emphasised the educative aspect of pornography; with regards to positions and styles of sexual activity. Informant four said “there is no one who can exactly tell you what you need to do to bring pleasure to your girl or yourself. Our forefathers did it in trial and error. They did not care about how their wives felt about their sexual activity: if they reached at orgasm or not. But in the pornography you can see how sex can be artistically and technically be wonderful experience for both partners.” (Informant 4, Male, Age 19)

Pornography viewing youth compare and contrast ‘Ethiopian sexual values and tradition’ with that of the Western. They are able to criticise the Western culture if they believe it has some kind of problems. They also condemn Ethiopian tradition, particularly, about the fact that sexuality is not openly discussed amid parents and children. Thus, pornography is like a ‘window’ for them through which they evaluate both Ethiopian and Western traditions with regard to sexuality. They believed that some of the good experiences from the West should be adopted by the younger generation while they also believed to stick to the good ones we possess already. For example; informant 4 further said that on some pornographic movies he saw Western people make sex enjoyable for both partners. However, respondent 5 on his part thought that in Ethiopian context only the man is expected to enjoy sexual pleasure while the women are there to satisfy the interest of men. Respondent 5 said;

For me pornography on one hand promotes men supremacy over women. I watch while women struggle to satisfy the needs of men. Sometimes men bite their partners. But the women have no choice rather than becoming obedient for the enquiries of men. I do not think this is a true or mutual love. (Informant 5, Male, Age 29)

Respondent 5 told me that it is not because he liked pornography that he views. However, it is a means of “*killing time*” [spending time]. He said, “for example, in the coming summer, where could I spend the whole two months? I can not afford going to theatres and cinemas, I can not always read, and I can not sleep the whole day. So what am I supposed to do? Therefore, going to the nearest video house is a good choice for me: it is affordable and also enjoyable thing.” Couple of other informants hold similar views regarding the lack of alternative recreational places to visit, mostly in the summer season.

#### **5.1.1.2 Spend Time**

As it has been briefly discussed above, some of my respondents also share the same concern similar with what informant 5 holds. It seems that watching pornography is not the best alternative for informant 1, young man who is 24 years old. Like that of informant 1, some others also end up becoming regular clients of video houses that show pornographic movies underground. [They do not show it publicly because if they are known for doing so, they will be sued by the police.] Informant 1 said,

I do not have a job to do. My parents are poor. They could not afford sending me to private colleges. So I have to wander here and there. If I get money sometimes I buy ‘*chat*’ and chew it at friend’s house with groups of young friends. Or sometimes I go to video houses nearby my parent’s home. The first time I went to this kind of video house was with my neighbour and friend of mine. Mostly they show action movies. But they also screen porno movies. They mostly charge 0.50 cents for it. Since I do not have a recreational place to go [that I can afford] or do a job, watching movies [including pornographic movies] is sometimes my only alternative for the day. Pornographic movies are screened here in secret because of its illegality. The owners do not want to expose that they are showing pornography here. But when we ask them they show us what we want to watch. (Informant 1, Female, Age 24)

Therefore, from the responses of informant 1, it can be argued that young people are attracted to the Western media products due to the lack of adequate income, lack of recreational centres, and alternative local media products: that are affordable, decent and also attractive to the youth.

Informant 1 emphasised the fact that video houses that show pornographic movies underground are spreading because there are no ample recreational choices for young people. Especially, uneducated, unemployed and relatively poor youngsters chose to come here because “this is considered to be ‘our world’. Since I am not educated I do not have the access to the internet. That is not the source of pornography for me. However, what I do is visiting informal video shops, small and crowded rooms near where I live.” (Informant 1, female, Age 24)

Informant 9, 19 years old [high] school dropout young man, on the other hand, told me that he visits video houses around his vicinity at least once in a week. He visits the video houses to see both the ‘bad’ and ‘good’ movies: ‘romance’ [meant pornography], action and all sorts of other Western and Indian movies. “There are times when I visit the video house only because did not have another place to go or something to do. I hang around the video house all day long since I did not have a job. I think that I will stop coming to the video house to watch pornographic or other movies if I will find a job to do.” (Informant 9, male, age 21)

From this informant, I have come to realize that when most of young people in the same socioeconomic and educational status say ‘romance’ they are referring to pornography; due to unexplainable reasons. Indeed, ‘video houses’ are the cheapest means of entertainment for the poor and unemployed young people [including the street children] because it only requires 0.50 cents. But there is no other attracting, affordable as well as healthy centre for such kinds of young people in Addis Ababa: the reason for flooding to informal video houses in shanty areas of the city.

### **5.1.1.3 Arousal**

At the moment of viewing pornography, I observe erection mostly.  
I some times have the urge to do sex after consuming pornography.  
(Informant 10, male, Age 24)

My informants who are categorised as ‘unemployed youth viewing pornography’ also mentioned the fact that they make use of some of the sexual acts they see in pornographic movies: but not all. None of them told me of trying oral and/or anal sex. They did not try it because it is not comfortable and it is not traditionally acceptable as well. However, most of my informants agreed that pornographic movies have an arousing effect on young people. For example, informant 10 is one of those who hold this view. Therefore, he said that;

Girls or women who act on pornographic movies I saw mostly were very sexy and attractive. Their breasts are big, their buttock is big, and their nipple and lips are attractive. Their body is sexy. I want to have such kind of girl friend. I want to marry a sexy girl that can satisfy my sexual needs and interests. (Informant 10, male, 24 years)

An immediate or short term influence of viewing pornography according to informant 10 is the erection on young viewers like him. I described this as an ‘immediate’ and ‘short term’ effect because the erection ends at the end of viewing pornography. However, the urge to do sexual intercourse remains in the thoughts of the viewer. That interest derived the person to find means to satisfy his/her sexual needs. In addition, informant 3 also share the same view with that of informant 10 regarding the issue of the arousing effect of pornography and the tendency to try practicing some of the sexual acts viewed on pornography.

#### **5.1.1.4 Educative Channel: ‘Breaking the Silence’**

What do young viewers learn from pornography? When my informants say ‘learning’ in the context of viewing pornography, they are referring to an educative aspect of pornography with regard to sexual acts, positions, and bringing pleasure to once sexual partner only. For example, respondent 7 said,

It is frightening and difficult to do sex for the first time. But if you see pornographic movies, one can learn a lot. I know some young people who immediately go out and try to practice it. (Informant 7, male, age 20)

From the above testimony it can be argued that it is possible for some people like [respondent 7] not to be directly influenced by pornography consumption while others experience it in their daily life activities. Pornographic messages are used as a mirror for some viewers where they could test their sexual behaviour. Therefore, there might be a possibility that the behaviour of the actors in the pornographic movies to be reflected in sexual life of the viewers: both positively and negatively.

As per the testimony of the informants, pornographic movies in Ethiopian context: [where sex is not liberated, sexuality issue is taboo, and where there is no formal sexuality education is provided at elementary schools] watching pornographic media helps the younger generation to find answers for their questions and curiosities. It also helps them “to break the silence” about sexuality at least in their own minds and amid their peer groups. With this regard, informant 8 said;

I have learned different kinds of sexual acts. I used to know and think only few techniques to do sex, like the “*ye abatoch ye enatoch*” style [literally means ‘mother and father style’ which is commonly said to be ‘*missionary position or style*’] that means the woman sleeping on her back while the man faces her from up. I learned from the porno that it is good to change different styles and have fun with sex. Who will show me or tell me or educate me about all those kinds of sexual acts if I did not see those pornographic movies? That is impossible, but only possible if you consume pornography. (Informant 8, male, age 21)

#### **5.1.1.5 Hated Women**

I have also asked my informants about their feelings the next day they see pornography, and also how it influences their daily life activities and their interaction with people; especially of opposite sexes. Informant 9 said “the only reason why I do not like consuming pornography is because I hate to see women the next day I watch it. Women appear for me as an animals or things, but not humans. Sometimes, very fat and ugly women appear on the porn. It makes me dislike women.” (Informant 9, male, age 21) In addition, informant 6 who holds this view said;

After exposure to pornography, I hate women because they sleep with everyone. They do not sleep with their own man. In pornographic movies it is difficult to distinguish which one belongs

to whom. She is willing to sleep with everybody. I hate such kinds of women who live for money, but not for love. (Informant 9, male, age 21)

According to informant 9, the first time he saw porno was very shocking for him because of the unusual things he viewed. He mentioned that some women and very young girls do sex with more than one person. He said, “some times women and men also do sex in groups: it is not similar with what Ethiopian’s traditionally practice. They do sex orally. In fact I have also seen anal sex, as well as the same sex, sex. That is very ugly for me.” (Informant 9, male, age 21)

All of the abovementioned informants hold a view that expressed concern with the impact of pornography on local cultural values and religious norms. He said, most of the things he saw on pornography are traditionally and religiously ugly things. He said,

It is not known in the pornography if the men and women who are acting are married and/or pregnant or not. Everybody does sex with this and that. There is no way to differentiate who is whose or who belongs to whom. It is like dogs, unprotected, one after the other, culturally ugly and shameful. I only watch this to spend my time and sometimes to forget some kinds of my worries; my joblessness and my parent’s poor life. There is nothing I could do more about it. (Informant 9, male, age 21)

In addition, informant 9 mentioned that video houses that show pornographic movies underground are almost ‘men’s world.’ I have also observed during my visit to one of the video houses [*Danni Video at Megegnagna area*] that there were no girls or women who view pornography at the video house. One of the usual clients of *Danni Video* [informant 11] told me that women do not come to such kind of video houses. He thought that it is because they shy to see sexual practices seen together with young men. This embarrasses them. The only women who seldom come to such a video houses are ‘bad girls’ like the bar-ladies and prostitutes. According to the comments of informant 11, bar ladies and prostitutes visit the video house because they want to see how to do different kinds of sex, because they might be required to do the same by their clients. He also said that “In fact I am also not happy about coming here because people consider me as an evil, bad boy and stupid.” (Informant 11, male, age 19)



From the facts and witnesses discussed above it can be argued that young people who visit video houses are viewed by the local community as 'bad people'. It seems that the society perceived young people who visit these video houses in a bad way, imagining the 'bad' Western media products that they would possibly view.

Some of the permanent clients of such kinds of video houses are not happy with their experience as well. Most of them feel guilty about their experiences. One of them, for example, informant 9 who said; "during the night I do have 'bad dreams' on my bed. I found my self sleeping with one of my neighbouring girls or someone I met or thought of during the day. Fighting with my friends over a girl or so. This disturbs me a lot in the morning. In the future I try to stop viewing pornographic movies. I should stop." (Informant 9, male, age 21)

#### **5.1.1.6 A Threat to Health, Society and Culture**

My informants have repeatedly expressed their ideas during both the focus group discussion as well as during in-depth individual interview regarding the potential threats of pornographic media upon local traditions: mainly young people's lifestyle. The potential influence has to do with the fact that young people want to try, experiment, test and experience new things they 'learn' from the media or anywhere. For instance, informant 13 said;

Pornography for me is something more than sex. It also shows male supremacy and women's inferiority. Actually, these days' girls in Addis as well as the lifestyle of the men themselves have become modernized like that of the Western people. The dressing style of our girls is changed. They are almost walking necked. This is extremely tempting for young men like me, not much less than that of watching porno. The hair making style is changed. Boys and girls can now kiss each other in the taxi, on the bus, on the road side and so on. It was not like this few years back. Young girls started to express their sexual needs and interests. It seems that they are also rushing to sex in younger ages. I know many of very young girls who do sex at the age of 11-14. I do not know if they know the risks attached to it. Of course it is the men who urge the young girls to these kinds of staff. However, once the girls start practicing sex, the sexual urge will even be increased, I think. So I think there are so many things related to pornography. (Informant 9, male, age 21)

The abovementioned testimony indicates how the old cultural norms in Ethiopia are slowly being replaced by the ‘modern’ traditions ‘imported’ via global media from the West. This is a general expression of how young people are attracted by the Western Media cultural products and how they are imitating it. As it has been discussed in the second chapter, Ethiopia has been a locked country in a sense that Western media products, especially of American, was forbidden to enter to the country. Now, the airwaves are relatively ‘open’ to Western media via satellite channels and the Internet. However, some young people still want to stick to the ‘old’ and ‘good’ traditions of the nation. Informant 11 said;

I think Ethiopian culture is good regarding sex. [Except the silence about it.] I support that women should be faithful to their husbands, and only opposite sexes should marry each other. But women should not do sex with many people like that of the Western women I saw on the pornography. I suggest that young girls should remain virgin until they marry to their permanent husbands. These days, it is risky to do sex with many people. Girls are victim in this regard. They may get pregnant, infected with HIV and other STIs. They need to be cautious about this. It is better to value virginity, sticking to the old tradition of our society. (Informant 11, male, age 19)

As it has been discussed in the Literature Review, the media imperialism thesis confer that cultural imperialism is occurring in the developing countries due to the domination of Western [especially American] cultural media products. Accordingly, from the abovementioned discussions it can be argued that the old local traditions in Ethiopia are on the process of deterioration because: the country started to open its door to Western cultural media products compared to the ‘*Derg*’ *Regime*; and foreign people including tourists, short term visitors, resident workers, investors etc are flooding the country; in addition, Ethiopians started to explore the world more than ever for business reasons, education, and the like and they bring-in foreign media and cultural products into the country [including pornographic movies]. These factors all together contribute to the erosion of the ‘old’ Ethiopian traditions, according to my respondents.

#### **5.1.1.7 Forgetting Pain**

Most of the people who visit video houses for the purpose of viewing pornographic movies are economically and academically weak. Literally, they are unemployed, not well dressed, school

dropout, addicted to cigarette, 'chat' or local alcohol etc. Their families were unable to send them to colleges. They live in some kind of hopelessness condition. Therefore, they are surrounded with a lot of pains they need to forget. Similarly, Thompson, (1995) cited in Strelitz, (2001) notes that "the appropriation of symbolic materials enables individuals 'to take some distance from the conditions of their day-to-day lives- not literally but symbolically, imaginatively, vicariously.'" (2001:52) Accordingly, some of young Ethiopians whom I discussed with told me that viewing pornographic movies help them to escape from their personal ills, worries, underachievement and fears. Among my informants, one of them who suffer amid such kind of situation, for example, is informant 6, who said;

Another reason for coming to this video house is to get rid of my boredom. My coming refreshes my thoughts, at least for a while. Pornographic movies are easy to understand. You do not need a translator. You know what is going to happen from the actions of the actors. Some pornographic shows actually do not have speeches. They only do have instrumental backgrounds. But when you see other movie categories like action movies, you need to know the language or one should translate the conversations for you if you want to grasp every other play and the progress of the story. Anyway, I visit video houses to escape from my tensions and enjoy watching Western movies to satisfy our interests. It is a place of hiding from my problems. ...In these kinds of video houses *all the rights of the movie viewers are fully respected*. We can do whatever we want to do. We can bring in anything, even drugs. There are *no restrictions* to drink alcohol, chew 'chat' or smoke cigarette; as far as we pay 0.50 cents. We see pornographic movies as well as action movies, Indian, American and European. Pornography is not restricted. I suppose this may eradicate our national culture amidst young people. What surprises me about pornography is about the fact that women are not infected with HIV as they do 'unprotected' sex [sex with out condom] with groups of men. They are not pregnant either. Why one of the two did not happen to them? Anyway, I know the environment is not good for our health. But I and my friends have to be here because we do not have any other alternatives that help us forget our fears, anxieties, pains and underachievement. (Informant 6, male, age 21)

Therefore, from the above discussion we can understand that the informal video houses that show pornographic movies are mostly found in shanty and 'dirty' areas of the city, where there are a number of unemployed, poor urban youth are found. These places are also where local drug, chat, is frequently on sale. It has been repeatedly mentioned by my informants that the problem

of the youth who visit the illegal/informal video houses is due to the lack of alternative opportunities. Their primary goal is not watching pornographic movies but hiding from their real life. If there were other opportunities at hand, watching pornographic movies would have been of a minor priority.

#### 5.1.1.8 New and 'Modern' Thing

Some of my informants hold the same idea with that of informant 11 who said “I do not think pornography or any kind of Western media products can be stopped any longer. We are living in a different era where the world is becoming ‘one village’, due to globalization and technology.” (Informant 11, male, age 19) Here I have come to observe that the term ‘globalization’ is amazingly becoming a familiar phrase in Ethiopia even by the less educated part of the society like the unemployed young people who view pornography in the context of this study.

Informant 11 said;

We young people as you know are curious about new things. Personally I want to know news things. I want to test and experience how something looks like or feels. It is my age. I do not think I feel the same way when I reach at the age of 40 or 50. [*With some laughter*] Thus, in pornography you see some new sexual acts that might be suitable for young people. (Informant 11, male, age 19)

Generally, from my interviews with my informants, I have come to learn that those young people who frequently visit the video houses to watch porno also share the dominant cultural view of the society regarding sexuality, because they say “*there are bad things in pornographic movies.*” This tells that even if they consume pornography, they are not totally comfortable about it.

Therefore, from the aforementioned issues, it is possible to summarize three themes regarding unemployed, poor young people’s experience of exposure to pornographic messages as: Americanization/Westernization of Ethiopian youth culture, erosion of the old and good local cultures, and global media messages as a means of ‘symbolic distancing’. It is therefore, possible to demonstrate the powers of cultural imperialism, that is, the absorption and indigenisation of

foreign cultural products; also with some level of filtering and resistances inline of the local traditional values.

In addition, the data presented above shows clearly as to how movie consumption practices are shaped by the cultural and socioeconomic contexts of a consumer as advanced by the ethnographic critique of the media imperialism thesis. (Assefa, 2005:61)

Depending on the arguments made by Fiske, (1989) cited by Assefa, (2005) it is also possible to argue that when young Ethiopians watch pornographic movies, there is a tendency that they “lose” their “socially constructed identities” (2005:69).

With regard to the polluting nature of pornographic movies, for example, informant 17 said “Pornographic movies deteriorate the cultural values and norms we have. Our culture is a source of pride for us. It is on the process of deterioration by the Western media messages. We should be cautious about what we consume and how we act about it.” (Informant 11, male, age 19)

### **5.1.2 Pornography Viewing Employed/Educated Youth**

Informant 15, a young girl who is 24 years old, [*will be turning to 25 in a month*] who was born and brought up in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, gave me one of the richest data I was looking for. My discussion with her was unique in many ways, namely, because we are so close and she was not shying to discuss the issues of sexuality with me. Secondly, she has a long term experience with exposure to pornographic messages via email, internet as well as videos and VCD/DVDs. My in-depth individual interview with her took two hours. Her response, as literally transcribed by the researcher, is as follows;

I have been watching pure pornography since I was on campus at Haromaya University. My friends [girls] had VCD player in our dormitory. When we feel fed up of studying and learning we chose to watch pornographic movies in a group. We like to watch it together. When we see it in a group, we just see the acts in the porn and shout as it surprises us. It was for fun. We do this mostly in the night. We were all girls; there was no boy with us. This was since 1994 EC, during my second year of my undergraduate study.

I do not watch pornographic movies at home because I do not have a private room and VCD player or TV set in my bedroom. I can not do it in the living room because all the family members use the salon. They may not be comfortable to watch it. They may not be happy if they also know I am watching porn.

I also receive pornographic messages via email. I do have friends who send me pornographic messages and cartoons through email. Such kinds of messages are mostly necked photographs, pictures and illustrations. I also forward to friends. I mostly shout and laugh about it and show it to friends around me. In addition, there are websites like '*babyboom*' that are sources of pornographic messages.

There is no good thing about pornography. It is an 'ugly' thing. Some parts are really shocking. There are things which we can not imagine or think in the porn. We feel ashamed after watching. We feel humiliated about what we see in the porn. It was especially shocking for the first few days I watched porn. However, I became acquainted to it later. It starts to become normal thing after a while.

It is true that some times I saw three men having sex with a single woman or two women with a man and the like. As I told you, there are so many ugly things about it. I agree that these things surly promote sexual immorality: multiple sexual partners, unprotected sex and even the 'same sex marriage.' This *does not fit with our culture*. But I know that group sex is spreading in Addis Ababa. This type of sex is commonly called '*sandwich*' [group sex between two or more men with one woman]. May be this has been caused by pornography, or probably from foreign people. As you know foreigners are flooding the city. They come up with their own culture and experience regarding sex. When they sleep with the prostitutes, they do everything they like because they pay to sleep with them.

Some of us in the group did not start sex by the time we were watching pornography, while others have already started it. Those who have got boy friends go and practice what they see in the porn. As I told you earlier there is no fear to talk about sex amid the group. There is nothing like a 'taboo' among us. Therefore, anyone who has unique experience will share that with the group, saying 'I have tried that and tried this; this is cool that is not'. When you share this with the group, those who did not start sex start to wonder. I remember that some of them even started to be frustrated about that: questioning if something is wrong with them for not starting sex. Since we talk about sex and our practices in relation to

pornography, some of the girls in the group were really in a pain about their sexual life.

Some of the girls disclose how they did it. We were free to this extent. What I want to say is, pornography helped us to practice sex: the different styles, methods and techniques of making sex pleasurable.

I do not agree with the idea that women are used by men in the pornography. However, it is in Ethiopian culture that women are even used during sexual intercourse. Women's satisfaction is not a big deal in Ethiopian culture. It is mostly the man who is expected to enjoy sex. Men's pleasure is respected in Ethiopian culture, but not women's. Men's benefits are well respected. This is not there in pornography. But I see that men do lots of things to find pleasure for the women in the porn. Both do not hide their feelings and interests. They act as what they feel. I can also see from the porn that sex has a big place in the Western culture. They 'do' anything possible to get pleasure through having sex.

The good thing about pornography is that it enables me and my friends to freely discuss about sex. We are not afraid of talking about sex in our dormitories. For example; if one of the girls asks 'I have faced this and that kind of problem when I had sex, what should I do about that?', the rest of us try to address our friends question. We thoroughly discuss about her problem and give her pieces of advises. Therefore, we were enabled to break a 'mountain size' taboo, the silence about sex. This has helped us a lot. It helped us to learn from each other.

Actually some people also use pornography at their home for arousal: including both the youth and the 'sugar daddy's'.

In fact, [*a moment of pause...and laughter here*] I have practiced some of the acts I have seen in the porn. I did it with my boyfriend. The reason for watching porn is to learn and practice it. [*laughter followed by...a moment of pause*]

However, I do not recommend for 15-24 years or younger than this] to watch pornographic messages because it extremely pushes them to start sex at early stage. Especially, for boys, it is not good because it urges them to do sex. This may bring health problems. If the boys rush in to sex with out protection, there is a tendency to be infected by HIV. However, I do not see a problem if husbands and wives or girlfriends and boyfriends watch pornography together.

I would say the Western media and cultural products are influencing our culture. For example, expressing love and sexual feelings publicly is used to be uncommon in Ethiopian culture. However, nowadays, young people actually started showing and expressing their love and sexual feelings everywhere: in the taxi, at the bus stop, airport, parties and public gatherings through kissing [on lips] and fornications.

For me pornography influences local culture, for example, in making young people [like my classmates in the dormitory] to freely discuss sex. It helps the youth to break the silence: taboo regarding human sexuality. Even married Ethiopian couples do not freely discuss about their sexual life. But if they watch pornography together, they may break the silence about sexuality and start to say 'I want this one, I do not want that positioning' etc. This will enable them enjoy their sexual relationship.

Negatively speaking, as I have been mentioning to you, pornography may bring unusual, uncommon things to the country: like homosexuality [lesbian and gay] as well as group sex etc. Therefore, sex might be perceived as such an easy and simple thing in the eyes of young people.

For those young people in their '*fire age*' pornography might have a direct influence because it urges them to practice sex with out planning. I know something: It is amazing that adults [married men] also extremely consume pornography. They have got computer sets and internet connections and VCD/DVD players as well. So they watch pornographic movies and browse webs as well. They want to practice what they see in the porn but since it is unusual thing they do not want to do it with their wives. But they want to practice it with prostitutes, school girls and bar ladies, because their wives can not do something like that. You can imagine the disaster here: the breaking of marriage, families, as well as possibility to be infected by HIV/AIDS as well. For example, I personally know someone with similar problem. He was my previous boss. He used to watch such kinds of movies and websites. He used to terrify young girls and women around him. He did something that is not expected from an adult like him.

Pornography should not be banned in Ethiopia. People have got the right to see what interests them. People's rights and interests must be respected. In addition, when you forbid young people from something, you even push them to try to see or do the thing that is forbidden. It will make them curious about the thing. They start to ask 'why' they were restricted to do it. Therefore, those who want to see it should have the right to see it and those who do not want to see should also be free from exposure to pornography.



Nowadays, you can rent pornographic movies from some video and music shops or electronic shops. It is also available on the street of Addis. You can buy from those who sale electronic music and videos on the street. (Informant 15, female, age 24)

From the abovementioned testimony of informant 15, in concurrence with other's response, it is possible to discuss the influences of exposure to pornographic messages among the youth; in eight different themes.

#### **5.1.2.1 Fun: Relaxation**

I have come to realize that 'one' of the reasons for some of the educated and employed young people for viewing pornographic web sites is just for fun: due to an easy access to the internet or VCD/DVD players. For example, informants 14 and 16 have access for pornographic websites in their office and they also exchange pornographic pictures via email with many of their friends here in Addis Ababa and abroad. Here, I have also noticed that some of the sources of pornographic messages are email messages and cartoons sent from friends of Ethiopians residing abroad; who also request receivers to forward the message to others.

#### **5.1.2.2 Seeing Followed by Real Sexual Practice**

From the testimony of informant 15, it can be possible to argue that some of young girls are bold enough to go out with their boy friends just for the sake of practicing what they have seen in the pornography. Informant 15 herself said that "I have practiced some of the acts I have seen in the porn. I did it with my boyfriend. The reason for watching porn is it to learn and practice it. [*Laughter for a while...and pause.*]" (Informant 15, female, age 24) She also told me that many of her friends among the group also did that same, except few who were frustrated for not starting sex like that of the rest of the group. An unanswered question here is how far they 'protect' themselves when they practice what they see in the pornography. Indeed, I have noticed that

there is a high possibility for young girls to start sexual practices at higher educational institutions, as a result of peer pressure, among other potential influences.

Therefore, it can be argued that pornography can influence the youth in both negative and/or positive ways. Most likely, it influences them to start sex earlier, practice sex with multiple partners, practice sex before marriage or outside of marriage etc.

### **5.1.2.3 Unplanned, Early Sexual Practice**

Informant 15 and her group, as it has been discussed above view pornographic movies in their dormitories. The group comprises 5-7 young girls, also students of University. The viewing started for fun, to get rid of their tensions and boredom during examination weeks on the premises of the University. However, it grew to the mimicking and practice of sexual acts viewed. Then it also grew to the level it influenced some of the young girls amid the group who were abstained from sexual intercourses before joining the University. This happened because some of the girls started to share their personal experiences with regard to the real sexual act and position practices with their boyfriends. When they repeatedly start to share “today I did this and tomorrow I will practice this one”, the rest of the girls who had no boyfriend or had not begin sex started to worry [in a wrong way] about their sexual health. They started to be frustrated about it. Then started to think about having a boyfriend to test the pleasure their friends experienced. These misconceptions resulted an early sexual practice of some of the friends of informant 15.

### **5.1.2.4 New Sexual Practices against Local Tradition**

In addition to the testimony of informant 15 discussed above, informant 12, a 23 years old young man also shared with me his own experiences with regard to viewing pornographic movies as follows;

I used to watch movies since my childhood. When I was a child my favourite type was cartoon. Now I am 23 years old young man. My selection has changed. I watch all including erotic and pornographic movies. In pornographic movies the sexual intercourse is visible. The man and woman are totally necked. But

in erotic movies, sex organs and the sexual acts are not totally exposed to be seen. When I want to see it, I can rent it from video shops. However, I do not like pornographic movies because it irritates me. It has got different kinds of sexual acts; anal, oral and homosexuality as well. The next day I saw these kind of porn, I do not like to see women.

What I can tell you is that many video houses are being opened in the city. You can find Video houses in an expected place. This shows that there is a market for such kind of business. Young people are consuming lots of Western media and cultural products that are made available via these video shops. What would the next generation be? I can see that our moral and ethical value system is endangered in this city. Every thing seems to be mixed up. This is the result of the engulfing of Western media and cultural products [including pornography] in the city, mostly consumed by young people. I support that we should keep the good and benefiting cultures from anywhere in the world. I know that culture also 'develops', 'improves' and 'changes' over time. However, we should not be imitating the 'bad' cultures of the West like the anal, oral sex and homosexuality etc. Therefore, I recommend that the government, video shops, the youth and any other pertaining bodies should work together to control the dissemination of culturally and morally wrong foreign media commodities in the country. (Informant 12, male, age 23)

#### **5.1.2.5 Freedom: Sexual Liberation**

It has been demonstrated that sexuality is taboo in Ethiopia. However, the group of girls who view pornography with informant 20, as the testimony have been presented, were able to discuss any kind of sexuality issues as a result of prolonged pornography viewing. Others including informant 12 also told me that pornography viewing helped them to discuss sex openly with their girlfriends or boyfriends. From my conversations with my informants, it seems that the culture and views of the younger generation seems to be changing regarding sexuality. They believe that sex is a 'natural law' and should be openly discussed for the wellbeing of the youth and children. Informant 20 said, "we [her friends] were enabled to break a 'mountain size' taboo, the silence about sex. [As a result of continuously viewing pornography in a group.] This has helped us a lot...to learn from each other via open and informal chats."

From the presentation of testimonies discussed so far, it can be argued that pornographic media has a kind of liberating effect on the young girls who view pornography together. The girls have become bold enough to talk about sexuality among themselves. They even started to discuss their private sexual practices with their boyfriends. This is unbelievable in Ethiopian tradition because sexuality is extremely private thing, a taboo. However, the young group of girls who view pornography in their dormitories have become “modern” and sex is “liberated” amid them. This is as the result of continuous viewing of pornography. An appropriate presentation here is about the result of similar study that demonstrated a liberating effect of USA cultural media influences in countries where media system is subjected to authoritarian control. (Boyd-Barrett, 1998:159)

#### **5.1.2.6 ‘Modern Culture’**

If we say a culture is ‘modern’ there should also be an ‘old’ one. With regard to this, one of my respondents who emphasised the potential influence of pornographic messages upon the ‘old’ Ethiopian traditions is informant 20. According to informant 20, the spread of “sandwich sex” can be an indication for this.

Depending on the response of informant 15 mentioned earlier, it is relevant to remind the argument made by Williams, (2003) who pointed that “the end product of cultural imperialism is supposed to be the domination of one culture by another alien culture.” (2003:222) The “product”, Williams discussed comprise the threatening of national identity; local, authentic and traditional cultures of a particular nation that is being flooded by the Western media products. Accordingly, the above-mentioned testimonies quoted from my informants’ show how gradually the younger generation is being attracted by the sexual culture and the ideological imprint of the West in the pornographic movies they view.

“The modern culture” in the eyes of the youth I have discussed with, means, imitation of languages, technologies and lifestyle of the Western people as perceived in the pornographic or other media products. Some of the things they try to practice actually quarrel with the local culture by invasion of local beliefs, lifestyle and traditional identities.

### **5.1.2.7 Sex Education**

My informants were also asked to demonstrate the positive (good) sides and the negative (bad) sides of pornography consumption. One of them who regard it as a positive medium is informant 14, a 27 years old young man, who emphasised the educative aspect of viewing pornography. He said;

It is to be modern to know how to make sex very enjoyable for both partners. Sex should be mutually enjoyed. It should please both the man and the woman. But in order to make it interesting experience you have to learn from somewhere or from someone. For me the best place to learn is watching pornographic movies. As you know, we do not talk about sex in our culture. It is a taboo. Most of all, women are very shying people when an issue of sexuality is raised. Therefore, I found pornographic messages very helpful with regard to grasping sexual acts and positions; that thought me how to gratify my partner. Ethiopian's traditionally know few positions and types of doing sex. Pornography is something modern prepared to those whose minds are willing to practice. (Informant 14, male, age 27)

### **5.1.2.8 Ugly, Shocking and Culturally Uncomfortable Seen**

Even if some of my informants' responses seem to demonstrate that viewing pornography is on one hand educative and also fun, there are also others who believe that some of the ugly and shocking parts in the porn should not be practiced amid our society. Therefore, I have come to understand that young Ethiopians whom I discussed with are capable of selecting what to practice or not from the pornographic seen. Before trying to practice it, they consider if the sexual acts are 'comfortable' inline with the cultural values Ethiopian's possess. Therefore, it can be argued that young Ethiopian's who were interviewed during the course of this study were capable of choosing and constructing their own meanings in line with their own local culture and identities. They are able to ignore and hate some parts of pornographic messages while they also selectively practice the sexual acts seen in the porn. Similarly, Thompson, (1995) cited by Assefa (2005) argue that "active local audiences resist or appropriate global messages attuned to their social context." (2005:22)

Therefore, relevant with these is also the critique of media imperialism thesis demonstrated by Boyd-Barrett (1998) who noted that media imperialism thesis ignored the issue of audience choices; audience consumption of specified cultural products. In addition the ethnographic critique also demonstrates the limited explanation of media imperialism thesis regarding the text/audience encounter with the message of global message. Therefore, there is a need to describe the culture, social system, beliefs, choices and experiences and contextual understanding of events and behaviours of the informants of the study, rather than focusing on the media text only.

Generally, pornography viewing youth compared to non-pornography viewing youth seems to be more open about having multiple sexual partners, practicing unprotected sex and sex before and outside of marriage. Those who view pornographic messages also tend to be friendly to new traditions of the West, including dressing styles and lifestyles. However, the non-pornography viewing youth are more interested in the academics, religion as well as mutual relationships and understandings with their lovers. They also seem to be more faithful to their traditional values. They believe that sexuality can not be liberated via viewing pornography but through separately including the issues of sexuality and reproductive health education in the elementary or secondary school curricula.

### **5.1.3 Non-Pornography Viewing Youth**

The characteristics of the non-pornography viewing youths as per my observation is quite different from that of pornography viewing youths; because, first, most of them are religious conservatives, second, they emphasise the bad side of viewing pornography, third, they bring in the issue of ‘mutual relationship of partners’ to demonstrate true love but not sexual acts and practices.

Accordingly, non-pornography viewing informants suppose that pornography is not good for sexual health because it produces ‘lust or covetousness’ in the minds of viewer in showing as if technical sexual acts are the only means to achieve pleasure in sex. None pornography viewing

respondents also emphasised the fact that porn minimizes the value of the good relationship between couples and magnifies sexual acts and sexual organs. (Informant 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21)

Non-pornography viewing young informants consider pornography viewing youths as hopeless, drug addicted, immoral and unhealthy segment of the society; because they are doing something that contradicts with the culture of the society and endangers their health.

Informants 17, 19 and 21 strongly believe that pornography influences the youth. They share a common idea that any media product, for example, television advertisements are made towards an anticipated result, that is, making peoples buy a product, goods or services. Accordingly, pornography invades young people's emotion and makes them search for similar sexual practices. Thus, in order to meet their sexual urges, they may abuse 'clean' children, young girls and women. For instance, informant 19 said,

You know the world is becoming more and more 'one' and so closer. So what happened in the West reaches Addis Ababa very soon. I think we can not control this kind of phenomenon. But it is good if the government hunts those who bring-in pornographic media products to Ethiopia through smuggling. Those who see porn should also stop if they care for their health. I think those who see pornography are cruel people and inhuman. They should know that pornographic messages encourage young people to rush into sex; probably to unsafe sex. You can imagine what would follow the practice of unsafe sex; HIV/AIDS and STIs. Pornography also promotes culturally unacceptable sexual practices like homosexuality, anal and oral sex. This is a dirty thing for me. (Informant 19, male, age 25)

On the other hand, Informant 18 said, young people are in the age where they want to experiment things. Therefore, when they see pornographic media, they want to experiment and test if the pleasure shown on the porn is real or not. This will then make them rush to sex; probably to unplanned and unprotected sex. Informant 21 also partly shares this concern and said, "I know one young girl on campus who was pushed by her pornography viewing boy friend and started sex with him before graduating." Both of these informants agree that quality national films and theatres should be produced and ample youth recreational centres that are affordable for the majority of the youth should be made available in order to prevent the inclination of the youth towards pornographic products.

Informant 19 also related pornography to religious values. According to this informant pornography promotes multiple sexual partners, homosexuality, starting sex early, sex before marriage [these are sin before God] and other uncommon sexual practices.

However, it is only informant 16 who mentioned the potential uses pornography can provide for married young couples to see how to make sex pleasurable and enjoyable for both male and female. He said, “our parents did not teach us or give us advise about sex. We do not discuss it freely. We do not learn it at school. The only way to learn about sexual acts and techniques is sometimes viewing pornographic movies, especially for those people who have no experience in sexual intercourse. So if pornography is in ‘responsible hands’ it might have an educative role. (Informant 16, male, age 21)

Generally, no one mentioned to me an aggressive behaviour after viewing pornography. Except some who mentioned the feeling of strong emotional need to do sex after they view pornography. On the other hand, the unemployed and relatively poor informants tend to view pornography because they did not have affordable alternative recreational facilities or jobs to do, and sometimes to hide themselves from their ‘pains’.

I have come to observe that those who do not see pornography perceive those who view porn as culturally immoral, sinners, sexually unhealthy, jobless, unsatisfied and hopeless group of people. On the other hand, those who do not view consider themselves as religiously and traditionally ‘faithful’ community.

In addition, I have come understand that non pornography viewing youth seem to be calm, hopeful, religious and contented; compared to those who view pornography; while those who view pornography tend to be not contented and did not accomplished well in some aspects of their life. However, few of my informants who usually view pornography seem to do that only for fun, but they are serious about their life. They do not relate what they see with themselves.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **6.1 Summary**

It has been mentioned in the introductory chapter that this study intended to find out the influences of exposure to pornographic messages among young people in Addis Ababa. It is also noted that the purpose of the study was to examine how young people respond to sexually explicit messages, identifying how the youth perceive and interpret pornography and also find out if there are any particular influential role pornographic messages play on the actual sexual practices of young people in some selected places in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In order to address the abovementioned purposes, this research divided in to six major chapters, has finally reached at some findings. In the first chapter, general background of the study, problem statements, research objectives, and significance of the study, limitations of the study and the scope of the study was discussed briefly. The second chapter dealt with the social context of the study; in which thorough discussion of the historical and contemporary history of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is presented. It is also in this chapter that the term “youth” is defined and developmental characteristics of the youth is demonstrated. Issues related to movie consumption trend in the study area are also discussed in the second chapter. On the other hand, the third chapter presented review of literatures related to the subject of this study; including the theoretical framework of the study as well as discussion and definition of the term “pornography” itself. The methodology of the study is presented in the fourth chapter of the thesis; that contains the thorough discussion of the tools of the qualitative research methodology employed to undertake this particular study. Therefore, most significantly, focus group discussion/interview and in-depth individual interview are discussed in the fourth chapter. In addition to the data collecting instruments, general description of informants, discussion of sample selection and size, and ethical issues that involve in the study are some of the issues presented in the chapter. The fifth chapter presented the discussion of research findings and interpretations, and the final chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

This study has met its aims in a sense that it arrived at thematic findings of the influences of exposure to pornographic messages among the youth in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The thematically identified influences of consumption of pornographic messages as presented in the fifth chapter are: resulting new sexual practices, arousal, hating women, used as a means of spending time, educative channel, threat to culture, used to forgetting pain, introducing new and 'modern' things, results early sexual practice and also liberation of sex. Therefore, it can be summarized as exposure to pornographic messages has both negative and positive influences. For example; one of the positive influences is its educative [educating 'alternative' sexual acts] aspect while the negative influences are rushing to unplanned and unprotected early sexual practices.

The study proved the arguments of Wartella, (2000:114) as real, in a sense that pornography viewing respondents experience premarital sex, arousal and hatred women. One of the significant problems here is that, some of pornography viewing youth practice what they see in the porn with commercial sex workers, some times with out proper protection.

On the other hand, one of achievement of this study is also the fact that it tests the theory of media imperialism thesis. Thus, as per the findings of this study, young people in Addis Ababa who participated in this study are capturing some of the alien cultures, at least some of the sexual acts perceived in the pornography, as well as rushing to unplanned and early sexual practices [sex before marriage] activities that obviously disgrace the traditional value of virginity.

From the testimonies of the informants, it can be argues that all those young people who view pornographic media do not literally practice what they view. However, they try to relate it with their own context and lived culture. They try not to do offensive acts to their sexual partners. They are not 'swallowing' *all* what they see in the porn. The informants indicated that some of the acts in the pornography are impossible to practice with Ethiopian traditional women: except with bar ladies or prostitutes. This can be used in support of Ang's (1990) argument cited in Assefa, (2005) that audience groups are capable of constructing their own meanings, their own local cultures and identities, even if there is an overflow of media images from transnational cultural industries. (2005:78) In addition, it has also been discussed in the literature review that local audiences strongly make meanings that go well with their lived life and experience.

However, through the extension of standardized Western culture, pornographic media is 'homogenizing' the 'sexual practices' or 'culture' of young people who view pornography. This means, to some extent, cultural imperialism is happening amid the participants of this study.

However, it is also important to recall and emphasize the fact that some of the informants are capable of filtering pornographic messages while others absorb and practice what they consume. Therefore, it can be argued that some of the 'old' and 'good' tradition of the nation with regard to sexual practices is threatened by pornography. Most notably, the fact that pornography disgraces virginity by promoting premarital sex is commonly accepted by the informants. Even though they believe in this, some of them are tempted to practice what they see in the porn.

It is also relevant to mention the appropriateness of the ethnographic critic of media imperialism thesis in a sense that media imperialism thesis gave little attention to the significance of the audience choices. From the testimony of my informants, therefore, it can be argued that local audiences make meaning from what they consume, in their own context: considering their own benefits and their own societal tradition. Thus, local pornography viewers are found to be capable of constructing their own meanings from what they see: without entirely and literally absorbing what is seen.

Indeed, the assumption that Western media is 'carrier of modernity', is proved to be true from the testimony of the informants of this study. For example, young people who view pornography in a group started to discuss sex openly as a result of viewing pornography. This is 'cultural improvement', amid a community that considers an open discussion of sexuality as a "*balege neger*" (literally means 'bad thing' or 'indecent thing'). But still the informants did not reach the level of naming sexual organs in local languages [because there is a tradition to call human sexual organs metaphorically, but not in the actual names, because it is taboo], but prefer using the English words instead. However, in a society where sex is not discussed openly, it is a significant change to know a group of young girls who started to discuss issues of sexuality freely.

When I envisioned this study, there was a fear in my mind if young people will not be willing to discuss about their pornography consumption experiences or issues related to sexuality. In addition, the scarcity of references in the Library of the University has also been a threat for this study, in addition to time constraints to finish up the study on time. [For instance, I have been planning to undertake survey, to know the level of pornographic media consumption among the youth in Addis Ababa, but forced to neglect it due to time constraints.] Given these, I am satisfied with the end results of this study, which I hope will provide an initial data for similar studies that would be undertaken in the future. However, this particular study could have been better than this with the provision of ample and necessary resources.

As it has been mentioned, this study is limited in many ways: mainly due to the limited resources, lack of previous studies related to the subject area as well as the silence about sexuality related issues in Ethiopian tradition. Therefore, further researches should be undertaken to better understand how young Ethiopians view, interact with and interpret pornography and the overall processes of pornography consumption.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

I would like to make the following recommendations depending on the results of this study.

1. Parental explanation, transparent discussion about sexuality and reproductive health issues with children and youth will keep them [between family: youth and children] not to seek information about sexuality from wrong places like pornographic media. In order to prevent the attraction of the youth to Western pornographic media products sex education must be encouraged in high schools or secondary schools and also needs to be included in curricula. Therefore, if we want to keep the youth and children from planned and intentional exposure to pornography, the silence about sexuality should be avoided and families should be able to thoroughly discuss sex with their children. This will keep the youth not to rush to wrong places in a search for answers for their questions and curiosities.

2. Sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention activities must be dealt in a broader context: dealing with the social context of the youth, their media consumption habits, their daily life activities and also considering their particular environment, peer group...etc of the youth in order to bring realistic, contextualized and achievable solutions for the problems threatening the youth. Behavioural change communication (BCC) alone can not bring a change without considering what kind of media exposures, daily life activities, lived experiences, contexts and environment of the target group of the BCC.
3. The government, governmental and non-governmental pertaining bodies should be cautious about the illegal dissemination and the smuggling of pornographic media products in the city of Addis Ababa, and other cities as well; especially video houses that are showing pornographic movies underground. Unless the system through which pornography is spreading is identified and also controlled, the wellbeing of the youth in particular and the tradition of the nation at large will remain threatened.
4. Since one of the major complaints for fleeing to watching pornographic media are dissatisfaction, lack of affordable alternative 'youth recreational centres' in the city, therefore, an effort should be exerted to escalate the development of national film industry and other 'healthy' and 'educative' entertainment facilities. Local film production/industry, actors, writers and directors should be encouraged to produce culturally sound [decent] world-class movies in order to keep Ethiopian culture and young people's sexual health sustained.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I

#### A) Interview Guide for In-Depth Individual Interviews

1. Please give me your full name, age, address and educational background.

2. What is your career (work)?
3. Have you ever been exposed to pornographic messages?
4. When did you first exposed to it?
5. Where? How? Why? For how long? And with who are you exposed to it?
6. Would you explain your experience as to
  - a. How you are influenced after you were exposed to pornography?
  - b. What were your feelings and thoughts look like after consumption?
  - c. What meanings have you given to what you viewed in the porn?
  - d. What was your immediate reaction/response/ after viewing?
7. Some people say that porn promotes: multiple sexual partner, group sex, anal/oral sex, rape, men's rule over women, prostitution, unsafe/unprotected sex and gay marriage (homosexuality) etc. What is you reaction and thoughts about this depending your porn consumption experience? Is that true or false for you? Why?
8. What do you think about how pornography influences local culture? Does it have any influence on local culture? Can porn erode local cultural values? How?
9. What do you think is the influence of pornographic messages on the well-being of the youth in Addis Ababa?
10. Did you literally put in to practice what you have seen in the pornographic movies? Or do you see and forget it/ignore/?
11. Do you engage yourself in the pornography as you view or consume? How? What do you mean?
12. Some people argue that pornography consumption results: aggression, emotional disturbance, arousal, violence against women, feeling of guilt and shame etc. Based on your own experience which one of the above happened to you? What is your thought about the argument itself?
13. Would you tell me the positive and negative influences or results of exposure to pornographic messages?
14. Does porn influences your daily life activity or your sexual behaviour? How?
15. What messages does porn convey to you about love, sex, and relationship?
16. Do support that pornography should be legally banned in Ethiopia? Why? How do you see the banning in light of freedom of expression?
17. Do you have special experience with regard to your exposure to pornography?
18. Finally, do you have any comments, suggestions, recommendations, ideas you want to add in relation to our discussion, (that you feel are important to this study)?

The End.

Thank you so much for your time and response.

## **B) Interview Guide for Internet Café/Video house owners**

1. Please, give me your full name, age, address, educational background and your responsibility in the organization.
2. Do you rent or show pornographic media?
3. How many people (in average) view pornography or rent pornography?
4. What kinds of people are your usual customers? (Age, sex, economical, educational status of your customers)

5. If you show them here, what kinds of reaction/responses do you observe from your clients as they view pornographic messages?
6. How much do you charge to rent/show pornographic materials?
7. Are your clients allowed to bring in their girl friends, drugs and alcohols to view pornography?
8. Do you know pornography is illegal in Ethiopia? Therefore, why do you make accessible at your shop?
9. Do you support that pornography should be banned in Ethiopia? Why?
10. What is pornography for you? Does it have any kind of impact or influence on you?
11. What do young people prefer to view or rent: can you classify as action movie, pornography or horror?
12. Do you recall any special experience you encountered as young people view pornographic material at your shop?
13. Do you think pornography suits with out culture, tradition and norm? How?
14. Do you have any suggestions about how or to what ends pornography viewing may influence young people?
15. Finally, do you have comments, suggestions, recommendations, ideas you want to add in relation to our discussion, (that you feel are important to this study)?

The End.

Thank you so much for your time and response.

### **C) Interview Guide for Professionals, Organizations and Officials**

1. Please, give me your full name, age, address, educational background and your responsibility in the organization.
2. Why is pornography illegal in Ethiopia and since when?
3. Do you support that pornography should be banned in Ethiopia and why?
4. (Especially question for ETV movies editor): Foreign movies are supposed to be edited before aired on ETV. What is the purpose of editing? What parts do you cut? How and for what uses do you do that? When do you start doing that? Do you have special job description to do that? Don't you think what you do may hinder the movie not to convey the intended meanings and impressions in the mind of viewers?
5. Even if Western movies are edited there are wide range of accesses for sexually explicit media at informal/illegal video shops and internet café's beside global satellite channels. To what extent are you successful in protecting the well-being of the youth?
6. Do you have any suggestions about how or to what ends pornography viewing may influence young people?
7. Do you think pornography suits with out culture, tradition and norm? How?
8. Finally, do you have comments, suggestions, recommendations, ideas you want to add in relation to our discussion, (that you feel are important to this study)?

The End.

Thank you so much for your time and response.

### **D) Interview Guide for Pornography Viewing Youth**

1. What is pornography for you? [Depending on an introductory pornography movie presented by the researcher as well as depending on your past experiences and knowledge about it?]
2. Why, where, how, with whom, and when do you consume pornography?
3. Would you explain your experience as to
  - a. How you are influenced after you were exposed to pornography?
  - b. What were your feelings and thoughts look like after consumption?
  - c. What meanings have you given to what you viewed in the porn?
  - d. What was your immediate reaction/response/ after viewing?
4. Some people say that porn promotes: multiple sexual partner, group sex, anal/oral sex, rape, men's rule over women, prostitution, unsafe/unprotected sex and gay marriage (homosexuality) etc. What is your reaction and thoughts about this depending your porn consumption experience? Is that true or false for you? Why?
5. What do you think about how pornography influences local culture? Does it have any influence on our local traditions? Can porn erode local cultural values? How?
6. What do you think is the influence of pornographic messages on the well-being of the youth in Addis Ababa?
7. Did you literally put in to practice what you have seen in the pornographic movies? Or do you see and forget it/ignore/?
8. Do you engage yourself in the pornography as you view or consume? How? What do you mean?
9. Some people argue that pornography consumption results: aggression, emotional disturbance, arousal, violence against women, feeling of guilt and shame etc. Based on your own experience which one of the above are realistic? What is your thought about the argument itself?
10. Would you tell me the positive and negative influences or results of exposure to pornographic messages?
11. Does porn influences your daily life activity or your sexual behaviour? How?
12. What messages does porn convey to you about love, sex, and relationship?
13. Do you support that pornography should be legally banned in Ethiopia? Why? How do you see the banning in light of freedom of expression?
14. Do you have special experience with regard to your exposure to pornography?
15. Finally, do you have any comments, suggestions, recommendations, ideas you want to add in relation to our discussion, (that you feel are important to this study)?

The End.

Thank you all for your precious time and response.

### **E) Interview Guide for Non-Pornography Viewing Youth**

1. What do you know about pornographic messages?
2. Have you ever been exposed to pornography?
3. Do you have friends who view pornography regularly? What do you know about them?
4. What was your first reaction during your first exposure to pornographic message?
5. What do you think are the sources where young people access pornographic messages? And where do you think young people view pornographic films?

6. What are your thoughts and feelings about young people who view pornography?
7. Why are you not interested in viewing pornographic movies?
8. Do you think pornography influences young viewers? Why? How?
9. Why do you think young people are interested to view Western media products? How about pornographic movies?
10. Do you support the fact that pornography should be legally banned in Ethiopia to protect the well-being of the youth and children?
11. Do you think pornography can influence local traditions? How? Why?
12. Who is supposed to view pornography? When? How? Why?
13. Do your religion, your family background, your education, your peers, and economic background influenced you not to be interested in pornography? Why? How?

The End.

Thank you all for your precious time and response.

## Appendix II

### 2.1 List of Pornography Viewing Informants

NO	Informant's Name	Sex	Age	Marital	Educational	Location
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				Status	Level	
1	Respondent 1	F	24	Single	Dropout	6 kilo
2	Respondent 2	M	24	Single	Dropout	Piazza
3	Respondent 3	M	21	Single	Dropout	Piazza
4	Respondent 4	M	19	Single	Dropout	Piazza
5	Respondent 5	M	29	Single	High School	Megenagna
6	Respondent 6	M	21	Single	High School	6 kilo
7	Respondent 7	M	20	Single	High School	6 kilo
8	Respondent 8	M	21	Single	Dropout	Piazza
9	Respondent 9	M	21	Single	Dropout	Piazza
10	Respondent 10	M	24	Single	Dropout	Megenagna
11	Respondent 11	M	19	Single	High School	Megenagna
12	Respondent 12	M	23	Single	Undergraduate	6 kilo
13	Respondent 13	M	18	Single	Undergraduate	Megenagna
14	Respondent 14	M	27	Single	Undergraduate	Megenagna
15	Respondent 15	F	24	Single	Postgraduate	6 kilo
16	Respondent 16	M	21	Single	Postgraduate	Piazza

### 2.3 List of Non-Pornography Viewing Informants

NO	Informant's Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Educational Level	Location
17	Respondent 17	M	18	Single	High school	6 kilo
18	Respondent 18	F	19	Single	Undergraduate	6 kilo
19	Respondent 19	M	25	Married	Postgraduate	6 kilo
20	Respondent 20	M	26	Single	Postgraduate	Piazza
21	Respondent 21	F	21	Single	Undergraduate	Megenagna

### 2.2 List of other Informants from Organizations

No	Informant's Name	Sex	Organization	Position
1	Azeb Hailesilassie	F	Ministry of Information	Monitoring and Regulation Expert
2	Tenagne Kebede	F	Ministry of Information	Press, Film Shooting

				Licence and Registration Division Head
3	Ararsso Amenu	M	Ministry of Information	Press, Film Shooting Licence's Library and Documentation Service Head
4	Gideon Ashenafi	M	MultiChoice Ethiopia	Sales & Marketing Representative
5	Asfaw Fekade	M	Ethiopian Television	Program Coordinator, Amharic
6	Yetnayet Tamiru	M	DVD/VCD vender on the street	Electronics seller on the street, Addis Ababa
7	Abebe Gashaw	M	DVD/VCD vender on the street	Electronics seller on the street, Addis Ababa
8	Daniel Tadesse	M	Danni Video House	Manager
9	Hiwot Mulatu	F	Millennium Internet Café	Cashier and controller
10	Mekete Gebru	M	Jolly Video	Manager and owner

### Appendix III

#### Map of Ethiopia





## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

**Student**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Internal Advisor**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**External Advisor**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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