

## Examination of Pornography in Cyberspace from Ethical, Spiritual, and Medical Perspectives

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Saleh Ghaffari Charati<sup>1</sup>, Esmail Haditabar<sup>2</sup>, Ebrahim Ghodsi<sup>3</sup>

1 PhD of Criminal Law and Criminology, Department of Law and Political Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran.

2 Assistant Professor of Criminal Law and Criminology, Department of Law and Political Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran.

3 Associate Professor of Criminal Law and Criminology, Department of Law and Political Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran.

### Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Cyberpornography is one of the emerging and multidimensional challenges in society. Each discipline offers different criteria, reasons, perspectives, and solutions according to their point of view. However, this multidimensional phenomenon has engaged all aspects of human societies in terms of individual and group dimensions and has left negative consequences. Regarding this, the present study was conducted to analyze and explain pornography from ethical, spiritual, and medical perspectives by challenging the current legislative approach and focusing on the spirituality of human beings in society and the mediation of ethical and medical discourse.

**Methods:** The present systematic review study was conducted in 2019 using domestic databases, such as Magiran and Noormags, without time restriction. The search process was performed using the following keywords: "Pornography", "Pornography and spirituality", "Pornography and medicine", and "Pornography and ethics".

**Results:** The investigation of cyberpornography from social, ethical, and medical perspectives revealed that cyberpornographers have a deviant personality and an ill state. From the legal perspective, cyberpornographers are viewed as criminals deserving of punishment. However, the present study, using a medical perspective and spiritual and community health approach, introduced the corrective, educational, and clinical measures as the proper actions and recommends the policymakers to adopt such measures.

**Conclusion:** Based on the results of this study, cyberpornography has more severe and destructive consequences on an individual's moral and spiritual wellbeing than crime. This phenomenon negatively influences both individuals' and groups' moral dimensions in all age groups. In addition, it can negatively affect the individuals' health in all its aspects, especially moral wellbeing. Moreover, the presence of any illness at the individual level corresponds to low mental and spiritual wellbeing in society as a wider context.

**Keywords:** Cyberpornography, Medical Ethics, Religion, Spirituality.

\***Correspondence:** Should be addressed to Dr. Saleh Ghaffari Charati. **Email:** salehghafari93@gmail.com

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### Introduction

Human societies and the development of value systems have created different patterns regarding human lives in communities. In this regard, the non-violation of individual's rights has formed the framework to protect and support human values and norms. The legislature has the responsibility for enforcing specific laws to keep a balance between human gathering and

the close relationship between individuals.

Nowadays, the diversity of human behavior and the excessive dependence of social and cultural relations on the virtual world have led to the emergence of a new type of human society and habitation called "cyberspace". This phenomenon has led to the oscillation of humans between the real and the virtual space, transferring them to variable elements. This

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part of human life, similar to their real environment, requires the enforcement of legal mechanisms to maintain the balance in retaining their rights in the new space. Therefore, all the values and norms of the real environment and its subsequent rights and duties have been transferred to cyberspace, meaning that cyberspace has become an undeniable reality (1).

The development of cyberspace has been accompanied by the diversification of delinquency and criminal cycles. Moreover, cyberspace has facilitated the commitment of more crimes while lowering the probability of criminal arrest. This has necessitated the adoption of more technical policy against cybercrimes. In such circumstances and with the emergence of this new atmosphere, policymakers were obliged to protect the rights and security of individuals. To this end, they had to set new rules in accordance with such an atmosphere.

In general, the use of computers and telecommunications for illicit and immoral relationships which are against public decency is considered one of the common challenges in sociology, psychology, medicine, ethics, religious jurisprudence, and law. To deal with such a situation, the legislature has introduced new legislation to criminalize cyberpornography and similar acts (2).

The criminalization of pornography in cyberspace has various consequences, such as the authoritarianization of the criminal justice system, development of security-oriented criminal policy, elimination of public responses, negligence of corrective and therapeutic approaches, and propagation of labeling pornographers. Regarding this, the fundamental question of the present study is whether cyberpornography should be considered a crime or a disorder (moral deviance or mental disorder)? What is the legislator's approach toward pornography? What are the criteria for considering pornography a moral perversion and a disease? What are the ethical and medical criteria for considering pornography a mental disorder and deviation? This article aims to critique the legal perspective on cyberpornography and

suggests the criminal policymakers to adopt ethical and medical perspectives for the purpose of undertaking correction, treatment, and educational measures.

## Methods

This review study was performed based on the analysis of opinions, principles, and criteria of information and communications technology with a combination of medical ethics principles and criteria. Moreover, the present research was targeted toward examining cyberpornography interdisciplinary in terms of the law, religious jurisprudence, and medical ethics.

The discussions were mainly developed by describing the content through exchanging views and scrutinizing the existing theories. Therefore, the main aim of the study was the conceptualization of cyberpornography by examining ethical, medical, social, and spiritual criteria. The structure and findings of the study are organized in two parts. While the first part deals with pornography as a disease and involves the analysis of its underlying medical reasons, the second part targets the analysis of pornography as a crime.

In order to perform this systematic review, the studies related to the subject of interest were searches in national databases, such as Magiran and Noormags, in 2019, without time restriction. This research is focused on the keywords of pornography, pornography and spirituality, pornography and medicine, and pornography and ethics.

## Result

### *1. Criteria of cyberpornography as deviance and disorder*

#### *1.1. Explanation of deviance (divergence or disorder)*

In general, the concept of misbehavior is divided into two categories, namely crime and deviance. The first category includes behaviors entailing distancing from rules and violating laws and regulations. The second category consists of actions and behaviors indicating a departure from social norms and values (3). The criminal policy considers deviance as distancing from social values and non-

conformity with them, hence bringing about social blame. However, if the importance of the violated norms and values is to the extent that it guarantees the government support and punishment, then the concept of deviance loses its implications and takes the label of a 'crime' since it involves rule violations. Therefore, deviance can appear, occur, and be explained in the context of a society in terms of norms (4). Each society has its own unique norms and values, which may not be accepted in other societies (5).

Meanwhile, the mission and purpose of criminal law are to identify important values and norms as rules, as well as supporting them in the light of criminalizing behaviors, which are against norms and values. Therefore, the process of turning norms into legal rules, within the framework of criminology foundations, determines the type of response to this rule violation. In this regard, the most appropriate responses are considered legal punishments.

Nevertheless, non-adherence to or distancing from other less important social norms and values is regarded as deviance rather than crime. Consequently, society will confront these behaviors in a form of a spontaneous social movement called social blame, despite the lack of any criminal sanction (6). Therefore, what is defined as a deviation, resulting in heterogeneity and inconsistency with social norms, will lead to social responses, not governmental ones. The provision of a proper response to confront the social deviations that occur only in the atmosphere of normality rather than regularity would disturb the balance of criminal policy in its main and fundamental path. Moreover, it will be accused of maximum interference in social behaviors and control of safe margins and privacy of individuals (7).

In compliance with the principle of the legality of crimes and punishments and considering the use of the minimal criminalization principle (8) or the principle of criminal law as the last resort (9). The need for applying the strategy of withdrawal and limiting the intervention of criminal law in social issues and deviated behaviors from

norms (10), and the involvement of society and its participation in controlling deviance and forming a social control network, it is required to reduce the interference of criminal law and government responses in controlling the social deviations.

However, interventions in this field should be delegated to appropriate social groups, such as syndicates, campaigns, grassroots organizations, and specific-related groups. The reason for adopting such an approach lies in the fact that the government's response to the deviation in criminal policy not only will lead to overcriminalization and interference in the private sphere but also will minimize community participation in controlling deviations by violating general principles supported by the human rights system. In addition, the government's response to deviation shifts criminal policy to authoritarianization and makes the criminal justice system security-oriented, thereby leading to penal legislation inflation.

### ***1.2. Cyberpornography as an emerging social and moral challenge***

One of the criteria for identifying deviation is social criteria or accepted ethics in societies. The attitude of society and the consequent functions and their interdependence on the survival and continuance of collective life are the most important criterion leading to deviation identification at the community level. The large infrastructure and structures of the societies and the differences and conflicts in social attitude call for a different process for the identification of values and formation of social norms (11).

It is noteworthy that with the advent, emergence, and expansion of cyberspace, many values and norms, previously considered basic in small local communities, are forgotten or changed. For instance, prior to the widespread introduction of social networks, such as Facebook, Telegram, Viber, WhatsApp, WeChat, Tango, Line, Emo, and Instagram, into traditional communities, hijab was considered one of the basic values of the Iranian society. However, with the expansion of the mentioned social networks, taking

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photography and filming without hijab has lost its former virtue and is no longer considered a deviation.

It is believed that one of the main criteria for identifying deviation, especially pornography, is a social criterion. Nevertheless, with the elimination of the social stigma of pornographic behaviors, the question raised is whether the criminalization of this deviation has social support. In other words, do people themselves blame vulgar images and videos? Are such deviations endured, especially with the removal of ethnical, social, and cultural distances as a result of technology?

It seems that the social underpinnings of pornography criminalization have been lost since families publish and distribute illegal photos and videos in cyberspace since it no longer bears a social stigma. For example, if a girl's photo or video without hijab was broadcasted in 1999, severe formal and informal reactions would be expected from government and public institutions.

On the other hand, in 2018, many social network users submit their vulgar and obscene images and videos. However, neither can the government and official institutions punish these people given their special circumstances (i.e., large number and living abroad), nor can the civil society control these users. This failure is due to the fact that many users do not object to this trend and that civil society loses its significance in the presence of official institutions and subsequent government responses.

It seems that Iranians have accepted politically and religiously forbidden images and films as normal. Moreover, the social stigma of such contents has been removed in recent years. For instance, in 2007, the distribution of a famous actress's obscene video received strong reactions by both official institutions (e.g., the police and judiciary) and social organizations. However, in 2018, thousands of similar videos were broadcasted daily which involved neither the intervention and sensitivity of the governmental organizations nor the sensitivity of civil society. Therefore, it seems that social criterion as the most important criterion of

pornography has lost its influence since 2012.

### ***1.3. Examination of pornography on medical criteria***

In clinical criminology, individuals are studied from medical and psychological perspectives. The research performed in the fields of clinical criminology is based on medical findings. From the clinical criminologists, psychiatrists, and physicians' points of view, many activists, producers, distributors, and individuals involved in pornography suffer from personality, mental, and sexual disorders. The root of some of these disorders lies at such factors as heredity, chromosome disorders, physiological defects, and mental illnesses (12).

Although the role of hereditary factors cannot be definitely determined in a person's tendency to produce or enjoy pornographic products, genetic disorders are considered influential in causing behavioral problems. Given that many pornographers and addicted individuals to pornographic products are more or less suffering from sexual perversion, the hereditary factors can be also influential in their tendency toward pornography.

The components and factors of inheritance are located and centered in chromosomes. The number of chromosomes is always even and constant for a living creature. Each cell normally contains 23 pairs of chromosomes, the defect of which causes the formation of a criminal personality. Therefore, many biologists believe that the development of sexual perversion, including pornography, has a causal relationship with chromosome 23 disorder and endocrine disease, especially hormone imbalance (13).

Physiological defects are defined as a living organism or cell dysfunction, divided into two categories of organ dysfunction and physiological transmission disorder on the verge of puberty (14). Organ dysfunctions can be observed in such diseases as protanopia, left-handedness, and ambidexterity. However, in the present study, specific dysfunctions related to puberty were taken into consideration.

Puberty not only is an effective period in human physiological development which



causes disturbances (9) but also according to Dr. Dublino, clarifies the existence of critical moments during which the likelihood of delinquency increases. In case a child is exposed to pornographic works while being in the critical period of puberty, during which the most obvious human development in biology occurs, the stimulation and arousal of sexual desire will cause precocious puberty. This, in turn, leads to various mental and physical disorders, thereby increasing the likelihood of the development of tendency toward delinquency and deviation.

Most pornographers and pornographic audiences are deviant or have mental or sexual disorders. In this regard, in most cases, we encounter pornographers who are considered paraphilic in terms of personality rather than sexual offenders. We also dealt with some types of pornographers who are sexual or psychosexual deviants and suggested that this group of pornographers should be considered as ill people rather than offenders.

Pedophiles are considered pornographers enjoying watching naked children, masturbating in front of a child, sexual touching of a child, or having sex with a child. Most pedophiles suffer from neurological disorders and are not emotionally stable (15). One of the personality and psychological disorders of pornographers is sexual sadism.

Sadism refers to causing some forms of physical or mental harm to another person to reach sexual arousal. Many pornographers, based on sadistic behaviors, try to provoke people's sexual motives and passions by producing and displaying pornographic works, thereby causing them sexual harassment. These types of psychosexual deviants are sexually satisfied by humiliating and harassing others or describing and depicting vulgar and obscene scenes. These symptoms are indicative of personality disorders and disease.

In addition to sadism, many pornographers suffer from masochism. In other words, these pornographers enjoy their humiliation and disgrace by showing their naked or nude pictures to others. Another personality feature or psychological problem of pornographers is their addiction to excessive intercourse, called

hypersexuality, occurring in both men and women. This excessive sexual desire is called satyriasis and nymphomaniac in men and women, respectively. Pornographers with this mental illness have compulsive sexual behavior to the extent that all their affairs are revolved around sexual activity.

Many pornographers, especially those who display sexually explicit images and videos to provoke others' sexual arousal, suffer from mental disorders, such as nudity and exhibitionism (16). Exhibitionism is a condition in which sufferers satisfy their sexual desires by showing a part of their body to other people.

It can be concluded that pornographers and pornographic audiences have sexually mental disorders, deviations, and transmitted diseases. Therefore, such individuals should be addressed with clinical criminological and therapeutic perspectives. According to this view, pornographers can be reformed, trained, and treated rather than being punished. Accordingly, the legislators should stop viewing this group as criminals and try to prevent such crimes by referring these individuals to correctional and medical institutions.

#### ***1.4. Examination of pornography from an Islamic principles perspective***

Pornography is considered a sin and a forbidden practice from the point of view of Shari' and clergies since it involves deviation and harassment (17-19). They also view pornography as an act leading to privacy violation, which sets the ground for the commitment of other forbidden acts (i.e., muharramât). Accordingly, religious principles are considered among the criteria for the criminalization of deviant behaviors.

A collective life requires the observation of group norms created as a result of individuals' interactions, as well as the consideration and fulfillment of the needs, mutual rights, and duties. These social norms, along with transcendental idealism, religiosity, and religious approach, collectively form a series of religious/belief norms, which should be observed by the society members.

Religious norms (i.e., Shari'a) are formed as a

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result of belief in one of the heavenly religions or religious beliefs and then internalized within individuals at a certain scope. Accordingly, the members of the society feel obliged to follow these norms; therefore, the violators are seriously treated as deviants. As the members of the society lose their faith in religious norms, the social system acts less severely in responding to the violations of religious norms (i.e., belief or religion) fade or even neglects such violations.

The main questions raised here are: What is the role of religious criteria in criminalizing cyberpornography? What is the impact of religious criteria on the performance of governmental and public sectors in relation to pornography, and what are the consequences? Initially, it is necessary to mention that in drafting pornography-related laws, the Sharia norms have been given priority by the legislator and regarded as the basis of the criminalization of this act (18-20).

Religious values and the formation of religious norms have influenced and overshadowed the entire governance structure and civil society. Furthermore, as superior and fundamental norms, they are associated with greater success to respect and observe the values. In Islamic systems, along with civil society, the performance of the government and governing body should conform to religious norms.

The response of the civil society to deviations through informal social tools are overshadowed by governmental responses (punishment) to crime and work conjointly. Therefore, the concept of crime and perversion is manifested in social relations with a reciprocal relationship between civil society and government. In this regard, this relationship is bound to respond to religious and belief deviations, as well as making the commitment of observance and respecting religious values and norms on both parties.

Since religious transgressors are seen as criminals, there is no necessity to use social tools as an informal way of controlling civil society. Instead, the responsibility of responding to religious deviance will be shifted onto the government, which itself is bound to

observe religious norms. Consequently, the criminalization of cyberpornography is justifiable in protecting and preserving religious norms. This can be accomplished by improving the associated criminal policy.

In such circumstances, the function of the criminal justice system will be limited because any inconsistency and violation of religious values and norms will be considered a criminal offense, rather than deviation, thereby leading to governmental responses. However, in a situation where civil society adheres to religious norms and is obliged to comply with them, while official and governmental institutions are not bound by such duties, a religious deviation is formed and religious norms will be a platform for identifying deviations. In these conditions, the informal tools of social control, without the formal and governmental tools, will be applicable in responding to religious deviants.

Eventually, the legislators of the Islamic Republic of Iran deal with the criminalization of pornography based on the social and religious norms (especially religious ones) (21). As mentioned earlier, the role of social criteria in this domain is under question. Regarding the religious norms, it should be noted that according to the positive and desirable functions of civil society and the corruption consequences of criminalization and punishment, pornography should be left to civil society. The civil societies can prevent such deviations by the adoption of such social tools as social blame, instructional responses, and non-penal approaches.

## ***2. Reasons for criminalizing cyberpornography***

### ***2.1. Supporting religious values and spirituality***

Religious, moral, and spiritual values are among the basic foundations for the formation and identification of social norms that have created a special and unique situation in distinguishing Iranian society from other societies. Accordingly, it can be claimed that along with social and political values, religious values are well-recognized and constantly trained (22). Specific norms are formed based

on religious values, the violation of which is considered a deviation.

It seems that Iran's legislative criminal policy pays inadequate attention to the management and control of civil society regarding deviations based on religious norms. In addition, it performs unilaterally in identifying behaviors that elicit a social response without considering civil society. Due to the fact that the government system is itself bound to carry out all religious affairs and observe all its related rules and regulations, it takes measures directly, identifies most of the religious values, and responds to them unilaterally.

The existing examples of responding to deviations confirm the support of the government system for religious values. One of these examples is the Article 638 of Iran's Islamic Penal Code of 1996, which uses ambiguous and interpretable concepts (23) each of which can be extended in the realm of analogy. According to this act of law, any demonstration of unlawful conduct in public is being criminalized, and the offender will encounter government responses in the form of imprisonment and flogging. It can be concluded that by enacting this article in the Islamic Penal Code, the legislator has eliminated the need for the criminalization of most deviations. Moreover, the use of vague and unclear expressions has imposed restrictions on the behaviors of the society members.

It is obvious that since in this model of criminalization, crime is not distinguished from deviation, community members are confused about right or wrong behaviors. Consequently, the multiple interpretations of this article and its analogy will result in no discrete judgment regarding depriving individuals from their civil liberties. This outcome strongly contradicts the minimal criminalization principle (8) or the principle of criminal law as the last resort (24).

Another example of government responses to religious deviations is the Note to Article 638 of Iran's Islamic Penal Code of 1996, which criminalizes unveiling and ill-veiling (25) in criminal law. Vague and interpretive expressions in this Note have led to the

inclusion of ill-veiling (women whose parts of body and head are uncovered), in addition to unveiling in the mentioned Article (26).

From the point of view of the society's members, unveiling and ill-veiling are considered social deviations, and the individuals violating these norms deserve social blame. The legislator, indented to protect religious values and norms, seems to have made a mistake in criminalizing unveiling and ill-veiling. It would be more reasonable to leave the confrontation with this issue to the civil society (17). Governmental interference in this domain encourages the expansion and maximum involvement of criminal law. Another example of criminal responses (i.e., governmental or official) to religious perversions is related to cyberpornography, which is criminalized by the legislator according to Islamic law and is subject to punishment.

Nowadays, it seems that the production, dissemination, and storage of vulgar and obscene content are acts of a social and cultural issue, which is treated differently in various regions. However, with the advent of cyberspace, the social stigma of vulgar and obscene photos and videos has been removed. In case that the civil society perceives a particular type of pornography as a deviation from the defined norms in that society, it can take the initiative and respond to it through informal social control tools. In this regard, there is no necessity that the legislator intervene in the criminalization of pornography and respond to this deviation by the governmental tools of criminal law.

Although this government response might be possible and justifiable according to the specific circumstances at a certain era (i.e., after the Revolution and in the 1990s), the current situation largely underscores the need for repealing pornography-related laws. Therefore, the criminal policy should reduce governmental interventions in this domain and replace harsh and aggressive responses with social responses. In other words, the criminalization of cyberpornography (as a religious deviation) like other deviations, such as drug addiction (27), unveiling and ill-veiling (7), gambling (28), and alcoholism (12)

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has prevented civil society from properly responding to this issue.

In these cases, particularly in pornography, criminal policymakers have demonstrated their dominance and authority by imposing a governmental response and refused to allow a comprehensive civil society to respond to this issue. The adoption of such an approach would lead to the authoritarianization of the criminal justice system, development of security-oriented criminal policy, inflation of the penal legislation, devaluation of punishments, and propagation of labeling.

### ***2.2. Supporting social and spiritual peace of citizens***

The individuals' duties towards their intercommunication in the society will bring about some rights that are established by the observance of duties. All members of the society are required to be aware of these rights (28) forming the basis of participation in social responsibilities (29). Therefore, citizens' rights are defined alongside their duties, with the two concepts being closely and reciprocally related. This is a two-way process involving the observance of duties on the one side and the guarantee of rights on the other side. In this regard, the concepts of prudence and supporting the citizens' peace are introduced when some behaviors are regarded as deviance due to their detachment from social norms or collective beliefs. Consequently, these antisocial behaviors disturb the mental peace of the citizens, thereby disrupting the established public order of that society.

On the other hand, these behaviors may be considered the violation of the fundamental values of the society, therefore being considered as a crime rather than deviance. In this respect, one of the arguments developed by policymakers regarding the criminalization of pornography is supporting the comfort and peace of citizens to have a healthy and moral life in the real environment. Regarding this, the fundamental question is whether the criminalization of cyberpornography is expedient and in conformity of supporting and protecting the peace and comfort of citizens.

The citizens' mental and emotional security

and their peace and comfort in a society with multiple social norms play fundamental roles in the employment of expedient measures. Accordingly, a dynamic and effective policy, in the first place, always seeks to recognize the norms the observance or nonobservance of which will widely influence the community levels positively or negatively.

The criminal policy should criminalize the norm violation cases (formerly called deviants) that lead to the disintegration of public order and commitment of deviant behaviors at the local or public level to prevent the harmful effects of such violations. This can be accomplished by the adoption of special measures and use of specific and different capacities. Regarding this, prior to the development of cyberspace, the criminalization of pornography seemed necessary for the preservation of the virtues, as well as the comfort and peace of citizens.

However, with the advent of cyberspace, the approaches adopted toward this issue have been changed since it has created certain conditions requiring different expediency, compared to the past. In the past, especially during the first years after the Revolution of Iran, it seemed that in case cyberpornography was not criminalized, the peace of citizens would be in danger of disturbance.

Contrary to that era, the adoption of such measures not only is against the freedom, comfort, and privacy of the citizens but also is not considered expedient any longer. In other words, the criminalization of deviations, like pornography (30), does not contribute to the benefits and peace of citizens due to such sweeping changes as the social transformation of Iranians, cultural transformations, cultural assimilation, emergence of civil society, and expansion of informal institutions.

In conclusion, cyberpornography criminalizing is no longer recognized as a necessity. Instead, society is convinced of the effectiveness of social tools, in the form of informal controlling measures of society, responding to cyberpornography. Regarding this, the criminal policy should renounce cyberpornography criminalization and leave it to civil society to regain its status and apply the available tools



## Discussion

The advent of cyberspace was accompanied by the emergence of new deviant and criminal behaviors in this new virtual context. 'Cyberpornography' is one of the behaviors challenging the public order and ethics, which can be commonly regarded as a medical, legal, moral, psychological, and sociological issue. In such circumstances, with the emergence of pornographic behaviors in cyberspace, legislative policymakers began to criminalize and subsequently punish cyberpornographic acts or related behaviors. Legislative policymakers, regardless of the pathological nature of this phenomenon, applied the criminal law to all forms and cases of this activity (12, 35).

However, the present study, contrary to Iranian criminal law, believes that cyberpornography is basically a mental illness and disorder (13). Regarding this, cyberpornography was explained in terms of the meaning and concept of a deviation (i.e., illness, perversion, or antisocial behavior). Subsequently, the traditional legal, religious, moral, and social criteria, based on which cyberpornography was criminalized, were challenged. This resulted in coming to the conclusion that these criteria are not applicable to cyberspace. Furthermore, with the dramatic changes in ethics and religious jurisprudence, medical advances, and corrective and clinical strategies, pornography should be responded morally and medically to prevent and socialize sexual pervers.

On the other hand, today, the reasons for cyberpornography criminalization, including upholding political, religious, and social values, as well as the implementation of the harm principle, have lost their practicality. Therefore, with the disappearance of the criteria and reasons for criminalizing cyberpornography, the criminal dimension of this phenomenon can be removed (14). Accordingly, public institutions, communities, and moral, educational, and correctional medical approaches can respond to this phenomenon socially and clinically to reach a

positive and desirable outcome. Among these responses can be the employment of such measures as public condemnation, grassroots organizations pressure, and family and informal institutions' blame, as well as pornography addiction withdrawal measures via using medicines and receiving clinical treatment.

These comprehensive and corrective responses, rooted in viewing pornography as deviance, would preserve individuals' spiritual wellbeing and privacy. In addition, they automatically remove the destructive consequences of governmental responses, namely authoritarianization, security-orientation, punishment devaluation, and public response elimination (28). Eventually, legislative policymakers are recommended to abandon viewing cyberpornography as a purely legal one-dimensional phenomenon. Rather, they are suggested to hold a multidimensional view on this phenomenon, especially medically and clinically, with the adoption of an ethical approach and attention to individuals' spiritual wellbeing. Moreover, it would be more reasonable to delegate the responsibility of confronting this phenomenon to public institutions, clinical sectors, medical specialists, and spiritual and religious experts.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, cyberpornography exerts severe and destructive consequences on an individual's moral and spiritual wellbeing. This phenomenon negatively influences both individuals' and groups' moral dimensions in all age groups. Therefore, in accordance with the findings of cyberpornography-related literature, it can be concluded that the perpetrators of these behaviors should be considered ill and deviants. In contrast to the legislator's view that considers cyberpornography a crime, this social phenomenon is outside of the framework of criminal law.

The criteria and reasons for cyberpornography criminalization, such as those related to society and religion, in addition to various principles, namely the harm principle, have lost their practicality. Given that cyberpor-

*Archive of SID*

nographers have a deviant personality and an ill state, criminal policymakers are suggested to adopt medical criteria and corrective and therapeutic measures for responding to this phenomenon. The adoption of such an approach would positively result in the protection of individuals' privacy, as well as moral and spiritual wellbeing.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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