

SMITH, D.S., BUTLER-WARKE, A., DAVIDSON, E.-L. and STEVENS, G. 2021. Boredom, bromance and binging: lockdown and the NoFap community. Presented at BPS (British Psychological Society) Male psychology 2021: men's mental health and wellbeing, 22 October 2021, [virtual conference].

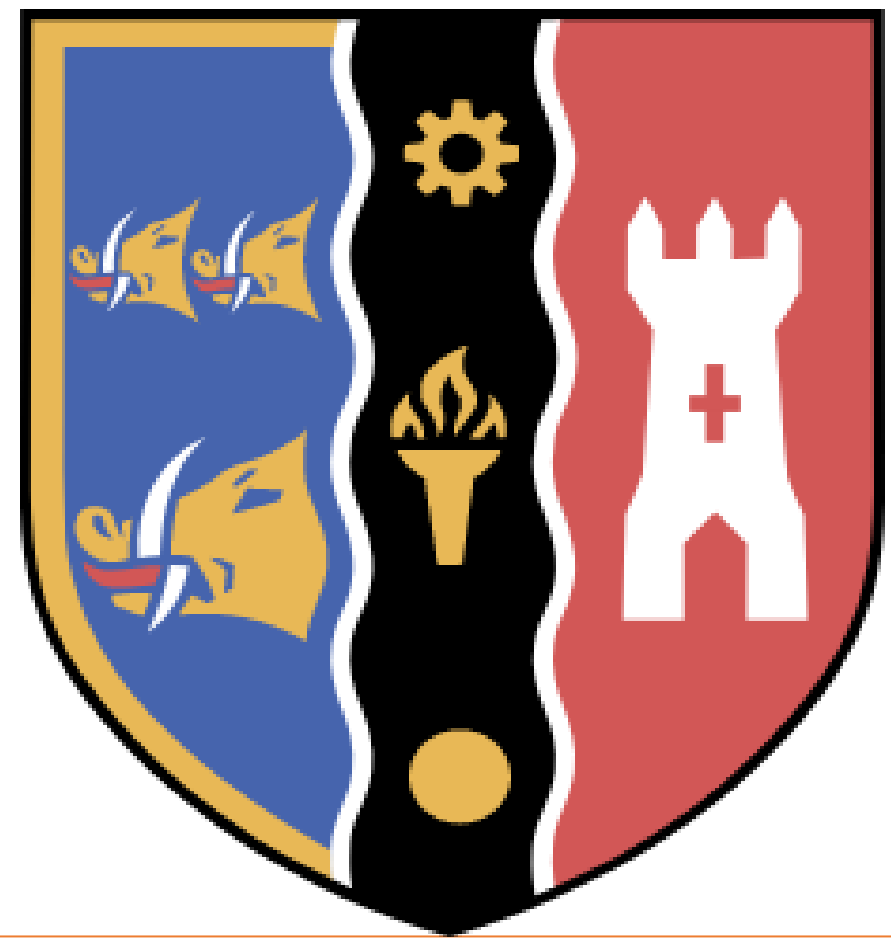
Boredom, bromance and binging: lockdown and the NoFap community.

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2021



Boredom, bromance and binging: Lockdown and the NoFap community



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1. Purpose of the research

- NoFap: mostly men abstain from “addictive cycle” of Pornography, Masturbation, Orgasm (PMO)
- Believe masturbation decreases testosterone. Unmasculine: men yield control over body for enhanced cognition/motivation (Taylor & Jackson, 2018)
- Pornography subverts natural economy of sexual exchange: autonomous sexual agency vs passive consumer of others’ pleasure (Hartmann, 2020)
- Users understand addiction as a function of the pornography industry exploiting natural urges.

Pornography and the pandemic:

- Pornhub searches up: free premium access
- General increase (Rodrigues & Martins, 2020)
- Problematic use: increase (Marchi et al., 2021)
- Correlation with low affect (Boethe et al., 2020)

Aims:

- 1.How have NoFappers adapted to lockdown?
- 2.Is lockdown associated with relapses or reboots?
- 3.How has the community supported its members?

2. Method

- Design: Critical discourse analysis of online, public, message board where users share their progress in NoFap challenges

Procedure:

- Python related search term “lockdown”
- 3 team members analysed, fourth reviewed
- Coded: valence, key themes, gender implications, metaphor, alternatives

Sample:

- 524 posts/164 threads March-November 2020
- Irrelevant threads removed: final, 513/159

3. Themes

The difficulty of lockdown

The last few months I am my old PMO self again – the pandemic has made this worse. I relapse almost daily...

1. Boredom

- Easy thrills of online pornography
- Time alone in room with tech: urges

2. Loneliness

- Escaping – PMO = “sole companion”
- Regress: unproductive/“pitiful”

3. Technology = temptation

- Pornography easy to access
- Phones, laptops/TV: paths to thought
- Social media e.g. Instagram/Facebook

The opportunity of lockdown

“Do you want to remember lockdown as a guy who mastered not fapping or a guy who mastered fapping? You decide”

“To make Heaven, one needs to live in Hell”

- 25% of posts: opportunity to test grit
- “Smooth seas don’t make skilled sailors”

1. Personal growth

- Gift: focus without daily pressures
- Only ‘easy mode’ after lockdown

2. Separating the men from the boys

- Exposes casually dedicated members
- NoFap 1% vs 99% who lack self control

Testing the parameters of NoFap

Do the same rules still apply?
Fewer sexual opportunities: why bother?

1. Existential questions

- Why do NoFap now?
- What is cheating?
- Ignore/modify rules?

2. Digital intimacy

- “Phone sex” with absent part?
- Masturbation without pornography?

3. No free pass

- “Real sex” not only goal: lifestyle
- NoFap = pledge for all circumstances
- Goal: performance, mastery, confidence

Alternatives suggested

- Reading
- Running
- Weightlifting
- Cold showers
- Computer coding



Recurring traits

- Performative masculinity: strength/discipline
- Endurance/resistance training: increase testosterone

Importance of the digital community

Overwhelmingly positive posts: encouragement/gratitude
Share vulnerability: antithetical to masculine scripts (Hartmann, 2020)

1. Bromance

- Emotionally intimate/expressive relationships – no rejection/judgement
- Motifs: ‘Bro’ terminology and military units – same enemy – PMO

2. Solidarity

- Reinforcement/mentorship: members show streak in flares
- ‘You have a 300-day streak, I so admire you. I want you to teach me!’

4. Discussion/conclusions

As per general population, NoFap users have been more tempted by Internet pornography and masturbation
Users see lockdown as a challenge to mental health and, by extension, abstinence – may hinders or helps them
Not static: some users changed mind during period looked at - to adapt, some attempted to redefine rules of NoFap
Allows us to reflect on role of tech: further integration between the Internet and digital platforms with human sexuality

References

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