

Exploring the Psychosocial Dynamics of Pornography Consumption among Young Adult Women

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Abstract. Pornography consumption among women has received limited attention in psychological research, as most studies primarily focus on men while female sexuality often remains socially sensitive. This study explores the psychosocial dynamics of pornography consumption among young adult women. A qualitative approach using thematic analysis was employed. Five women aged 18–25 years participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews. The findings indicate that pornography use commonly began with curiosity or accidental exposure through digital media and gradually developed into habitual behavior. For several participants, pornography functioned as a coping strategy to regulate negative emotions such as stress, loneliness, and emotional distress. Participants also reported various psychological and relational impacts, including guilt, intrusive thoughts, reduced concentration, and conflicts with personal moral and religious values. Social and cultural expectations toward women further intensified feelings of shame and negative self-evaluation. Beyond addictive behavioral patterns, the study also identified recovery processes involving emotional reflection and identity reconstruction. These findings highlight that pornography use among young adult women reflects complex psychosocial processes shaped by emotional needs, gender norms, and sociocultural contexts, emphasizing the importance of gender-sensitive psychological services and digital sexual education.

Keywords: *Coping, Pornography Consumption, Psychological Impact, Young Adult Women*

Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology over the past decade has significantly expanded public access to various forms of information, including sexually explicit content. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs reported that as of March 2025, 233,552 pornography-related contents had been handled, the majority originating from websites and a portion from the platform X (formerly Twitter). This information indicates the high availability and widespread distribution of pornographic content in Indonesia's digital space. This condition is further supported by findings showing that 97% of students in a particular educational region had been exposed to pornography with a frequency of one to three times per week (Ardi & Mubarokah, 2024). In addition, initial exposure often occurs between the

ages of 12 and 15, marking the early phase of digital sexual behavior development (Darmayanti et al., 2025).

At the global level, the trend of pornography consumption also shows a high prevalence. An international survey conducted across 42 countries reported that approximately 70–94% of adults have consumed pornography at least once (Bóthe et al., 2024). Although pornography consumption is relatively common, not all individuals experience problems related to its use. Bóthe et al. (2024) explain that among the large number of pornography users, only a subset report experiencing Problematic Pornography Use (PPU), a condition in which pornography consumption becomes difficult to control and leads to distress or disruption in daily life. Therefore, PPU should not be understood as a progression experienced by all pornography users, but rather as a condition affecting certain individuals whose pornography use becomes problematic.

To understand the characteristics of behaviors perceived as problematic, Griffiths developed the Components Model of Addiction, which consists of six components: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse (Bóthe et al., 2017). This model explains how a behavior can exhibit addictive characteristics when individuals experience cognitive preoccupation with a particular activity, use the activity to modify their mood, gradually increase the intensity of use, and encounter both internal and external conflicts as a result of the behavior.

From a developmental perspective, early adulthood represents an important stage according to Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory, specifically the stage of intimacy versus isolation. During this phase, individuals begin to establish close, stable, and meaningful relationships, and the ability to form intimate connections is considered an indicator of healthy psychosocial development (Fadly & Islawati, 2024). Conversely, failure to develop intimate relationships may lead to a tendency toward social isolation. Developmental studies further indicate that some individuals begin entering this stage during late adolescence and the early years of adulthood (Pandiangan et al., 2025). Therefore, pornography consumption during this developmental period has the potential to influence the formation of intimacy, emotional experiences, and relational patterns, making it particularly relevant to examine among young adult women.

Although pornography consumption has been widely studied, most research has focused primarily on men or general populations, leaving women's experiences relatively underexplored. Recent studies, however, indicate that women also consume pornography, but often with different motives, emotional contexts, and psychosocial risks. Women are more likely to experience moral incongruence, feelings of guilt, and emotional distress due to social pressures and religious norms (Bóthe et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, cultural norms that position women as moral guardians within the family further complicate their experiences of pornography consumption and intensify internal conflicts (Fujiati, 2016). This condition is reinforced by findings showing that women's sexual self-control is strongly shaped by social standards, which may cause their experiences related to pornography consumption to differ significantly from those of men (Lanus et al., 2024).

This gap highlights the need for research that explores the experiences of young adult women in greater depth, particularly regarding how they understand, manage, and interpret pornography consumption in their everyday lives. The present study aims to explore these experiences through a qualitative approach that places participants' subjective experiences at the center of the analysis. In interpreting the findings, this study employs the Components Model of Addiction as a conceptual framework to better understand the dynamics of initial exposure, habit formation, the use of pornography as a coping mechanism, as well as the psychological, cognitive, and relational impacts experienced by young adult women.

Beyond these aspects, this study also reveals processes of recovery and meaning-making that are not fully explained by addiction-based models, representing one of the novel contributions of this research. In addition, the findings offer practical implications for the development of gender-sensitive digital sexual education and counseling services. Consistent with the qualitative approach, this study focuses on exploring how personal, emotional, cognitive, and social factors interact in shaping the experiences of pornography consumption among young adult women, based on the assumption that such experiences are complex and influenced by both internal dynamics and the cultural norms they encounter.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to: (1) explore the initial exposure and the formation of pornography consumption habits among young adult women; (2)

identify the role of pornography consumption in emotional regulation; (3) understand the psychological, cognitive, and relational impacts experienced by participants; and (4) examine the processes of recovery and meaning-making related to these experiences.

Method

This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive thematic approach to gain an in-depth understanding of young adult women's experiences of pornography consumption. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to explore participants' subjective meanings and personal interpretations related to sensitive experiences. Through thematic analysis, this study sought to identify patterns of meaning within participants' narratives and to understand the psychosocial dynamics underlying pornography consumption among young adult women.

The participants consisted of five women aged 18–25 years who were selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: (1) women in the early adulthood age range (18–25 years), (2) individuals who had accessed pornographic content through digital media, and (3) individuals who perceived their pornography consumption as an experience that created difficulties or internal conflicts in their daily lives. Therefore, the participants in this study do not represent pornography users in general, but rather individuals who interpret their pornography consumption as a problematic experience in their lives. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Initial	Age	Residence	Education/ Occupation	Initial Exposure to Pornography
A	20	Pasuruan	Student	Introduced by a friend during junior high school
SH	21	Surabaya	Student	Exposed through social media during early university years
SA	20	Surabaya	Student	Introduced by peers during junior high school
PM	24	Surabaya	Student	

R	24	Surabaya	Student	Accessed content through the internet during senior high school Encountered content through social media during senior high school
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Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face at locations mutually agreed upon with the participants. Each participant was interviewed once in a single interview session lasting approximately 30–45 minutes, and all interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The interviews focused on participants' history of exposure to pornography, their emotional and cognitive experiences before and after consumption, and how they interpreted this behavior within their daily lives. Field notes were also used to capture contextual details and nonverbal responses during the interviews.

All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning within participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved several stages, including repeated reading of the transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data, coding relevant segments, grouping codes into categories, and developing overarching themes that represented patterns related to motives for consumption, emotional dynamics, moral conflicts, and self-regulation strategies.

Result

The analysis of interview transcripts from five participants generated five main themes describing the dynamics of pornography consumption among young adult women. The analysis process involved iterative coding to identify patterns of experiences, emotional contexts, and the meanings participants attributed to their behavior. The findings indicate that pornography consumption did not merely originate from curiosity, but developed through processes involving habit formation, emotional regulation needs, psychological and relational consequences, and conflicts with social and religious values. In addition, the study identified processes of recovery and reflective meaning-making that are not fully explained by traditional addiction theories. The themes are presented as follows.

Initial exposure and the formation of pornography consumption habits. Initial exposure to pornography among young adult women generally began with curiosity, accidental encounters, or sexual stimuli encountered through digital media. At this stage, the first contact with sexual content triggered cognitive and affective responses that encouraged individuals to revisit such material, gradually developing into more regular patterns of consumption. This exposure often served as an entry point to repeated use, particularly when combined with easy access and digital algorithms that continuously recommend similar content (Darmayanti et al., 2025).

I first accessed pornography when I was around 17, during my first year of university. At that time, I spent a lot of time on the internet and social media, and I accidentally came across that kind of content. At first, it was just curiosity, so I opened it because I wanted to know more. (SH, 21 years old)

I first encountered pornography when I was in the second year of senior high school. I was not intentionally looking for it, but at that time it was very common on social media, especially on Twitter and Telegram. There were anonymous accounts that frequently shared sensual videos or photos. Because I was very curious about adult-related topics, I eventually opened the content. At first I was shocked, but over time I became somewhat addicted. (R, 24 years old)

The experiences of SH and R indicate the emergence of the salience component in the Components Model of Addiction, which occurs when sexual content begins to capture attention and triggers cognitive preoccupation. Repeated curiosity, the urge to reopen such content, and increased attentional focus after the initial exposure reflect the core characteristics of salience as described by Bóthe et al. (2017). Exposure patterns through social media platforms such as Twitter and Telegram also highlight the role of environmental cues that reinforce repeated access and encourage individuals to enter a more intensive phase of exploration.

In addition, both excerpts illustrate affective reactions that align with the mood modification component, referring to the use of pornography to obtain certain sensations such as excitement or the gratification of curiosity. R's transition from feeling "shocked" to becoming

“addicted” reflects a mechanism of positive reinforcement that strengthens the behavior. As explained by Bóthe et al. (2024), mood modification plays an important role in the development of addictive habits. Indications of tolerance are also evident in R’s experience, which describes an increasing tendency to access such content more frequently over time. Overall, the patterns experienced by SH and R are consistent with the early dynamics of addictive behavior, in which initial exposure, emotional responses, and easy digital access interact to shape habitual pornography consumption among young adult women.

Pornography as a coping mechanism and emotional regulation. The use of pornography as a means of managing emotions emerged as a consistent pattern among young adult women. This theme illustrates how participants used pornography to relieve stress, distract themselves from intrusive thoughts, cope with emotional emptiness, or calm themselves during distressing situations. Within the context of addiction, the use of pornography for mood modification or emotional comfort represents an important indicator of pornography functioning as a maladaptive coping strategy (Bóthe et al., 2017). This mechanism suggests that the behavior is not solely triggered by sexual stimulation but is also driven by deeper affective needs related to stress, loneliness, or other forms of psychological tension.

I used to watch it almost every day. Usually at night before going to sleep, I would open Twitter and scroll until I found that kind of content. Sometimes I also watched it when I was feeling stressed or overthinking. At first it was just for entertainment, but over time it started to feel addictive. It became like a routine. Sometimes I even opened it while traveling, just to pass the time. But eventually I realized that it was no longer just a habit—it had become a form of escape. I watched it because I wanted to get rid of the feeling of emptiness. Sometimes I felt like my life was very flat, like nothing made me feel desired. Watching it became a way to feel something again. (R, 24 years old)

Yes, very often. Usually when I felt sad, lonely, or insecure. For example, after being reminded of something from my past or when I heard news about sexual harassment. I would suddenly feel very anxious and my mind just wanted to calm down quickly, so I watched it. Sometimes it was just to forget things for a moment, but it ended up becoming addictive. When

I was busy or happy, I didn't think about it at all. So it mostly appeared when I was feeling down. That's when I realized that I wasn't watching it because I wanted to, but because I was searching for a sense of safety. (PM, 24 years old)

The experiences of R and PM clearly reflect the mood modification component in the Components Model of Addiction, referring to the use of pornography to alter or reduce emotional tension through temporary feelings of relief, distraction, or a brief sense of emotional presence (Bóthe et al., 2017). In this context, pornography functions as a rapid coping strategy for dealing with stress, anxiety, and loneliness, providing short-term emotional reinforcement that increases the likelihood of repeating the behavior when uncomfortable emotional states reappear (Bóthe et al., 2024).

These findings also indicate that pornography use is not solely related to patterns of addictive behavior but is also closely connected to deeply personal emotional needs experienced by participants. The narratives suggest that pornography is used as a way to alleviate feelings of loneliness, a sense of being unwanted, and emotional insecurity that may be difficult to address through other means. For some women, pornography consumption may also serve as a private space to explore their feelings, bodies, and sexual identities in everyday life. Research on women's experiences as pornography consumers suggests that women's engagement with pornography often carries complex meanings, functioning not only as a source of sexual stimulation but also as a means of understanding oneself sexually, regulating emotions, and exploring imagination and sexual identity (Attwood et al., 2019). Therefore, in this context pornography consumption does not merely reflect addictive dynamics, but can also be understood as an individual effort to cope with complex emotional needs and personal experiences.

At the same time, the narratives of both participants also reveal the emergence of conflict, particularly intrapersonal conflict between the desire to feel emotionally calm and the awareness that the behavior may be harmful in the long term. Expressions such as "escape" and "addiction," as well as the realization that pornography provides only temporary comfort, illustrate a cyclical pattern in which negative emotions trigger pornography consumption, followed by brief relief

and subsequent feelings of guilt or disappointment, which eventually lead back to negative emotional states. This pattern aligns with the understanding that maladaptive coping strategies may reinforce addictive dynamics and intensify emotional distress among young adult women (Bóthe et al., 2024).

Psychological, cognitive, and relational impacts of pornography consumption. This theme describes how pornography consumption generates emotional, cognitive, and relational consequences for young adult women. The impacts reported include mood fluctuations, feelings of guilt, reduced concentration, mental fatigue, intrusive thoughts, and moral awareness that conflicts with personal values. Pornography consumption also affects social relationships, particularly when individuals experience feelings of unworthiness, emotional withdrawal from others, and fear of negative social judgment. These findings indicate that the impact of pornography on women extends beyond sexual behavior, influencing broader psychological well-being and interpersonal relationship patterns (Fa'ida Ahmada & Noorrizki, 2023).

Physically, I don't really feel much impact, but mentally and emotionally it affects me a lot. My mood changes very easily. After watching, I might feel happy at first, but not long after that I start to feel sad, almost like blaming myself. Sometimes I also find it hard to concentrate, especially when I'm working on my thesis. Suddenly I start thinking about opening X again. It's like my mind gets easily distracted. (SH, 21 years old)

Usually at night all the negative thoughts appear. When I feel sad or stressed, I suddenly want to watch it just to calm myself down. But afterward it actually makes everything feel worse. I immediately feel dirty, like I've failed somehow, and the next day it can happen again. At that time I really felt like I was trapped in a vicious cycle. (SA, 20 years old)

From a psychological perspective, the experiences described by SH and SA indicate the emergence of conflict components within the Components Model of Addiction. This component refers to situations in which the behavior continues despite producing emotional distress such as feelings of shame, guilt, sadness, and a sense of losing control (Bóthe et al., 2017). Difficulties in maintaining concentration, the presence of intrusive thoughts about returning to pornography

consumption, and moral conflict after viewing such content demonstrate a discrepancy between personal values and actual behavior. This pattern suggests that the reward system remains active even when the behavior produces negative emotional consequences, which is a key characteristic of addictive behavior.

In addition to conflict, there are indications of withdrawal-like effects in the form of emotional tension, restlessness, and a strong urge to return to watching when individuals attempt to restrain themselves. SA's narrative illustrates a cycle in which negative emotions trigger pornography consumption, followed by temporary relief and subsequent feelings of guilt that lead to renewed urges to watch again. This pattern reflects maladaptive emotional regulation that may reinforce dependency. Relational consequences are also evident through feelings of social withdrawal, fear of negative judgment, and reduced self-confidence that affect interpersonal relationships. These patterns correspond to the consequence phase described in addiction models, in which compulsive behaviors begin to interfere with psychological functioning and the quality of social relationships (Bóthe et al., 2024).

Conflict with religious, social, cultural, and gender values. This theme illustrates how pornography consumption generates tension between personal behavior and the religious, social, and cultural values held by young adult women. Religious norms that emphasize self-control and prohibit sexual behavior outside moral boundaries, combined with patriarchal cultural expectations that restrict women's sexual expression, create strong moral pressure. These conditions often lead to feelings of guilt, shame, fear of negative judgment, and identity conflict. Such experiences are intensified by societal tendencies to apply different moral standards to men and women. From a religious perspective, it clearly contradicts what I believe. Every time I watch it, I feel extremely guilty afterward, like I've committed a major sin. But even though I know it's wrong, it still happens again. Sometimes I try to calm myself by praying, but the urge comes back. It feels like an internal conflict that never really ends. (A, 20 years old)

I always think that when men watch pornography, it's considered normal. But when women do the same thing, they are immediately judged negatively. It's like women are expected

to be more proper and not show any sexual desire. That makes me feel even more guilty, because society seems much harsher toward women who watch pornography. (SH, 21 years old)

The experiences described by A and SH illustrate the conflict component in the Components Model of Addiction, which refers to the tension between ongoing behavior and moral values that have been internalized since early socialization. Feelings of guilt, shame, and the belief that their behavior is religiously wrong represent forms of intrapersonal conflict that intensify emotional distress (Bóthe et al., 2017). This conflict emerges not only from personal values but also from broader social pressures that frame pornography consumption as inappropriate behavior for women.

In addition to moral conflict, SH's narrative highlights the presence of strong gender double standards, in which pornography consumption among men is often normalized while women are stigmatized for the same behavior. Such patriarchal norms deepen internal conflict and place a heavier emotional burden on women compared to men. The combination of religious guilt and sociocultural pressure creates a complex psychosocial experience, suggesting that value conflict is not merely a secondary consequence but an integral part of the dynamics of pornography consumption among young adult women.

Recovery and meaning-making processes. This theme illustrates how participants began to move away from patterns of pornography consumption and entered a phase of emotional recovery and personal meaning reconstruction. At this stage, participants' focus shifted from merely restraining the behavior to understanding the emotional roots and past experiences that had shaped their habits. Recovery was not viewed simply as strict adherence to prohibitions, but rather as a process of confronting past wounds, practicing self-care, and rebuilding personal identity. This dimension is not fully explained within the Components Model of Addiction and therefore represents a novel contribution to understanding the experiences of young adult women.

I see it now as more than just a bad habit. It came from old wounds. Back then I didn't feel like I had control over my life, and pornography became a way to regain that control. But over

time it actually made me feel more lost. Now I realize that if I want to recover, I have to face my trauma instead of hiding from it through watching. I'm still struggling, but I don't want to see this as who I am. It's just part of my process. (SA, 20)

SA's narrative suggests that recovery is not merely about stopping the behavior but also involves processes of meaning-making and identity reconstruction. The recognition that the behavior originated from "old wounds" reflects a form of reflective awareness that extends beyond addiction-based explanations. SA interprets pornography consumption as a response to a sense of lost control, while recovery is understood as confronting the underlying sources of emotional pain rather than simply suppressing the urge to watch. This dimension is not captured within traditional addiction components such as salience, tolerance, conflict, or relapse, as the process of healing is more closely related to trauma processing, self-compassion, and the restoration of personal agency.

Furthermore, SA's statement that she does not want to consider the behavior as part of her identity reflects a process of identity separation, in which individuals detach their sense of self from past problematic behaviors. This attitude represents an important aspect of psychosocial recovery, as individuals begin to view themselves more holistically rather than defining themselves through previous maladaptive behaviors. Consequently, this theme represents one of the key contributions of the present study, demonstrating that pornography consumption among young adult women can evolve toward reflective, emotional, and existential healing processes that are not fully captured by existing addiction models.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that pornography consumption among young adult women, particularly among participants who perceive their pornography use as problematic often originates from increasingly pervasive digital exposure. Previous studies have reported that Indonesian adolescents and students are frequently exposed to sexual content through social media and instant platforms such as Twitter and Telegram (Ardi & Mubarokah, 2024). Such

exposure often occurs unintentionally during adolescence, a developmental period characterized by heightened sexual curiosity and the formation of digital identity (Darmayanti et al., 2025). On a broader scale, algorithms within social media platforms may further reinforce repeated exposure by continuously recommending similar content within users' feeds (Vescan et al., 2024). Therefore, the early exposure experienced by the young adult women in this study should not be interpreted as representative of all pornography users, but rather as experiences of individuals who perceive their pornography consumption as problematic in their daily lives.

The formation of habitual pornography consumption among participants also aligns with mechanisms associated with addictive behaviors, particularly through the components of salience and mood modification. The salience component emerges when individuals repeatedly think about or anticipate pornography consumption, while mood modification appears in the consistent urge to seek emotional changes through sexual content (Bóthe et al., 2017). Research on internet-based addictive behaviors further suggests that selective attention and dopaminergic reward systems can reinforce repetitive behavioral patterns (Sharpe & Mead, 2021). Studies on visual addiction also indicate that repeated exposure to sexual stimuli can strengthen habitual responses until such reactions become increasingly automatic. These findings suggest that the formation of pornography consumption habits among young adult women follows common neuropsychological patterns of behavioral reinforcement, although gendered contexts may deepen the emotional meanings associated with the behavior.

The use of pornography as a coping mechanism was also clearly reflected in participants' narratives, particularly when they experienced emotional stress, loneliness, or academic pressure. Previous studies have shown that pornography may function as a short-term self-regulation strategy for alleviating negative emotions (Fa'ida Ahmada & Noorrizki, 2023). This finding is consistent with research indicating that individuals often use digital sexual stimuli as a form of escape from internal emotional conflict (Fevriasanty et al., 2020). In addition, women may experience increased emotional sensitivity and impulsivity during the premenstrual phase, which may increase vulnerability to using certain behaviors including pornography consumption

as affective compensation (Fujiati, 2016). Thus, the coping dynamics observed among young adult women suggest that pornography consumption cannot be understood merely as sexual behavior, but rather as part of broader efforts to manage complex emotional experiences.

Beyond functioning as a strategy for emotional regulation, participants' narratives also suggest that pornography consumption may be connected to a need for validation and the experience of feeling sexually desired. In several excerpts, participants described how pornography often portrays sexual interactions in which individuals appear to express clear enthusiasm and desire toward their partners. Such representations may create a temporary sense of being desired or sexually valued, something that participants may not consistently experience in their real lives, either due to relational dynamics or social norms that restrict women's sexual expression. Research on women's experiences as pornography consumers indicates that women's engagement with pornography often carries complex meanings, functioning not only as a source of sexual stimulation but also as a space for exploring sexual identity and personal sexual experiences (Attwood et al., 2019).

Participants' narratives also indicate that pornography consumption may relate to processes of reinterpreting or reworking previously uncomfortable or conflictual sexual experiences. In sociocultural contexts where strong moral and religious norms continue to shape sexual attitudes, women's sexual experiences are often accompanied by feelings of guilt or anxiety regarding their sexuality (Olivia & Umam, 2025). Such conditions may lead women to experience internal conflict between their sexual needs and prevailing social norms. Consequently, engagement with sexual media may in some cases provide individuals with an opportunity to reflect on their sexual experiences and gradually rebuild a sense of agency and control over their bodies and sexuality.

The psychological impacts reported by participants include feelings of guilt, intrusive thoughts, reduced concentration, and a perceived loss of control, which are commonly documented in studies examining the effects of pornography consumption among adolescents and university students (Imawati et al., 2018). Other research has also reported that pornography

users may experience declines in academic performance when consumption impulses increase during periods of academic pressure (Hisyam et al., 2025). Furthermore, repeated exposure to sexual content may intensify emotional distress and weaken impulse regulation among individuals with psychological vulnerabilities (Tripayana et al., 2021). The findings of this study therefore suggest that the psychological consequences experienced by young adult women extend beyond emotional distress, also affecting cognitive functioning and overall productivity.

Moral conflict emerged as one of the most prominent aspects in the experiences of young adult women, as pornography consumption often conflicts with religious values and social norms of propriety. Research on women's sexuality in Indonesia indicates that women experience stronger moral pressure than men when engaging in behaviors considered sexually taboo (Fujiati, 2016). Furthermore, moral incongruence tends to be more intense among women, as they are more likely to internalize religious values and social expectations regarding modesty compared to men (Lanus et al., 2024). Feelings of shame and fear of negative judgment have also been documented in studies on digital sexual behavior, particularly among women raised in strongly religious environments (Febriansyah et al., 2022). Therefore, the moral conflict experienced by young adult women should be understood within a broader cultural and gendered framework.

The selection of young adult women as the focus of this study is also supported by developmental considerations, as this life stage is characterized by the need to establish intimate relationships and consolidate personal identity. Developmental literature suggests that early adulthood represents a phase in which individuals begin integrating personal values with sexual experiences and interpersonal relationships (Fadly & Islawati, 2024). At the same time, women at this stage undergo identity transitions that may increase sensitivity to external influences, including social and moral pressures (Prihandini et al., 2020). Other developmental studies indicate that young adult women are still negotiating the meaning of sexuality and relational experiences, particularly when previous experiences involve emotional uncertainty (Pandiangan et al., 2025). Therefore, this population represents an important group for examining pornography consumption.

The impact of pornography consumption on interpersonal relationships was also evident in this study, particularly in relation to feelings of being worthy of love, trust, and perceptions of intimate relationships. International studies have shown that pornography consumption may influence the quality of romantic relationships and alter expectations about intimacy (Bóthe et al., 2024). The experiences of young adult women who reported relational anxiety are also consistent with findings that pornography exposure may increase body dissatisfaction and insecurity within relationships (Febriansyah & Nurhayati, 2022). Furthermore, research among Indonesian university students suggests that pornography use may intensify relational tension and hinder the development of interpersonal trust (Usfunan et al., 2025). These findings indicate that the consequences of pornography consumption extend beyond individual experiences and also influence relational dynamics.

The identity of young adult women in the context of pornography consumption is also shaped by social stigma and cultural narratives surrounding female purity and modesty. Studies on stigma internalization have found that women tend to interpret sexual behaviors that deviate from social norms as personal moral failures (Febriansyah & Nurhayati, 2022). Feelings of shame and self-judgment are further reinforced by gender expectations that position women as guardians of family morality (Haidar et al., 2020). These findings are consistent with research suggesting that women's experiences of guilt are often multilayered, as they involve not only personal evaluation but also the burden of sociocultural expectations (Lanus et al., 2024). Thus, the identity experiences of young adult women in this study are closely intertwined with broader social values and cultural power structures.

Gender dynamics and power relations also play an important role in shaping women's experiences of pornography consumption. Patriarchal norms often position women's sexuality as an object of social control, making digital sexual behavior a domain subject to strong surveillance and moral evaluation (Prihandini, 2020). The experiences of women who felt they had failed to meet expectations of purity reflect patterns of social control described in studies on adolescent sexuality in Indonesia (Tripayana et al., 2021). These power relations also influence how women

evaluate themselves, particularly when they perceive themselves as deviating from cultural expectations (Haidar & Apsari, 2020). Therefore, the experiences of pornography consumption among young adult women cannot be separated from the broader social structures that shape their self-understanding.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the identification of recovery and meaning-making processes in women's experiences of pornography consumption, which are not fully explained by addiction models centered on behavioral mechanisms. Previous studies have suggested that women's recovery processes often involve identity reconstruction and the integration of emotional experiences, particularly when sexual behavior is interpreted as a response to past emotional wounds (Anggraini & Maulidya, 2020). The qualitative perspective employed in this study highlights the importance of participants' subjective interpretations in understanding psychosocial recovery processes (Fujiati, 2016). Moreover, the processes of self-reflection and self-compassion observed among participants are consistent with recovery frameworks that emphasize emotional integration (Vieira & Griffiths, 2024). These findings enrich academic understanding by demonstrating that recovery among young adult women involves reflective, emotional, and spiritual dimensions that extend beyond traditional addiction models.

This study has several limitations. The relatively small number of participants and the relatively homogeneous characteristics of the sample limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the data were obtained through interviews on a sensitive topic, which may introduce potential recall bias or the possibility that participants withheld certain personal experiences. The strong cultural and religious contexts surrounding participants may also produce different experiential dynamics if the study were conducted among women from different sociocultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

Based on the research objectives, the findings indicate that pornography consumption among young adult women represents a complex psychosocial process rather than an isolated sexual behavior. Pornography consumption often begins with increasingly pervasive digital exposure that is difficult to avoid, and gradually develops into a habitual behavior through curiosity, short-term emotional reinforcement, and the ease of digital access. Over time, pornography may function as a means of emotional regulation, particularly when individuals experience stress, loneliness, or emotional distress, thereby serving as a rapid but maladaptive coping mechanism. These findings suggest that the initiation, maintenance, and meaning-making of pornography consumption among young adult women involve the interaction between emotional needs, digital environments, and developmental dynamics characteristic of early adulthood.

The study also demonstrates that pornography consumption can generate significant psychological, cognitive, and relational consequences for young adult women. Feelings of guilt, moral conflict, intrusive thoughts, concentration difficulties, and a reduced sense of being worthy of love often emerge within the context of religious values and sociocultural norms that impose stricter moral standards on women than on men. These findings indicate that women's experiences of pornography consumption cannot be fully explained solely through a behavioral addiction framework. Emotional needs such as the desire to feel sexually desired and attempts to alleviate emotional distress related to uncomfortable personal experiences also represent important dimensions in understanding this phenomenon.

The main contribution of this study lies in highlighting recovery and meaning-making processes in women's experiences of pornography consumption. Recovery is not

merely understood as the cessation of behavior, but also as a process involving identity reconstruction, the processing of emotional wounds, the development of self-compassion, and the separation of personal identity from past behaviors. These meaning-making processes suggest that experiences of pornography consumption may become part of broader processes of self-reflection and psychological growth. Therefore, this study not only addresses the gap in research concerning women's experiences of pornography consumption but also provides a conceptual foundation for developing psychological interventions and digital sexual education that are more sensitive to the emotional, moral, and sociocultural contexts of young adult women.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, psychological services and digital sexual education programs for young adult women should be designed using approaches that are non-stigmatizing and sensitive to emotional experiences, religious values, and sociocultural contexts. The findings suggest that pornography consumption among some young adult women may be closely related to deeply personal emotional needs, including the desire to feel sexually desired and the use of pornography as a temporary strategy for coping with emotional distress related to past experiences. Therefore, psychological services should provide safe and supportive spaces where women can reflect on these experiences without moral judgment, enabling healthier processes of emotional regulation, self-understanding, and psychological recovery.

Future research is encouraged to involve participants with more diverse sociocultural backgrounds in order to obtain a broader understanding of the dynamics of pornography consumption among young adult women. In addition, the use of mixed-method approaches may help strengthen qualitative findings with quantitative evidence, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between

pornography consumption experiences, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being.

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