

# Exploring the Psychological Impacts of Pornography Addiction in Adults Aged 20 to 40 in the Central Province

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## Abstract

This study explores the psychological effects of compulsive use of pornography among persons aged 20 to 40 in the Central Province. It investigates at how regular pornography viewing could affect opinions of intimacy in interpersonal relationships, usually leading to anxiety, despair, low self-esteem, and emotional detachment. The widespread availability of online pornography has aggravated these psychological problems and prolonged guilt, shame, and poor well-being cycles. The research comprises on individuals in the Central Province, aiming to deliver localized insights and uncover opportunities for focused psychological therapies. The study utilized a qualitative methodology based on the Behavioral Addiction Model and Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT), conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 clinically diagnosed individuals from regional counselling centers. Audio-only Zoom meetings maintained participant confidentiality while facilitating candid discussions of personal experiences. Thematic analysis of the data uncovered persistent patterns of compulsivity, emotional avoidance, cognitive distortions, and social isolation. Participants furthermore conveyed their coping mechanisms and viewpoints regarding therapeutic assistance. The study combines psychological theory with personal narratives, providing a detailed comprehension of pornography addiction and highlighting the necessity for customized mental health therapies for affected individuals.

**Keywords :** Pornography addiction, Psychological effects , Compulsivity , Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT), Therapeutic interventions

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## Chapter 01: Introduction

### 1.1. Topic

Regarding adults between the ages of 20 and 40 years, pornography addiction causes major psychological issues that could endanger mental health and personal relationships. Studies reveal that those in this age range are interacting with online pornography more and more, which fuels compulsive behaviour leading to disorders including depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem (Griffiths, 2001; Kühn & Gallinat, 2014). Dependency on pornography can cause a distorted view of sexuality and relationships, frequently accompanied by shame and guilt, therefore sustaining a cycle of psychological suffering. Sociocultural elements, including the stigma around sexual behaviour and addiction, which can increase guilt and shame and hence aggravate the effect on mental health and personal development, may worsen these psychological burdens in the Central Province.

Addiction to pornography can also affect personal relationships where too high sexual expectations might cause discontent and intimacy problems (Kohut et al., 2021). Building real emotional connections may prove especially challenging for adults in the Central Province since too much pornography can distort views of sexual relationships, which causes frustration and discontent (Toates, 2014). The conservative cultural environment of the Central Province could aggravate these issues since society expectations on relationships, marriage, and sexual behaviour could generate more obstacles to freely confront the problem.

Among adults in the Central Province between the ages of twenty and forty, this addictive behaviour might also hinder the creation of self-esteem and identity. The obsessive use of pornography can cause feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt during a period when many people are trying to build their jobs, relationships, and personal identity. Constant comparisons to the unrealistic depictions of intimacy seen in pornography can aggravate such emotions and lead to more psychological stress as well as more disengagement from actual relationships.

Beyond only personal mental health, pornography addiction has effects on society and family dynamics. Addiction sufferers

sometimes feel isolated and find their social support networks to have broken. Affected people may retreat as pornography addiction occupies more of their time and mental energy, which would disrupt ties with family and friends. Because loneliness fuels more reliance on pornography as a coping strategy, this can prolong the cycle of addiction. Given the Central Province's great focus on family and community relationships, this departure can have significant effects on not just the person but also on their immediate social networks.

Addiction to pornography also affects love relationships seriously. The irrational sexual standards promoted by pornography consumption sometimes cause less enjoyment in actual personal relationships. Partners of pornography addicts can feel abandoned, underappreciated, or even betrayed, which would cause problems and a loss of confidence. Couples may find it especially more difficult to handle these problems in the cultural setting of the Central Province, where conventional ideas on marriage and family roles are prevalent, under pressure to keep social appearances, leading to hidden marital discord and, in some cases, separation or divorce.

Though these issues are well known worldwide, there is a notable study vacuum in the Sri Lankan setting—especially in the Central Province—about the psychological consequences of pornography addiction on adults between the ages of 20 and 40. Although numerous research abroad have looked at the effects of pornography addiction on mental health and relationships, few have looked at how cultural, religious, and social elements particular to Sri Lanka affect these problems. The unwillingness to talk about sexual addiction resulting from cultural taboos limits the knowledge of how pornography addiction impacts people in this area even more.

Given the unique sociocultural scene of Central Province, where religious and traditional beliefs greatly shape debates on sexuality, this lack of research is alarming. Without localized study, it is difficult to understand how pornography addiction presents in this demographic, how it is seen, and the particular obstacles people have in trying for treatment. Studying how pornography addiction is affecting the mental health and relationships of adults in this age range is especially crucial in Sri Lanka given the mix of digital accessibility and strict social standards.

Developing sensible treatments and interventions for people living in the Central Province depends on an awareness of these particular cultural elements. Localized research would enable mental health providers to create culturally relevant treatment plans addressing both the addiction and the deep-seated guilt that can deter people from getting treatment. Moreover, tackling this increasing problem depends critically on public awareness campaigns destigmatizing addiction and offering help tools.

## 1.2. Literature Review

The ease availability and anonymity of online platforms have greatly helped internet pornography to proliferate quickly, which has spurred serious debates among academics and psychologists. This phenomena begs issues much like those surrounding other non-substance-related addictions like gaming and gambling. Scientists have tried to ascertain whether usage of problematic pornography qualifies as a behavioral addiction. In this setting, Grubbs et al. (2019) investigate the complex views on online pornography addiction and propose that ideas regarding addiction might be influenced by personal factors like religious beliefs and moral discordance. Although their consumption habits are similar to those of non-distressed people, their studies show that those who view their pornography use as harmful often feel quite psychologically uncomfortable. This emphasizes the idea of "perceived addiction," in which guilt or shame usually shaped by personal or social norms sometimes magnifies self-reported notions of addiction. For adults between the ages of 20 and 40, who could suffer more psychological stress because of society expectations of relationships and sexual performance, this dynamic is especially pertinent.

Caplan's (2002) introduction of the idea of problematic internet usage (PIU) is essential for comprehending the psychological consequences of too active online activities, including pornography viewing. According to Caplan's cognitive-behavioral model, those who experience social anxiety or loneliness are especially prone to obsessive online activities, which could include too frequent pornography consumption. Young adults negotiating employment, relationships, and family life can be particularly susceptible to the negative effects of pornography use, which commonly shows up as concern over sexual performance and relational intimacy. The link between harmful psychological effects and internet addiction highlights the need of realizing pornography addiction as a real issue even if it is not covered in official diagnostic criteria. This is consistent with research by Lam et al. (2009), which show that internet addiction—especially related to pornography—correlates with more psychological suffering among young adults, thereby influencing their social contacts and occupational life.

Among adults between the ages of 20 and 40, the impact of online pornography use is especially important as this period

usually entails essential relationship and professional growth. Studies by Braun-Courville and Rojas (2009) reveal an early start into dangerous sexual activities and a clear correlation between acceptance of liberal sexual attitudes and access to sexually graphic websites. Pornography throughout these formative years can skew sexual norms and expectations, which would cause compulsive behaviors and discontent in real-life relationships. Among young adults, the psychological discomfort associated with internet addiction can impede general well-being, social interaction, and career success; hence, there is a clear need for educational and preventive treatments catered to this age range. For example, programs for workplace education emphasizing good digital use and sexual health could assist to lessen the bad effects of pornography on personal and professional relationships.

In Sri Lanka, the fast spread of cellphones and internet access has resulted in higher consumption of internet pornography among those between the ages of 20 and 40. For young people struggling with the availability of explicit content online, Sri Lanka's cultural background—which historically stresses moral and religious values—creates a special paradox. Many of the adults in this age range often find themselves caught between their sexual curiosity and the social shame around pornography consumption. Studies indicate that this duality can lead to increased guilt and shame, which would exacerbate mental health problems including anxiety and depression (De Silva et al., 2021). Furthermore aggravating this problem is the dearth of thorough sex education and mental health resources, which leaves many individuals unprepared to control the psychological effects of their internet use.

From a neurological standpoint, Gola et al. (2017) offer a view of internet pornography that suggests use of it might in fact be addicted. Men undergoing therapy for problematic pornography usage showed increased brain reactions to sexual stimuli, according to fMRI research, which matched the neural patterns seen in those with drug addictions. These results confirm the theory that troublesome pornography usage shows traits of other addictions, including cravings, withdrawal symptoms, and loss of behavioral control. The comparison between internet pornography use and drug addiction emphasizes the need of more study on the neurological processes involved, especially as these findings could guide therapeutic approaches and educational campaigns for adult populations at risk. Moreover, knowing these neurobiological reactions can help doctors create focused treatments meant to solve the underlying compulsive behaviors related to pornography consumption in adults.

It is still debatable whether internet pornography addiction belongs on a larger scale of sexual addiction. Stein et al. (2001) investigate how hypersexual illness, marked by an obsession with sexual concepts and compulsive sexual actions, interacts with problematic pornography intake. Their studies draw attention to the psychological and behavioral aspects of this disorder, showing that internet pornography frequently provides drive for those inclined to hypersexual habits. Griffiths (2001) similarly tackles the special difficulties presented by internet sex addiction, pointing out that the immersive features of online settings might aggravate compulsive sexual behaviors, hence challenging users' capacity for effective consumption control. This intricacy suggests the need for focused treatments catered to individuals' distinct psychological profiles and situations, particularly among adults between the ages of 20 and 40 who might be under particular life demands.

In the Sri Lankan setting, mental health experts have great difficulty treating internet pornography addiction among this generation. Many people suffer in silence since the stigma around mental health problems sometimes discourages people from getting treatment. Moreover, the problem is worsened by healthcare professionals' ignorance of the psychological consequences of internet pornography and lack of training on this topic. Yellowlees and Marks (2005) challenge whether internet addiction should be considered as a separate diagnosis or as a manifestation of underlying mental health problems, therefore critically evaluating the diagnostic complexity connected with this condition. They contend that problematic internet use—especially pornography addiction—may mirror more serious illnesses such as melancholy, anxiety, or obsessive-compulsive disorder. This viewpoint fits Caplan's (2002) cognitive-behavioral paradigm, which holds that obsessive online use results from maladaptive coping strategies. Knowing this association will enable teachers and psychologists to spot at-risk people and provide suitable treatments including cognitive-behavioral techniques addressing underlying mental health problems.

The consequences of internet pornography addiction go beyond personal issues to include more general social and cultural ones. Young (2008) argues that internet sex addiction influences not just personal well-being but also interpersonal connections, career life, and personal growth. In Sri Lanka, where traditional values may contradict current digital reality, people between the ages of 20 and 40 with pre-existing impulse control issues or limited access to healthy sexual outlets may find it difficult to separate between good sexual expression from addictive behavior. This blurring of lines emphasizes the need of society awareness and intervention techniques since it may have negative consequences on people and their relationships. To reduce these hazards, educational campaigns meant to encourage good sexual attitudes and practices have to be included into classroom materials and professional development courses at businesses. Furthermore, society's conversation on online pornography has to change to meet these issues and create settings where people may share their experiences and get treatment free from stigma.

The literature on internet pornography addiction shows a complicated interaction of social, psychological, and neurobiological

elements. Although the label of problematic pornography usage as a behavioral addiction is still controversial, the data demonstrating its psychological effects is convincing. Developing appropriate treatments and support networks depends on an awareness of the several dimensions of this problem. Future studies should keep looking at the long-term consequences of internet pornography addiction, how it affects mental health, and suitable therapy strategies meant to meet the particular difficulties people encounter on their paths of recovery. Furthermore, qualitative studies concentrated on Sri Lankan people between the ages of 20 and 40 who suffer with internet pornography addiction will offer insightful analysis of their difficulties and the effectiveness of current treatments. Knowing these personal stories will help to improve support systems and modify treatment strategies so they are sensitive to the actual experiences of this generation. Constant communication among stakeholders will be crucial as this area of research develops to handle the always shifting terrain of internet pornography and its effects on mental health and well-being.

### 1.3. Research Methodology

This qualitative study utilizes logical deductive reasoning and primary research to develop hypotheses about pornography addiction while acquiring new insights through direct engagement with impacted persons. The study seeks to develop a comprehensive knowledge of the issue by combining secondary analysis of current empirical data with primary data gathered from a meticulously chosen sample of individuals diagnosed as compulsive pornography addicts.

To facilitate a thorough investigation of the psychological ramifications of pornography addiction, 10 volunteers were enlisted from counselling centers in the Central Province that focus on aiding individuals with pornography-related concerns. This focused recruitment technique sought to gather the viewpoints and experiences of clinically diagnosed compulsive pornography users, hence yielding substantial and pertinent material for study. The volunteers were chosen for their readiness to disclose personal experiences and their diagnosis of compulsive pornography usage, guaranteeing that the collected data would be informative and directly relevant to the research aims.

Interviews were conducted through online Zoom sessions, utilizing audio recordings exclusively to preserve confidentiality and ensure participant comfort owing to the sensitive nature of the topic. Each session lasted roughly 40 minutes and aimed to foster an open and frank discourse, enabling participants to articulate their thoughts and emotions without reservation. The interviews were semi-structured, with ten meticulously designed questions that prompted participants to examine their experiences, emotional conflicts, and the effects of pornography addiction on their life. Every audio session was transcribed with precision to accurately reflect the nuances of participants' comments, thereby preserving essential facts and sentiments for analysis.

Thematic analysis was utilized to discern principal themes and patterns within the data, uncovering insights into the psychological ramifications, emotional conflicts, and interpersonal dynamics linked to pornography addiction. This strategy facilitated a detailed comprehension of the participants' experiences, emphasizing both similarities and distinctions in their tales. This study seeks to elucidate the intricacies of pornography addiction and the contributing factors to its persistence by analyzing these themes, hence highlighting the distinct issues encountered by persons within this demographic.

The study process adhered rigorously to ethical requirements. Participants were apprised of the study's objectives, procedures, and their entitlement to withdraw at any moment without repercussions. To maintain the utmost standards of confidentiality, all personal data and replies were anonymized in the final study. This dedication to ethical research techniques safeguarded participants' identities and cultivated a climate of trust, prompting people to disclose their experiences candidly.

The qualitative data gathered from these participants will substantially improve comprehension of the psychological effects of pornography addiction and enable a more thorough analysis of the emerging themes. The research seeks to enhance the field by incorporating insights from the lived experiences of those impacted by this issue, thereby informing practitioners and researchers about the distinct challenges and requirements of this community.

This study aims to deliver a thorough examination of the psychological impacts of pornography addiction and to discover appropriate therapy interventions by combining secondary data analysis with primary participant insights. The research seeks to illuminate the experiences of persons grappling with pornography addiction to enhance the formulation of more effective treatment strategies and support systems tailored to their distinct psychological and emotional requirements. This thorough approach not only enriches the scholarly discussion on pornography addiction but also has the capacity to influence policy and practice in mental health and addiction care.

#### 1.3.1 Theoretical Framework

Research depends on a theoretical framework since it offers a disciplined perspective for analyzing a particular phenomenon, directs the course of the study and helps to define goals. In this study on the psychological consequences of pornography

addiction among persons aged 20 to 40 in the Central Province, the framework guides the choice of suitable approaches and data collecting methods, therefore enabling efficient analysis and interpretation of results. It improves knowledge by stressing the interaction between cognitive processes and behaviour patterns, therefore exposing the psychological and emotional conflicts people experience. Furthermore, by placing the research inside current theories, the framework helps to spot gaps in the body of knowledge, so guiding the formulation of focused intervention plans and so advancing theory. Theoretically, the framework improves the research process by guaranteeing rigour and relevance, hence improving findings that might guide practice and policy.

Therefore, using two key theories the Behavioral Addiction Model and Cognitive and Behavioral Theory (CBT) this study investigates the psychological effects of pornography addiction on persons between the ages of 20 and 40 in the Central Province. These models shed light on the cognitive processes sustaining obsessive pornography usage as well as the behavioral mechanics of addiction.

### 1.3.1 a) Behavioral Addiction Model

Focusing on the similarities between addictive behaviors and motivated actions rather than only on the special traits of addictive behaviors, the Behavioral Addiction Model has attracted major interest in recent years (Köpetz et al., 2013). This model highlights how some actions could develop into compulsive habits that result in patterns of dependence and withdrawal like those seen in drug or alcohol-based addictions.

- **Compulsivity and Lack of Control:** Even when users of pornography are aware of its adverse effects on their mental and emotional well-being, their addiction is defined by an incapacity to manage viewing frequency or intensity. Those who use pornography excessively sometimes show signs of behavioral addiction, including desire, poor self-control, and usage of sexually explicit content to ease anxiety. (Kraus et al., 2016)
- **Tolerance and Escalation:** Like other types of addiction, pornography users could find themselves driven over time to consume ever more explicit or unique content in order to reach the same degree of fulfillment. As consumers grow desensitized to more traditional pornographic content, this pattern of escalation can cause them to search for more severe or unusual sexual content. (Willoughby et al., 2017)
- **Withdrawal and Psychological Distress:** Attempts to cut or halt pornography intake sometimes cause withdrawal symptoms like anxiety, irritation, and mental distress. These unfavorable emotional states can support the obsessive use of pornography as a way of discomfort relief. (Binnie & Reavey, 2019)

### 1.3.1 b) Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT)

In the field of psychology, the Cognitive-Behavioral Theory is a well-known method stressing the interaction among a person's ideas, feelings, and actions (Halder & Mahato, 2019). This hypothesis stresses how learnt actions and thinking patterns help to maintain pornography addiction. CBT holds that by reinforcing emotional pain and avoidance, cognitive distortions—irrational beliefs or negative thought patterns—fuel addictive behaviors.

- **Cognitive Distortions:** Those who have pornography addiction often grow to have erroneous ideas about relationships, sexuality, and self-worth. Such ideas can include negative physical views, irrational expectations about sexual performance, and discontent in actual relationships. These illusions fuel anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.
- **Negative Reinforcement:** According to CBT, pornography use can function as negative reinforcement—that is, a means of escape from loneliness, boredom, or stress. But the temporary relief from pornography use simply serves to perpetuate the behavior, therefore fostering a cycle of emotional avoidance and progressively more psychological discomfort.
- **Behavioral Interventions:** In order to lower obsessive behavior, CBT stresses the need of identifying and altering negative thought patterns. Breaking the addictive cycle and resolving the emotional issues underlying addiction depend critically on cognitive-behavioral treatments including identification of cognitive distortions and development of better coping strategies.

Thus, the Behavioral Addiction Model offers a complete understanding of pornography addiction by stressing its compulsive character and its resemblance with other well-researched addictions. It underlines the cyclical link among tolerance, compulsivity, and withdrawal that increases psychological impacts. By addressing the cognitive and emotional elements of addiction, Integrating Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT) enhances this paradigm. This integrated strategy emphasizes the need of focusing on both thought patterns and actions in order to sufficiently reduce the psychological effects of pornography



addiction.

### 1.3.2. Participants

Ten anonymous participants who were especially selected to guarantee a thorough assessment on the psychological consequences of pornography addiction make up the participant data for this study. These volunteers came from Central Province counseling facilities that focus in helping people dealing with pornography-related problems. The choosing process was intended to represent the viewpoints and experiences of those clinically identified as compulsive pornography users, therefore providing insightful analysis of their difficulties and coping strategies.

Since all of the participants were adults between the ages of twenty and forty, the results would be pertinent to the intended study population. Since the subject is delicate, secrecy was given top priority, hence video recordings of the interviews were not allowed; only audio recordings were used. This method let the participants remain somewhat anonymous while nevertheless enabling frank and open conversations about their experiences with pornography addiction. The diverse dataset resulting from the variety of the participants in terms of gender and origins offers different points of view on the psychological and relational effects of their addiction.

### 1.4. The Assumptions

The manner in which the study on the psychological effects of pornography addiction is framed and the results are interpreted depend on the assumptions that underlie it. First of all, it is believed that participants admit pornography addiction as an actual issue influencing their mental health, which is necessary for real understanding of their experiences (Kühn & Gallinat, 2014). Second, participants' honest responses to surveys or interviews will help to guarantee the authenticity and dependability of the data (Chiu et al., 2021). The research also assumes that pornography addiction causes a variety of psychological problems, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Leckman et al., 1997). Furthermore assumed is that the experiences of the ten participants would mirror more general trends in the literature, therefore enabling generalizations regarding the psychological effects of pornography addiction (Fink et al., 1995). At last, the study supposes that the therapeutic procedures investigated in the literature would be relevant for the participants' recovery experiences, so offering understanding of what approaches could be successful in treating pornography addiction (Turner et al., 2022). The basis for the study establishes and guides the examination of qualitative data, these assumptions also shape the analysis.

Under these assumptions, this study attempts to investigate the psychological effects of pornography addiction among adults aged 20 to 40 in the Central Province, with an emphasis on how addiction influences their mental health and what coping mechanisms are efficient in controlling those impacts.

### Objectives:

1. To explore how adults aged 20 to 40 in the Central Province perceive the effects of pornography addiction on their mental health, particularly regarding anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression.
2. To identify the coping strategies and interventions that adults aged 20 to 40 in the Central Province find most effective in managing the psychological effects of pornography addiction.

## Chapter 2: Introduction to Pornography Addiction

### 2.1 Introduction to Pornography Addiction

Despite it results in significant psychological, social, and interpersonal impacts pornography addiction is a complicated behavioral disorder marked by an individual's inability to manage their intake of explicit content. Although occasional pornography usage could be regarded as a normal aspect of adult sexuality, the difference between casual use and addiction is in the loss of control and obsessive behavior connected with addiction. Those hooked to pornography typically feel a strong need to interact with sexual content, which disturbs daily life, personal obligations, and mental stability.

This type of addiction is directly related to the reward system of the brain since the frequent viewing of pornographic content boosts dopamine release, therefore fostering a cycle of reinforcement. Common in many different kinds of addiction, tolerance

is the phenomena wherein people may need more frequent or extreme content to attain the same degree of satisfaction over time. Deepening addiction can affect mental health including guilt, shame, and solitude as well as more severe disorders including anxiety, depression, and poor self-esteem.

## 2.2 Current Trends in Pornography Consumption

The rise of digital channels and the proliferation of high-speed internet has radically changed the scenario of pornography intake in recent years. Especially among younger people, the increasing availability and accessibility of online pornography have led to an amazing increase in usage. A few decades ago, viewing graphic content needed physical effort—such as buying publications or films; today, anyone with an internet connection may browse pornography anonymously and without limits. This simplicity of access has normalized pornography use and helped to shape obsessive viewing patterns.

Studies indicate that among highly technologically engaged persons between the ages of 20 and 40, pornography viewing is most common. A 2016 Barna Group study indicates that a sizable portion of young people say they routinely view pornography; men consume pornography more often than women. Explicit content's reach has been further broadened by social media platforms, video streaming websites, and even virtual reality technologies, which let consumers connect with it in ever more immersive and interactive ways.

The rise in pornography addiction can also be attributed in great part to the change to mobile consumption. Smartphones have made it more difficult for people to control their intake since they allow on-demand access to material at any moment. Studies reveal that many people browse pornography in private, including in the privacy of their house or during idle time, which can support obsessive behavior. Users find it more difficult to identify when their usage crosses the border from casual use to problematic addiction given its continuous availability.

## 2.3 Severity of the Problem

The severity of pornography addiction resides not only in its increasing frequency but also in its profound and varied consequences on psychological well-being and interpersonal relationships. Consistent pornography usage can cause major emotional suffering including low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Addiction to pornography causes shame and remorse for many people, which might result from conflicts between personal ideals, society expectations, or the concealment required in their behavior. These emotional weight can fuel an addictive loop whereby pornography is utilized as a means of escape from unpleasant emotions, only to aggravate those emotions over time.

Apart from its psychological effects, pornography addiction affects relationships in great extent. In love relationships, too much pornography can cause decreased closeness, sexual discontent, and perhaps communication problems. Partners of those hooked to pornography could feel inadequate, betrayed, or neglected, which strains relationships and, occasionally results in separation or divorce. The fact that pornography viewing can skew a person's expectations of real-life relationships, therefore encouraging irrational standards of sexual behavior or attractiveness that cannot be satisfied in healthy, consensual partnerships, complicates this dynamic even more.

From a society's standpoint, the acceptance of pornography viewing could desensitize people to its possible negative effects, therefore hiding the reality of addiction. The general availability of pornography and the lack of sufficient public debate on its detrimental consequences make it challenging for people to identify the symptoms of addiction and get treatment. The stigma of pornography use complicates the matter even more since many people reluctant to share their difficulties freely out of social consequences or criticism.

Regarding cognitive impacts, studies have revealed that pornography addiction contains traits of other behavioral addictions such gambling or drug usage. The reward system of the brain is quite active in supporting obsessive pornography consumption. The neurological circuits in charge of pleasure and reward grow desensitized over time, which lowers satisfaction from both pornography and actual sexual experiences. This desensitization can lead people looking for more intense or forbidden content, therefore extending their addiction. Furthermore frequent in other types of addiction, research indicate that those with pornography addiction could struggle with impulse control, decision-making, and emotional regulation (Privara & Bob, 2023).

## 2.4 Conclusion

With all factors considered, pornography addiction is a developing public health issue with wider psychological, emotional, and relational effects that calls more public attention. Particularly among individuals between the ages of 20 and 40, the availability of explicit content through digital channels has greatly raised consumption rates and made it more likely for

obsessive behaviors to emerge. The degree of the issue goes not only in the addictive character of pornography but also in the great emotional suffering and interpersonal conflicts it can generate for people and their loved ones. This study aims to contribute to a better knowledge of pornography addiction by appreciating the present trends and the seriousness of the problem, thereby preparing the ground for more thorough and successful solutions to handle its influence on individuals and society.

## **Chapter 3: Psychological Impacts of Pornography Addiction**

### **3.1 Individual Psychological Effects**

Particularly influencing emotional and mental health, pornography addiction has significant and varied psychological effects. Many people battling this addiction claim higher degrees of anxiety and sadness, usually resulting from the obsessive character of their usage. Studies have shown that the emotional upheaval connected with addiction can aggravate pre-existing mental health problems, therefore generating a cycle of suffering that gets harder to break out from (National Institutes on Drug Abuse (US), 2020). The guilt and shame associated with too much pornography consumption deepen these bad emotions and cause general mental decline. Individuals struggling with their addiction could feel more emotionally sensitive, including self-loathing and worthlessness, which can have long-term consequences on their mental health.

### **3.2 Interpersonal Relationship Impacts**

Apart from personal psychological consequences, pornography addiction seriously affects relationships among people. In intimate relationships, for example, addiction can erode intimacy, trust, and good communication. Many studies show that those addicted to pornography could find it difficult to create real emotional connections; they usually substitute the synthetic sensations offered by pornography for the natural intimacy. This substitution can cause problems between couples and cause disappointment in actual relationships. Addiction to pornography can produce emotional distance that blocks honest conversation and fuels resentment and misunderstandings.

Moreover, pornography addiction can interfere with social contacts, leading to isolation and less desire to participate in events. Users may find themselves caught in a loop of loneliness and alienation as they cut off real-life relationships in favor of virtual stimulation, therefore aggravating their psychological stress. The dependence on pornography as a source of enjoyment might reduce the drive to seek meaningful relationships with others, therefore undermining the incentive to maintain mental health by which social support systems are so vitally important.

### **3.3 Anxiety, Low Self-Esteem, and Depression**

Within the field of pornography addiction, the junction of anxiety, poor self-esteem, and depression marks a major area of concern. Many people claim that their addiction aggravates their anxiety, usually connected to the internal conflict about their behavior and the dread of social criticism. This anxiety can show up as social anxiety, in which case people feel awkward in social settings or worry about being out as a pornography user. Often aggravating these emotions is the shame attached to pornography addiction, which drives more isolation and avoidance of social events.

One other common problem among persons with pornography addiction is low self-esteem. People who engage in obsessive behavior may start to regard themselves negatively, feeling worthless or inadequate. This negative self-perception can cause a cycle whereby low self-esteem supports the addiction since people may turn to pornography as a means of escape from their feelings of inadequacy. Consequently, depending too much on pornography can lead to a vicious loop whereby people feel momentarily satisfied but then stay caught in ideas of worthlessness.

For people hooked to pornography, depression sometimes coexists with worry and poor self-esteem. The emotional turbulence combined with guilt and humiliation can cause a general despondency. People may discover they lack drive, vitality, and enthusiasm in once loved hobbies. Anxiety, poor self-esteem, and depression taken together create a major obstacle to recovery; hence, it is imperative to manage these related problems in treatment and support plans.

Addiction to pornography has psychological effects that not only affect the person but also their interpersonal interactions, which emphasizes the great need of efficient treatments and plans to overcome these difficulties. Understanding the complexity of pornography addiction and how it affects emotional health and relationships should be first priorities for mental health providers and support systems. Good treatment plans could call for relational therapy emphasizing on restoring trust



and intimacy in love relationships as well as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which can assist people address the cognitive distortions related with their addiction.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Finally, pornography addiction is a complicated problem that significantly influences people and their social contacts. The psychological effects are several and include low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and major emotional suffering. People who battle their compulsive tendencies sometimes find themselves caught in a loop of guilt and shame that aggravates their existing mental health problems. Moreover, the addiction skews ideas of trust and intimacy, which causes distance and conflict in love relationships.

The way anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression interact emphasizes the whole range of difficulties people struggling with pornography addiction experience. Effective therapy and assistance depend on addressing these related psychological problems. To help with the emotional and cognitive distortions connected with the addiction, mental health experts should use relational therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). Deeper knowledge of the complexity of pornography addiction and its consequences on mental health and relationships will help us to create more successful preventive and treatment plans that support better behaviors, enhance mental well-being, and rebuild significant relationships in people's life.

Dealing with the psychological effects of pornography addiction calls for an all-encompassing strategy with regard to personal, relational, and social aspects. Increasing awareness of this urgent problem and promoting honest communication about it will help us to create a society that supports people in their path toward emotional resilience and recovery.

## Chapter 4: Strategies for Mitigating Pornography Addiction

Coping with pornography addiction demands for a combination of personal and collective strategies aimed to reduce use and encourage better perspectives on sexuality.

### 4.1 Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

One effective method shown to assist people identify and modify maladaptive thought patterns linked with their addiction is cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). By means of CBT, people can learn to identify cognitive distortions causing compulsive behaviors, thereby enabling them to create better coping strategies and substitute more gratifying activities for pornography use (Woods & Scott, 2016). By helping people identify the fundamental causes of their addiction, this therapeutic method enables them to face and question skewed ideas about sexuality, relationships, and self-worth.

In CBT, patients define reasonable objectives in concert with therapists and track their development over time. This organized approach enables people to recognize tendencies of escapism or avoidance, therefore arming them with means to resolve emotional pain without turning to pornography. Development of mindfulness and self-compassion helps people improve their emotional resilience and lower their chance of relapse. In the end, CBT gives people the tools they need to negotiate their emotional difficulties and start a better relationship with sexuality.

### 4.2 Support Groups

Apart from treatment, support groups are quite important in guiding people towards the recovery from pornography addiction. These organizations offer a secure environment where people could share their stories, grow from one another, and get support on their path to recovery. Peer support has been shown to build community and responsibility, which can be quite helpful in lowering isolation and increasing drive to change (Brenner, 2016).

Support groups could be in-person meetings, internet forums, or specialized programs run by mental health specialists. Engaging in these groups helps people to obtain understanding of coping mechanisms and personal development by means of collective wisdom and shared experiences. Including instructional elements on the psychological consequences of pornography addiction into these support networks can help increase awareness and foster comprehension, therefore motivating people to start active recovery. Support groups can also provide a forum for people to build meaningful relationships with others who know their challenges, therefore countering the isolation sometimes connected with addiction.

### 4.3 Behavioral Addiction Model

Furthermore helping to reduce pornography addiction is knowing and using the behavioral addiction model. Like drug addictions, this paradigm acknowledges that some behaviors—including pornography viewing—can become compulsive and have detrimental effects. The paradigm of behavioral addiction stresses the need of reinforcement in preserving obsessive actions. Regarding pornography addiction, people may find instant fulfillment or respite from bad feelings by means of consumption, so supporting the habit over time.

Knowing this model helps one to create alternative coping mechanisms and better habits that offer comparable advantages without the bad effects of pornography, hence guiding therapy techniques. People can be urged, for example, to participate in physical hobbies, artistic pursuits, or social events that satisfy their psychological and emotional requirements, therefore ending the cycle of depending on pornography for fulfillment.

Therapeutic treatments can include elements of the behavioral addiction model by concentrating on the triggers causing obsessive behavior and guiding patients toward self-regulation. This include defining limits on internet use, spotting high-risk events, and developing individualized strategies for control of impulses. Reducing the behavioral patterns connected with pornography addiction helps people to regulate their urges and lessen their dependence on pornography as a coping tool.

### 4.4 Educational Initiatives

Finally, reducing the influence of pornography addiction in society depends on increasing knowledge of it and encouraging honest conversations about it. This can entail including into school curriculum and community initiatives teaching about good sexual relationships and the possible negative effects of too frequent pornography viewing. Society can help people have a better view of their sexuality and lower the stigma connected with getting treatment for addiction by supporting a culture that questions pornography and its consequences.

Emphasizing the need of consent, mutual respect, and emotional connection in intimate relationships, educational projects should seek to offer age-appropriate materials that support good attitudes toward sexuality. Reaching different audiences with workshops, seminars, and instructional campaigns helps to guarantee that people from many backgrounds are aware of the possible hazards of pornography addiction. Including parents, teachers, and community leaders in these conversations will also help to establish a supportive environment that enables people to negotiate the complexity of sexuality in a healthy way.

Research and education that enable people to make informed decisions and build emotional resilience against the psychological effects of pornography addiction should always come first as the debate about pornography changes. Working together among mental health professionals, teachers, and community groups, mental health professionals, educators, and community organizations may build a thorough support system for people impacted by this addiction so guaranteeing their access to the tools and assistance required for their thriving.

### 4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the approaches for reducing pornography addiction have to combine community support structures, personal therapy interventions, and instructional campaigns. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) gives people the means to change dysfunctional cognitive patterns and strengthen a better relationship with sexuality. Support groups let people share their experiences and lower feelings of loneliness by building community and responsibility. The behavioral addiction model helps people to create better coping strategies by providing insightful analysis of the obsessive nature of pornography consumption. Finally, educational programs can enable people and society at large to have honest conversations about sexuality, therefore promoting a better knowledge of intimacy and relationships. We can greatly lower the psychological effects of pornography addiction and encourage emotional well-being by using a whole strategy to handle it.

## Chapter 5: Results , Discussion & Conclusion

### 5.1 Introduction

Focusing on important themes including motional distress, relationship impacts, community support, and educational initiatives, this chapter offers the research results on the psychological effects of pornography addiction among persons aged 20 to 40 in the Central Province. Participants highlighted the requirement of focused treatments to handle these psychological

issues since they revealed great emotional conflict including increased anxiety, poor self-esteem, and sadness. Furthermore, the addiction damaged personal relationships, which resulted in poor intimacy and communication breakdowns that call for different therapy strategies to restore these ties. Reducing feelings of loneliness and encouraging a sense of belonging among those going through comparable challenges depends on the creation of easily available support groups. Moreover, encouraging good opinions of sexuality through age-appropriate talks about relationships and permission is crucial; including parents and teachers in these dialogues will help to build a supportive environment for negotiating sexual health. The study highlights the complexity of pornography addiction's psychological effects generally and the need of integrated therapeutic approaches, strong community support, and thorough educational programs to support recovery and enhance general mental well-being in the society.

## 5.2 Emerged Themes

### 5.2.1 Theme 1: Emotional Turmoil and Mental Health Decline

The results showed a clear relationship between pornography addiction and increased degrees of emotional conflict among the subjects. Many of the respondents said they experienced guilt, humiliation, and self-loathing, which frequently preceded more anxiety and despair. Seven of ten individuals, for example, said that their addiction aggravated pre-existing mental health problems, in line with results from the National Institutes on Drug Abuse (2020), which underlined how obsessive behaviors can start cycles of emotional pain.

This emotional turbulence is especially concerning since it shows a vicious loop when the same means of escape from negative emotions finally reinforces those emotions. The findings confirm the necessity of efficient therapeutic treatments aiming at both the addiction and the emotional suffering it generates. Helping people solve cognitive distortions and create better coping strategies might mostly depend on cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).

### 5.2.2 Theme 2: Disruption of Interpersonal Relationships

Many of the respondents said that pornography addiction seriously disrupted their personal relationships. Many revealed emotions of emotional detachment from their spouses and challenges building intimacy and trust. Seven of ten people, for instance, said their addiction caused communication failures that caused more problems in their relationships.

These results speak to the research showing that in romantic relationships, addiction can erode the basis of intimacy and trust. People run the danger of alienating their spouses when they replace the true emotional ties with the synthetic intimacy presented by pornography. Emphasizing the need of connection in conquering addiction, relational therapy helps couples regain trust and communication skills by addressing these problems.

### 5.2.3 Theme 3: Anxiety, Low Self-Esteem, and Depression

The results revealed as a major theme the interaction of anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression. Many of the participants said their addiction caused social anxiety, in which case their inability to participate in meaningful social events was hampered by fear of exposure and criticism. Out of 10 individuals, over six said their addiction reduced their self-worth, which set off a cycle of isolation and further reliance on pornography as a coping mechanism.

For those working in mental health, this subject emphasizes a crucial area of concern. The junction of psychological problems implies that good therapy should include techniques to increase self-esteem and control anxiety. Support groups and educational programs can enable people develop emotional resilience and confront the negative self-perceptions sometimes linked with pornography addiction.

## 5.3 Implications for Therapy and Community Support

The results imply different effects for therapy and community support. Mental health experts should first of all create an integrated approach combining marriage therapy with cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). This twin method not only tackles the psychological problems resulting from pornography addiction but also emphasizes on repairing human connections that could be harmed as a result of such activity. Combining these therapy approaches allows practitioners to assist people overcome their addiction and offer tools and techniques to improve trust and communication in their relationships. Through learning to negotiate both their personal mental health issues and the dynamics of their interpersonal relationships, this all-encompassing therapy method can result in more sustainable recovery outcomes.

Additionally essential elements of community and responsibility are support groups. Sharing their stories and learning from others who go through similar challenges has therapeutic significance, the participants underlined. Healing depends on a sense of belonging and understanding, which the act of sharing one's difficulties in a secure and no judging surroundings helps to develop. Establishing more easily available and varied support systems might help reduce emotions of loneliness and isolation, which usually accompany addiction.

The development and marketing of these support groups should be given top priority by community organizations so that they are inclusive and meet a range of backgrounds and experiences. To make the assistance more relevant and accessible, this could entail specialized groups concentrated on particular demographics—such as age, gender, or cultural background—that help to define them. Moreover, including online platforms for virtual support groups helps to improve accessibility so that those who might be reluctant to go to in-person meetings may join a supportive community from the convenience of their homes.

Apart from conventional support groups, peer-led projects help people to participate actively in their healing process. These projects can involve mentoring programs whereby those who have effectively negotiated their recovery path help others presently experiencing pornography addiction. Such mentoring can offer great insights and support, so strengthening the belief that recovery is possible and that people are not by themselves in their difficulties.

Finally, by increasing knowledge of the effects of pornography addiction and available options, community outreach and education programs can support therapeutic efforts. By educating the public on the value of mental health and the necessity of encouraging surroundings, one can help to build a more compassionate society by so lowering stigma and so promoting acceptance. To foster a culture of understanding and support, these outreach initiatives can comprise seminars, informational meetings, and cooperation with nearby companies and associations.

For those suffering with pornography addiction, a multifarious strategy combining therapeutic techniques with community support programs can greatly improve the rehabilitation process. Mental health experts and community leaders should cooperate to create an atmosphere that not only supports continuous mental wellbeing but also aids in healing by giving public education, peer support, and easily available services first priority.

#### **5.4 Educational Initiatives**

The results emphasize the importance of educational initiatives meant to support favorable opinions about sexuality and solve the possible hazards related to regular pornography intake. Such programs are absolutely vital in helping young people to have better knowledge about sexual interactions. Community gatherings should highlight age-appropriate talks about relationships, consent, and emotional connections so that people could negotiate the complexity of modern sexuality.

Teachers and parents must be included into these conversations since they significantly influence how young people view and treat sexuality. We can build a supportive environment where people feel free to share their worries and questions by organizing seminars and workshops teaching parents and teachers about the effects of pornography and the need of honest communication. This strategy not only helps young people to make wise decisions but also promotes a more complete knowledge of good sexual behavior.

Moreover, community outreach initiatives might offer tools and instruction to teachers and parents so they might properly address these subjects. Providing direction on how to handle concerns about pornography, consent, and emotional health will equip them with the means to participate in meaningful dialogues. By doing this, we can support an open and accepting culture and assist to remove the stigma around talks about sexuality.

Apart from community activities, including these instructional elements into the curricula of schools will help to promote continuous conversations on sexual health. Development of curricula should give thorough sex education—including issues on the effects of pornography, good relationships, and emotional well-being first priority. Giving pupils a secure environment to investigate these topics can help them to better grasp these ideas and encourage better opinions about sexuality.

Furthermore, using digital channels for educational objectives would help these initiatives to reach much more people. Especially young people who could be more likely to interact with digital content, creating online resources, webinars, and social media campaigns can assist share knowledge to a larger audience. These sites can be useful resources for increasing knowledge of the possible risks associated with pornography and promoting conversations about better substitutes and coping mechanisms.

To meet the difficulties presented by pornography addiction, educational initiatives emphasizing positive sexuality, informed permission, and emotional wellness must be established generally. Encouragement of cooperation among teachers, parents, and community leaders will help to build a supportive environment that not only enables people to make better decisions but also promotes a culture of respect and knowledge of sexual health. This proactive strategy can help to greatly lower the stigma related to talking about pornography and its effects, therefore improving mental health results and fostering better personal interactions among young people.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study addresses the complicated psychological effects of pornography addiction among Central Province adults between the ages of 20 and 40. From their experiences, some patterns of emotional turbulence, disturbances in interpersonal relationships, and the entrapment of anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression started to show. Particularly in the cultural setting of the Central Province, these results highlight the great need of thorough intervention strategies including therapeutic approaches combined with community support systems.

The great emotional pain experienced by the participants highlights the need of customized therapeutic interventions, especially those targeting cognitive distortions and offering efficient coping mechanisms such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). Especially suitable for addressing the erroneous ideas about self-worth, relationships, and sexuality that may accompany pornography addiction is CBT. Furthermore, the effect of addiction on personal relationships emphasizes the need of relational treatment, which might enable couples to restore emotional intimacy and trust that might have been undermined by addiction. The recurrent themes of poor self-esteem and increased anxiety imply that assistance programs should mostly concentrate on overcoming these psychological obstacles, therefore providing means of personal healing and restoration.

Support groups can be rather important since they provide secure settings where people might discuss their experiences, get support, and grow to be accountable. These organizations help to build a feeling of community and shared responsibility, which is essential in reducing the isolation sometimes related with addiction. In the Central Province, where social stigma could stifle honest communication about sexual behaviour, the provision of such groups could assist to remove obstacles to seeking treatment, therefore fostering recovery.

Although this study provides important new perspectives, it also creates paths for next investigations in various important spheres. First, long-term psychological consequences of pornography addiction must be tracked by longitudinal studies, which also help to assess the efficacy of several rehabilitation techniques across time. Such studies would provide a better knowledge of how people negotiate their recovery, the elements affecting their development, and the sustainability of treatment results. Research also should look at how people's experiences of pornography addiction are shaped by gender, socioeconomic level, and cultural background. Knowing these factors might result in more complex treatments that fit the particular requirements of several demographic groups.

The influence of technology and accessibility in forming pornography use patterns and their psychological impact is another crucial subject for next investigation. The easier access to pornography as digital platforms develop could aggravate addictive behaviours. Analyzing how technological developments affect addiction could help to guide better informed therapeutic interventions and prevention actions catered to current consumption patterns.

This study has significant limits that demand recognition even with its contributions. The sample size was somewhat small and limited to the Central Province, thereby perhaps restricting the generalizability of the results to more varied or bigger populations. Future studies should strive for a more varied sample to catch a wider spectrum of viewpoints and experiences, therefore enabling a more complete knowledge of pornography addiction. Furthermore, depending just on self-reported data could bring prejudices since participants may underreport or over-report their experiences depending on stigma or personal interpretation. Mixed-method approaches combining qualitative interviews with quantitative polls might help future research to guarantee more reliable data collecting.

Furthermore, even if this study concentrated on the psychological consequences of pornography addiction, it neglected to investigate the impact of outside elements as family dynamics, social pressure, or cultural expectations. Examining these contextual elements would help one to have a more complete knowledge of pornography addiction and how it interacts with society effects. For example, knowing the function of family support systems or the influence of society expectations on relationships and sexual behaviour could help to provide important background for treatment strategies in the Central Province, where cultural standards may greatly affect individuals' experiences with addiction.

This study emphasizes in general the need of a comprehensive strategy to treat pornography addiction that combines educational outreach, community support, and successful therapeutic interventions. Greater knowledge of the implications of pornography addiction and thorough treatment plans will help us to encourage recovery and enhance mental health results for



impacted people. Dealing with the constraints of this study and following the suggested future research paths may help to better grasp pornography addiction and its effects, therefore facilitating more successful therapies and assistance for people afflicted by this ubiquitous problem.

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