

Help-Seeking Behaviour to Stop Pornography Consumption: An Application of Theory of Planned Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The rise of accessibility for digital media has heightened concerns regarding pornography consumption and its psychological, social and behavioural effects. Literature suggests a high prevalence of pornography consumption normally forces individuals seeking professional or informal help due to addiction. Help-seeking behaviour in this context is commonly examined using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which posits that intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Building upon the original TPB framework, this concept paper incorporates gender and self-stigma as additional predictors to better capture the sociocultural realities within Malaysia due to pornography consumption. This proposed study adopts a quantitative survey design using purposive sampling to recruit Malaysian adults aged 18 and above who self-identify with pornography addiction. The paper highlights the complex interplay between pornography consumption, moral incongruence, internalised stigma, gendered sociocultural expectations and help-seeking behaviour. Although pornography consumption rates in Malaysia have increased over time, help-seeking behaviours aimed at stopping the consumption appear to be declining. The reasons are partly due to enhanced technological advancements, persistent stigma, and gender-related barriers in the country. The findings suggest that help-seeking is not solely shaped by the core TPB constructs but is significantly influenced by self-stigma and gender norms too. Given the controversial and evolving nature of pornography, this concept paper emphasises the need for continued research to promote open dialogue and encourage healthier help-seeking behaviours among Malaysians.

Keywords: *Addiction, gender, help-seeking behaviour, pornography, self-stigma.*

INTRODUCTION

The increasing accessibility of digital media in Malaysia has intensified concerns about pornography consumption and its potential psychological, social and behavioural consequences (Shukri et al., 2024). With 90% of the Malaysian population connected through the internet (Howe, 2024), the pornography consumption rate for emerging adults in the country has been reported at a rate of 74.5% (Goh et al., 2023). Moreover, the conducted survey revealed 81.2% reported lifetime pornographic consumption intentionally. It's quite alarming for a multi ethnic South East Asian country like Malaysia to hold this rate, where sex discussions are considered taboo and are prohibited due to cultural and religious constraints. Few limited existing literature being conducted in the country reflected a clear picture of pornography usage addiction among emerging adults in Malaysia (Tan et al., 2022, Ali et al., 2021). It was observed to be a high rate of pornography consumption among Malaysian college students, especially involving males.

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Pornography consists of explicit visual or verbal portrayals of sexual activities, typically intended to evoke sexual stimulation or gratification (Goh et al., 2023). In 2019, the widely used pornography platform known as Pornhub, recorded approximately 39 billion search queries and 42 billion site visits, averaging about 115 million visits each day. These figures illustrate the substantial scale of contemporary pornography consumption and the high demand for such content (Tan et al., 2022).

Studies have revealed that pornography consumption is a form of psychological state where one becomes completely dependent on the content emotionally to the extent where it alters their daily routine and mental health well-being (Simran et al., 2022). Scientific investigation has indicated that problematic pornography consumption is linked to a range of psychological distresses (Rimti et al., 2025; Mattebo et al., 2018), relationship-related anxiety, alcohol consumption (Vieira & Griffiths, 2024; Leonhardt et al., 2018) as well as increase in suicidal tendencies (Privara & Bob, 2023).

It is essential to examine pornography use and to systematically identify those who may be at risk of developing problematic patterns, as early classification allows for timely and targeted support. Recent studies indicate that a substantial proportion of individuals who seek professional or informal help for pornography-related concerns do so because they perceive themselves as being “addicted” to pornography (Jiang et al., 2022). In related with that, help-seeking behaviour is defined as a problem focused-planned action that involves interacting with a particular healthcare professional on a personal level (Cornally & Mccarthy, 2011). The most common approach to frame help-seeking research is by employing the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Adams et al., 2022). The application of Theory of Planned Behaviour has surpassed over 1200 research bibliographies in academic databases, a great predictor in health-behavioural intention (Al-Lozi & Papazafeiropoulou, 2012), has been applied in more than 1000 studies and generally every result supported the theory and confirmed its validity on adaptation (Chen, 2019). In particular, this theory has been widely acclaimed as the main theoretical guide in health help-seeking research (Adams et al., 2022; Thongmak, 2021; Chen, 2019). The adaptation of this theory to identify decision-making factors and how behaviour transformation happens are greatly beneficial in addressing the help-seeking procedure and creating treatments to support behaviour change (Adams et al., 2022).

This theory has been implemented in quite many local studies in the context of pornography consumption (Lim et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2022; Lim, 2017). In Malaysia, the help-seeking behaviour is reported to decline (Sarnon et al., 2020). According to Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), behavioural change is preceded by the formation of intention. The theory posits that intention is shaped by three core determinants: Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioural Control. Attitudes refer to an individual’s favourable or unfavourable evaluations of engaging in a particular behaviour, Subjective Norms reflect perceived social expectations or pressures from significant others to perform the behaviour and Perceived Behavioural Control denotes an individual’s assessment of how easy or difficult it is to carry out the behaviour in question (Ajzen, 1991).

Moreover, it has also been observed that two important factors, gender (Nagai et al., 2023) and self-stigma (Aris & Othman., 2022) have the ability to influence the help-seeking behaviour. Shi et al (2021) proposed adding these predictors into the original model of the theory to enhance its ability to explain and predict behavioural intentions more effectively. As for gender, psychological differences do exist between men and women in the way they behave, from communication style to trying to influencing others (Governor & Akata, 2020),

in which women have higher help-seeking intentions than men (Doll et al., 2021). Whereas, for self-stigma, those with higher levels of self-stigma are known less inclined to seek professional help (Lannin & Bible, 2022), because their low self-esteem makes them feel that seeking help will make them socially unacceptable.

There is a gap within local study in the context of pornography. Topics like this are considered taboo and sensitive to approach in Malaysia (Tan et al., 2022). For instance, numerous studies have been conducted in Western countries, however it is also important to explore the topic among non-Westerners which could sustain the development of pornography studies over time. This research will provide an important understanding in a non-westerner context with the development of the theory based on our culture and tradition as Southeast Asian representatives. Moreover, given the likely role of individualistic orientations in amplifying self-stigma and gender roles, future research should explore this hypothesis in more depth (Lannin & Bible, 2022). The research gaps between these existing individual characteristics appeared to provide valuable insights to the evolving landscape of help-seeking patterns (Tan et al., 2022). From the theoretical gap perspective, implying the Theory of Planned Behaviour in the context of stopping pornography consumption is still scant according to the researcher's database. Thus, the research questions arose to examine how the three determinants of the theory impact help-seeking behaviour and also the predictors (gender and self-stigma) behave differently.

Hence, having a well-defined theoretical framework would significantly enhance our capacity to comprehend, interpret, anticipate and effectively address maladaptive behaviours (Adams et al., 2022). This is an attempt to establish a conceptual framework by incorporating the Theory of Planned Behaviour as the main theoretical guide for this study. This concept paper aims to examine how help-seeking behaviours to stop pornography consumption works by applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour. To answer these research gaps, this concept paper specifies the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioural Control in help-seeking behaviour to stop pornography consumption.
2. To determine the gender differences and self-stigmatization in help-seeking behaviour to stop pornography consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behaviour

Theory of Planned Behaviour is an extended version from Theory of Reasoned Action developed by Ajzen and Fishbein in 1980 from the field of social psychology. This theory is considered a very successful and effective model in predicting and describing human behaviour as it can acknowledge more information to explain behaviour, compared to other existing models (Al-Lozi & Papazafeiropoulou, 2012). The theory posits that an individual's behaviour is primarily determined by behavioural intention. Ajzen (1991) defined intention as the expected result that directs your planned actions. In other words, it is the motivational elements that influence a behaviour and indicators of how hard individuals are willing to try or put in effort to perform a behaviour. Hence, intentions can influence action to the level of extent an individual possesses behavioural control. Basically the rule is that, "the stronger the intention to engage in a behaviour, the more likely should be its performance" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). The framework of Theory of Planned Behaviour comprises three determinants of behavioural intentions which are Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioural

Control. Following Ajzen's suggestion, this theory could be expanded, previous researchers have proposed incorporating additional predictors into the original model to enhance its ability to explain and predict behavioral intentions more effectively (Shi et al., 2021). Table 1 below outlines the definition of the determinants of behavioural intentions. Meanwhile, Figure 1 shows the model of Theory of Planned Behaviour, compiled according to Ajzen (1991).

Table 1: Definition of Three Determinants of Behavioural Intentions

| Determinants of Behavioural Intention | Influence Factor | Definition |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Attitude | Personal Influence | The degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour to be acted upon |
| Subjective Norm | Social Influence | The perceived social pressure of the external environment surrounding individuals on whether to perform a behaviour or not, and how family and friends would affect his/her perception of whether to behave in a certain way or not |
| Perceived Behavioural Control | Situational Influence | One's perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour |

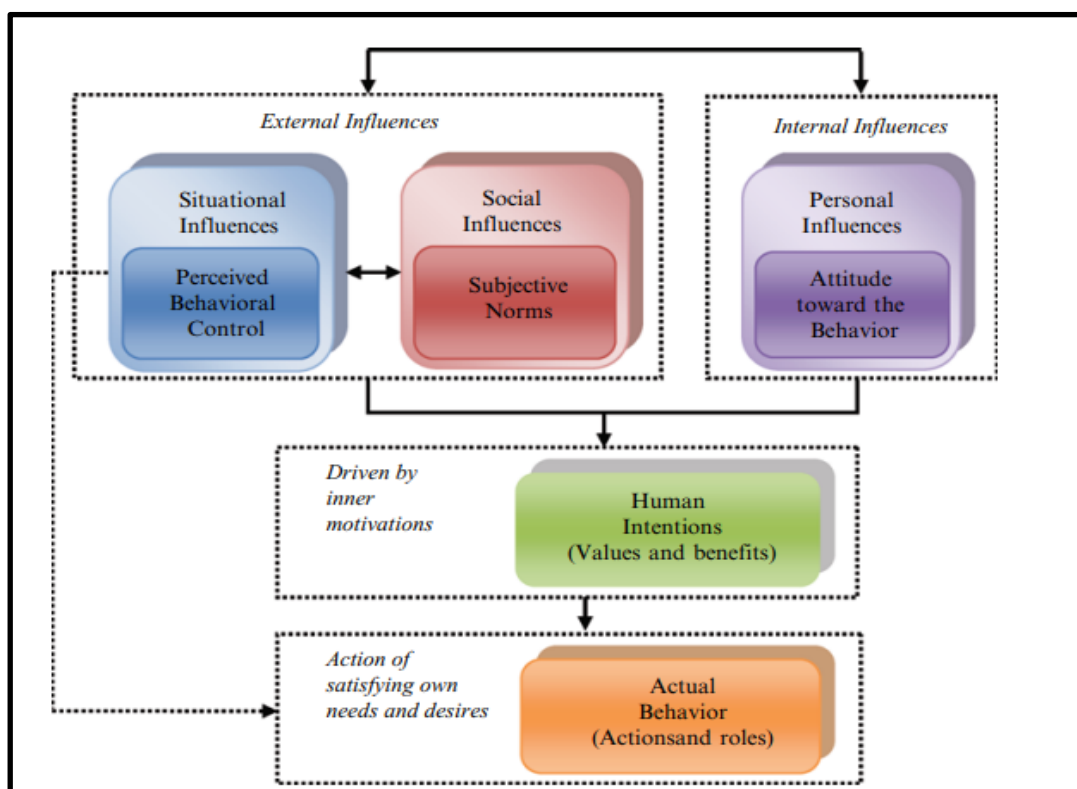


Figure 1: The Model of Theory of Planned Behaviour, compiled by Ajzen (1991)

Help-Seeking Behaviours

Generally, help-seeking behaviour is a problem focused-planned action that involves interacting with a particular healthcare professional on a personal level. The concept of help-seeking as a planned action fits well with the theory since it implies that asking for help

includes an informed and conscious decision to ask for help or not (Cornally & Mccarthy, 2011). Help-seeking can be categorised into three types: formal help-seeking, informal help-seeking, and self-help according to Kunyahamu (2024). Formal help-seeking is about seeking help from professionals, who're knowledgeable and qualified enough in health-related problems. Secondly, informal help-seeking is about seeking help from non-professionals, for instance family members, friends or colleagues. It is mentioned that typically, informal help-seeking is the usual method by many people when they face challenges in life. Lastly, self-help is about helping oneself without seeking for professionals or non-professionals help. The self-help method works depending on one's confidence in their capability of handling issues.

In Malaysia, the help-seeking behaviour is reported to decline. A study by Lim et al (2025) revealed that their findings are consistent with patterns reported in both local and international contexts, in which, although males have traditionally represented the majority of pornography consumers worldwide, emerging evidence suggests that female in conservative societies, such as Malaysia, are increasingly encountering difficulties in avoiding pornography consumption (Sarnon et al., 2020). Consistent with existing literature, it can be inferred that contemporary environments have made abstaining from pornography more challenging, largely due to the pervasive nature of digital media and advances in personalised technology. Such developments have substantially increased the accessibility of pornographic content by eliminating many traditional barriers to use. Supporting this view, a narrative review encompassing studies from countries including Spain, China, Italy and France identified technological advancement as a primary contributor to the rise in pornography consumption (Qadri et al., 2023). Consequently, the rapid evolution of technology presents significant challenges to efforts aimed at reducing pornography viewing.

The Application of Theory of Planned Behaviour: In the Context of Help-Seeking Behaviours to Stop Pornography Consumption

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, this theory is the most common approach to frame help-seeking research (Adam et al., 2022, Thongmak, 2021) and a great predictor in health-behavioural intention (Al-Lozi & Papazafeiropoulou, 2012).

Firstly, attitude is defined as the positive or negative assessments of a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It was extinguished that people's opinions towards pornography are more positive as years pass. Statistics showed 60–70% of individuals had favourable opinions about pornography (Goh et al., 2023). These results are explained by the social context in which adults have come to accept the ubiquity of sexual content in media, especially on social media. More acceptance of this media can lead to a more optimistic outlook because sexual hints and innuendos are ubiquitous in modern popular entertainment (Ward et al., 2016). Even popular local content artists have included sexual content in their work and earned over 97% likes on social media, in various localised forms of entertainment (Lim et al., 2025). This suggests that such content is well received. These tendencies' pervasiveness indicates that society has adapted to the existence of sexual material, resulting in greater acceptance. In fact, many individuals consider watching pornography to be a common and pleasurable pastime that can offer enjoyment, knowledge, and direction.

Secondly, Subjective Norm is defined as the perception of peer pressure to engage in the behaviour, in this case, watching porn (Ajzen, 1991). Individuals are under less social pressure to watch porn, meaning that friends and relatives are more likely to implicitly approve of the act of watching porn, which lowers the intention to stop (Lim et al., 2025).

These findings are consistent with Bóthe et al. (2024), which highlighted peer pressure is evident, where adults consume porn in an attempt to fit in with friends and other social groups. Particularly among college students, watching porn is thought to help one gain social acceptance from others (Lim et al., 2025). Similar to Attitude, the rise in sexual content on social media may also be the reason why there is less social pressure from peers or parents to avoid watching porn. Moreover, the reason for not seeking help to quit might also be because of the benefits people feel they received by consuming pornography. Sexual satisfaction is frequently linked to the use of pornography. However, for a restricted country like Malaysia, sexual education and knowledge are not openly discussed among schools nor families. This restriction has made pornography an easy way to learn about sex and have sex. This is due to the fact that pornography can be viewed in secret and anonymously without fear of unwarranted criticism (Paul & Shim, 2008). As a result, peers now consider watching porn to be more acceptable.

Thirdly, Perceived Behavioural Control is defined as perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It basically represents a person's capacity to voluntarily cease or regulate their porn-watching practice. Lim's et al. (2025) study revealed that self-control was seen as difficult to be practiced as years passed. This can be mainly because of the access to online pornography due to technological improvements. The respondents of the study do not view watching or not watching pornography as an attempt at self-control, according to one interpretation of this data. The fact that behaviour is frequently more influenced by the environment lends credence to this claim. Internet users frequently come across intrusive pop-up ads in today's digital which are frequently connected to adult content. These pop-ups may act as catalysts for pornographic viewing (Martini & Gangadharbatla, 2023). Thus, these can be the sole reasons why help-seeking behaviour patterns were seen declining in our country (Lim et al., 2025).

Self-stigma as a Predictor in Help-Seeking Behaviour

Self-stigma has been observed as one of the factors that influence help-seeking behaviour at various levels (Aris & Othman, 2022). Self-stigma involves a decline in an individual's self-esteem or sense of self-worth, stemming from the belief that seeking professional mental health support makes them socially unacceptable (Vogel et al., 2018). This internal conflict can significantly lower self-esteem and contribute to delays or complete avoidance of help-seeking behaviours.

Stigma is a characteristic of an individual that is devalued by society, it coexists with labels, stereotypes, social exclusion and discrimination. When people internalise the stigmatising opinions of the public and display stigmatised traits such self-identity sensitivity, self-defeatism, self-isolation and self-narrowing, this is referred to as self-stigma (Huang et al., 2025). In many cultural contexts, including Chinese society, stigma remains a dominant deterrent to accessing health care and recognized as a major obstacle to seek help (Shi et al., 2021). Those with higher levels of self-stigma are generally less inclined to seek professional help, whether it involves careful planning or responding spontaneously to available support (Lannin & Bible, 2022). Understanding the role of self-stigma is therefore essential for developing more effective interventions and promoting help-seeking behaviour.

In the context of pornography use, particularly within culturally or religiously conservative societies like Malaysia, pornography consumption is often framed as negatively impacting self-stigma or self-esteem (Chandel et al., 2024). This is because watching porn is labelled as immoral or deviant. As a result, individuals may perceive their behaviour as a

personal failure, which intensifies psychological distress and undermines self-worth. Higher consumption of pornography reported lower levels of self-stigma (Stulhofer et al., 2019). Meaning that, those who're an addict, might not reciprocate the idea of seeking for help to stop.

Exploring the influence of self-stigma as one of the predictors in the context of Theory of Planned Behaviour is not something new (Maryam & Mehran, 2018). Numerous research has examined and illustrated how self-stigma affects one's willingness to change. They discovered that the primary obstacles to disclosure were the feelings of guilt and shame that came with using porn in general and discussing their problematic usage of it in particular. These internalised stigma can influence help-seeking behaviour in two interrelated ways. First, self-stigma may act as a barrier to help-seeking by increasing fear of judgment, embarrassment and potential social repercussions. Individuals experiencing self-stigma are more likely to conceal their difficulties, avoid disclosure and delay or forgo seeking professional or informal support. Second, self-stigma may paradoxically motivate help-seeking when the internal distress becomes overwhelming, prompting individuals to seek assistance as a means of alleviating guilt or restoring a morally acceptable self-image. In such cases, help-seeking may be driven less by objectively problematic use and more by moral incongruence between personal values and pornography consumption (Grubbs et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in a meta-analysis conducted by Lannin and Bible (2022), it was observed that self-stigma related to help-seeking has a strong and substantial negative association with help-seeking behaviours. The analysis revealed that the relationship between stigma and help-seeking was stronger among White individuals compared to non-White individuals. This may be due to Westerners' cultural perspectives, which often emphasize individualistic values such as independence, personal responsibility and the perception of the self as distinct from others. These values may intensify the negative impact of self-stigma. Given the likely role of individualistic orientations in amplifying self-stigma, future research should explore this hypothesis in more depth (Lannin & Bible, 2022).

Overall, Chandel et al. (2024) has highlighted how pornography consumption is often framed negatively impacting self-stigma in culturally or religiously conservative societies like Malaysia. As Malaysians were also reportedly having higher levels of pornography consumption (Goh et al., 2023), their help-seeking behaviours to stop were seen as not favourable enough as mentioned by Lim et al. (2025).

Gender as a Predictor in Help-Seeking Behaviour

Gender differences have been observed as one of the factors that influence help-seeking behaviour (Nagai et al., 2023). It is mentioned that women tend to demonstrate larger intention for help-seeking compared to men (Haavik et al., 2019). They are more likely to access health services while men are not even aware of most of the available services. This is because women tend to be more socialised to take care of themselves and others. Hence, that is why women are more likely to have contact with professionals such as doctors and manage to identify their health problems at an earlier stage (Helmert et al., 2023).

Now connecting into the context of pornography consumption, research consistently shows that men report higher rates of pornography usage and are more likely to perceive their use as excessive or problematic, which increases their likelihood of seeking help for issues related to loss of control, compulsivity or perceived addiction. Men's help-seeking is often motivated by functional impairment, such as interference with work, relationships or

daily responsibilities (Grubbs et al., 2019). In contrast, women generally report lower levels of pornography consumption but may experience greater psychological distress when they do engage in such behaviour, particularly in conservative or religious contexts. Female help-seeking is more strongly influenced by shame, guilt and moral incongruence, as pornography use may conflict with gender norms and expectations surrounding sexual modesty. As a result, women may be less likely to seek formal help due to heightened self-stigma and fear of social judgment, despite experiencing significant emotional distress (Sarnon et al., 2020).

However, when females demonstrate a higher level of porn addiction, their treatment-seeking behaviour becomes stronger. This group of females report higher levels of subjective religiosity as well as greater frequency of weekly religious practices according to Lewcuk et al. (2017). These findings align with prior research suggesting that female sexuality is more strongly influenced by sociocultural and normative factors compared to male sexuality. In simple words, when religious rules are very strict, actions that try to strongly follow those rules and actions that break those rules can actually end up reinforcing each other. Even if a person is trying hard to behave correctly, the pressure created by rigid norms can make the “forbidden” behaviour more tempting or distressing. As a result, both strict rule-following and rule-breaking can unintentionally strengthen each other, even though the person never intended for that to happen.

Contrasting with the above findings, our local studies derived the opposite. A recent study by Lim et al. (2025) concluded that females in conservative societies, such as Malaysia, are increasingly encountering difficulties in avoiding pornography consumption (Sarnon et al., 2020). Although males continue to report greater engagement with pornography, help-seeking behaviour among females appears to be declining locally. One possible explanation for this trend is the increasing accessibility of pornography through advanced technology and anonymous online platforms, which may reduce perceived risk and urgency to seek help. The ease of private access, coupled with diminished external monitoring, may normalise continued use and weaken perceived behavioural control or motivation to stop. Within this context, female users may be less inclined to interpret their consumption as problematic or in need of intervention, highlighting the influence of technological and sociocultural factors on help-seeking behaviour in Malaysia (Qadri et al., 2023).

Conceptual Framework

This concept paper draws the following conceptual framework by incorporating the elements of Theory of Planned Behaviour and adding predictors to examine help-seeking behavioural patterns to stop pornography consumption. Figure 2 below illustrates the conceptual framework for the study.

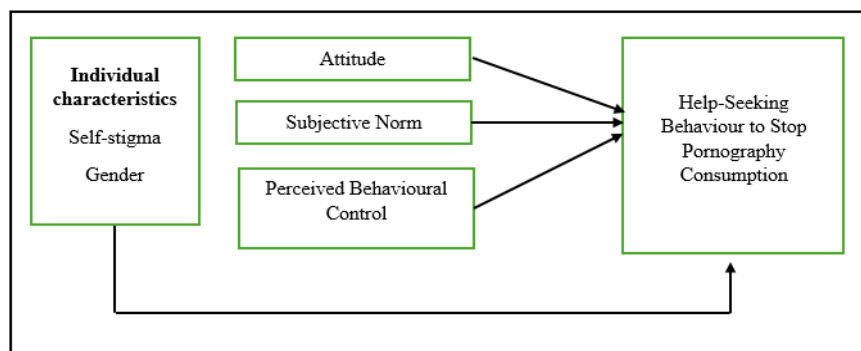


Figure 2: Conceptual framework

The independent variable of this study is the elements of Theory of Planned Behaviour: Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioural Control, followed by two additional individual characteristics: Self-stigma and Gender. The dependent variable of the study is the Help-Seeking Behaviour to Stop Pornography Consumption.

METHODOLOGY

The current conceptual study approach applies a quantitative method, with a survey research approach. The survey is designed to be conducted virtually. This is a very sensitive research topic which can make respondents feel uncomfortable with the researcher's presence in a face-to-face setting. When it's conducted virtually, respondents will be able to answer honestly without any fear of judgment. Not only that, they will not feel pressured to provide only socially acceptable answers. Moreover, the location of the study takes place locally, here in Malaysia and the subject of the study will be respondents aged 18 and above. People under the age of 18 are legally considered minors in many jurisdictions and their participation in research is subject to tight restrictions, particularly when it comes to sexual-media related subjects. Meanwhile, adults are usually viewed as more prepared to comprehend the scope of the research, by identifying possible risks and making independent decisions about their participation. Hence, the recruitment advertisements for the study will be placed on social media platforms. Respondents who are interested can visit the survey page to understand consent and objective of the study.

The designated sampling for this study is a purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique used in research to select a specific group of individuals or cases that possess particular characteristics or qualities of interest. Since this study aims to examine help-seeking behaviours to stop consuming pornography, obviously the group of interest should be those consuming pornography actively. Hence, it would be only relevant if the study is carried out among users rather than non-users. Apart from demographic questions, the online survey questionnaire is designed based on Likert scales developed by Lim (2017) comprising three sections: Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioural Control towards pornography and the Psychological Help-Seeking Stigma Scale by Vogel et al. (2013) to analyse Self-stigma. The study should obtain the approval from the ethics committee before data collection. The data will be analysed using SPSS.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

This current concept paper intended to apply Theory of Planned Behaviour to analyse help-seeking behaviour to stop pornography consumption. Since this theory is adaptable and open to theoretical expansion according to Shi et al. (2021), it has been proposed to add two individual predictors in the original model of the theory to enhance its ability to explain and predict behavioural intentions more effectively. Adding Self-stigma and Gender have uncovered the underlying mechanisms driving this effect. While TPB assumes relatively rational decision-making, help-seeking for pornography use is often shaped by shame, guilt, and internalised moral judgments. Self-stigma can be conceptualised as a mechanism that influences TPB components by shaping negative attitudes toward seeking help, amplifying perceived social disapproval (subjective norms), and reducing perceived behavioural control due to fear of judgment or disclosure. Including self-stigma therefore helps bridge the gap between cognitive intention-based models and affective experiences, offering a more nuanced understanding of why individuals may delay, avoid, or selectively engage in help-

seeking. Moreover, gender further strengthens the framework by accounting for socio-cultural differences in how pornography consumption and help-seeking behaviour are experienced and interpreted. It actually demonstrates that help-seeking behaviour is not uniform across groups and that the theoretical pathways may be gender-specific, particularly in conservative cultural contexts in Malaysia.

Practically, including self-stigma and gender as predictors provides valuable implications for assessment, prevention, and intervention. Understanding the role of self-stigma enables practitioners to differentiate between distress arising from problematic pornography use and distress driven by moral incongruence, allowing for more appropriate and targeted interventions. Stigma-informed approaches can reduce shame, promote healthier attitudes toward help-seeking, and improve engagement with support services. In the Malaysian context, where cultural and religious norms strongly influence sexuality, recognising how self-stigma and gender shape help-seeking behaviour can inform culturally responsive policies, psychoeducation programmes, and counselling practices. Overall, the inclusion of these predictors enhances both the theoretical robustness and applied relevance of the study.

The study will enable policymakers and service providers to ensure that counselling and support services are culturally and religiously sensitive, confidential and easily accessible, including anonymous or online platforms, to encourage help-seeking among individuals experiencing pornography-related distress. By openly discussing and researching these topics, communities can promote more open conversations, leading to better understanding and acceptance, by breaking the stigmas in Malaysia. Ignoring or avoiding taboo topics can lead to harmful behaviours or situations going unaddressed. Studying these topics provides the opportunity to identify risks and develop strategies to mitigate harm within the community. Therefore, the contribution of the study will help the communities to grow, adapt and create a more informed and supportive environment for all members. Future scholars and researchers may use this study as a form of reference material in conducting similar studies on researching help-seeking patterns, behaviours or intentions in Malaysia, in the context of sexualisation.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several limitations in the current study. This study added only two predictors which is the self-stigma and gender role differences. Other relevant factors such as family attitudes, religious teachings, mental health literacy and availability of services were not directly measured, which may also influence help-seeking behaviour. This study focuses only on the negative shades of consuming porn. It is highly encouraged to study both positive and bad enforcement of watching pornography. For instance, future research can examine the positive shades of why individuals continue being addicted to pornography. The study is conducted in general locally, meaning that anyone who is eligible can participate in the survey. It is suggested to conduct this study in Malaysia across different states. This can be a great intervention in terms of how for instance, an urban state like Selangor and a religious state like Kelantan may be different in terms of consumption and help-seeking patterns. Their sociocultural differences will provide a more comprehensive understanding based on Malaysian context. This study is limited to collecting data only through surveys. Future studies should use longitudinal designs to examine how pornography use, self-stigma and help-seeking behaviours evolve over time. Qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could provide deeper insights into personal motivations, moral conflicts, and cultural

influences. The study focuses only on majors (aged 18 and above) and not minors due to possible legal restrictions. Future research should include a broader age range, particularly minors and adolescents, to better understand how developmental and social factors influence their consumption and related behaviours variously. This would improve the generalizability of the findings across different age groups. However, a proper procedure should be taken in this case to avoid ethical issues. Moreover, this study lacks the differentiation in help-seeking sources. It may not distinguish between formal (e.g., counsellors, psychologists) and informal (e.g., friends, family, religious leaders) help-seeking ways, which could obscure important differences in motivations and barriers across help-seeking pathways. Future researchers may include this to identify the variation of help-seeking patterns between formal, informal or self-reliant help-seeking methods as discussed earlier in the literature review.

CONCLUSION

This concept paper highlights the complex interplay between pornography consumption, self-stigma, gender, and help-seeking behaviour within the Malaysian context. By applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour and extending it to include self-stigma and gender as key predictors, the study provides a more nuanced understanding. The findings underscore that help-seeking pattern is not solely driven by attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control, but also influenced by moral incongruence, internalised stigma and gendered sociocultural expectations. Although there has been a rise in pornography consumption statistics in Malaysia throughout the years, it was observed that the help-seeking behaviour patterns to stop consumption were seen declining in our country, mainly due to the technical advancements. Adding on to that, the role of self-stigma and gender also doesn't favour the behaviours. These insights emphasise the need for theory-informed, gender-sensitive, and stigma-aware interventions that are culturally responsive and accessible. Overall, the study contributes to both theoretical advancement and practical application by informing future research, policy development and intervention strategies aimed at promoting healthier help-seeking behaviours in relation to pornography consumption. This field of research may be able to guide clinically as well. Future study should continue to examine these constructs through different methods and designs. In summary, pornography has a very complex and controversial construct and more research is needed in light of the ever-changing times.

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