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Understanding patterns of pornography exposure: a case study of female 9th grade junior high school students

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ABSTRACT

Pornography use among adolescents is an issue that must be understood by considering behavioral, emotional, academic, social, and family contexts. This study aims to describe patterns of pornography use among a ninth-grade middle school student in Makassar. The study employs a qualitative approach using a single exploratory case study design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with the subject and supporting informants, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, with triangulation of sources and techniques to verify data credibility. The findings indicate that the subject reported using pornography approximately 1–2 times a day for 15–40 minutes per session, accompanied by a desire to access it again and anxiety when unable to do so. Memories of the content sometimes surfaced while the subjects were studying and were perceived as disrupting their concentration. Observations and informant accounts also indicated changes in academic engagement, emotional expression, and interactions with peers. These usage patterns were found in the context of loneliness and family conflicts; however, the data are insufficient to conclude that any single factor is the sole cause or that all behavioral changes are a direct result of pornography use. These findings highlight the importance of support that is sensitive to children's needs, education regarding personal boundaries, guidance on digital media use, and communication between schools and families.



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Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional stage in an individual's development characterized by physical, psychological, and social changes (Imawati & Sari, 2018). Puberty, as part of the process leading to adolescence, is marked by various biological, psychological, emotional, and social changes that occur gradually, including rapid physical growth, hormonal changes, the emergence of social interests, and more complex emotional development (Amirullah et al., 2026). These hormonal changes and sexual development, as explained by Nasution (2025), can increase adolescents' curiosity about sexuality and encourage them to seek information related to their own development. With the advancement of digital technology, such information has become increasingly accessible via *smartphones* and social media (Santoso, 2022). This ease of access provides opportunities for adolescents to obtain useful information, but it also increases the likelihood of exposure to sexually explicit content that is not yet appropriate for their age and developmental stage (Insaniyah et al., 2025). When information about sexuality is difficult to obtain through appropriate educational sources, some adolescents may seek information through

digital media without adequate guidance (Alifa, 2025) . In such situations, patterns of pornography use among adolescents need to be understood by considering usage characteristics, emotional and family circumstances, as well as their connection to learning experiences and social interactions.

The issue of children and adolescents' exposure to pornography is also a concern in Indonesia. According to Sy (2025) , based on data from the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi), a total of 233,552 pieces of pornographic content were addressed during the period from October 20, 2024, to March 8, 2025. Furthermore, according to Anisah & Lewoleba (2024) , based on statistical data from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), a total of 5,566,015 incidents of child pornography were recorded in Indonesia over a four-year period. This figure places Indonesia second in the ASEAN region and fourth globally. Meanwhile, Radovanović (2026) , citing a UNICEF Indonesia study, reported that 50.3% of children have seen sexual images on social media, while 42% of children feel uncomfortable or afraid as a result of their experiences in the digital space. These findings highlight the importance of paying attention to children's experiences when encountering sexual content online, including through guidance, strengthening digital literacy, and adequate communication between children, families, and schools.

Pornography is content that explicitly depicts sexual activities or body parts through images, videos, text, audio, or other digital media (Hisyam, 2026) . In this study, patterns of pornography use refer to the behavioral characteristics of participants in accessing and viewing such content, including the frequency and duration of use, the desire to view it again, and the feelings experienced when unable to access it. These usage patterns are distinguished from exposure to pornography, which can occur either intentionally or unintentionally. Pornography usage patterns in this study are understood based on the behavioral characteristics exhibited by the subjects, with a focus on their experiences and the accompanying circumstances. Therefore, this study describes pornography usage patterns based on the subjects' experiences, observational findings, and supporting informant accounts, taking into account the accompanying emotional, family, academic, and social contexts.

Various factors related to pornography use among adolescents have been examined in previous studies. Risma et al.(2026) Curiosity about sexuality can drive adolescents to seek information through the internet or their peer groups. Limitations in sex education can also lead adolescents to seek information from sources that may not be appropriate (Agma, 2025) . Furthermore, low levels of religiosity can increase vulnerability to risky sexual behavior and exposure to pornography (Gracia et al., 2026) . These findings suggest that pornography use must be understood by considering information needs, knowledge levels, and individual characteristics, as well as the various conditions accompanying such behavior.

Emotional factors, such as loneliness, anger, fear, and boredom, can also drive the use of pornography as a form of escape from experienced stress (Rosejunero & Sugiyarta, 2025). In this context, pornography use can be understood as a behavior that arises alongside an individual's efforts to cope with emotional distress. From a social perspective, peer influence can encourage the habit of watching pornography due to the pressure to conform to the group (Ramdhani et al., 2022) . Meanwhile, from the perspectives of the family and digital environments, ease of internet access, parental supervision, family communication, and guidance on digital media use are relevant factors in understanding adolescents' experiences in the digital space (Kadek et al., 2025; Sistiarani et al., 2025). These various factors indicate that patterns of pornography use need to be understood by considering the interplay between individual characteristics and their living environment.

If not properly addressed, problematic pornography use has the potential to be linked to difficulties in various aspects of adolescents' lives. A study by(2018) reports that adolescents experiencing pornography addiction may exhibit psychosocial changes, including difficulty concentrating, decreased interest in learning, emotional changes, and a tendency to withdraw from their social environment. In line with these findings, Hidayatullah and Alfadla (2025) explain that exposure to pornography among adolescents with high IQs makes it difficult for them to focus on their studies due to a lack of concentration, while those with low IQs experience a complete loss of concentration, a tendency to withdraw from their social environment, and suffer serious brain damage.

Based on interviews conducted at a junior high school in Makassar, a female student was identified who exhibited several characteristics of repeated pornography use. The interview results indicated a desire to watch it again and feelings of restlessness when unable to access the content. The subject also revealed that memories of previously viewed content sometimes surfaced during class, thereby disrupting her concentration. In interactions with peers, there were accounts of touching female friends' private areas and paying attention to the friends' reactions to such behavior. In addition, preliminary data indicated changes in academic and emotional activities, such as a decline in motivation to study, a tendency to isolate herself, and increased irritability. These findings served as the basis for a more in-depth examination of the subject's experiences through observation, interviews with the subject, and accounts from supporting informants.

The novelty of this study lies in its contextual depiction of pornography usage patterns among a ninth-grade middle school student in Makassar. This study not only describes the behavioral characteristics of pornography use such as repeated use, the desire to watch again, and anxiety when unable to access content but also examines the accompanying emotional and family circumstances and their relationship to the subject's learning experiences and social interactions. These various aspects were examined comprehensively based on observations and interviews with the subject and supporting informants in the context of daily life and the school environment through a case study approach. Based on this description, this study aims to describe patterns of pornography use among the subjects along with the accompanying conditions. The research findings are expected to enrich our understanding of pornography use among adolescents and serve as a basis for the development of guidance and counseling services, family support, and digital media education tailored to the needs of adolescents.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of pornography addiction behavior among students within the school environment. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to comprehensively explore the experiences, behaviors, and conditions related to pornography use among the research subjects, thereby enabling the researcher to understand the phenomenon based on the subjects' experiences and perspectives. According to Septiana et al. (2024), the case study method is a research approach that can provide an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon. Supported by relevant theoretical foundations, this method allows researchers to examine various aspects of a case in greater detail. The study by Assyakurrohim et al. (2022) defines a case study as research that deeply explores a specific phenomenon or case within a particular temporal and contextual framework through various data collection techniques and research procedures over a specific period of time.

This study was conducted at a junior high school, with the primary subject being a ninth-grade female student identified as exhibiting pornographic addiction behavior. Subject selection was carried out using a purposeful sampling approach based on specific criteria, such as the habit of repeatedly accessing and viewing pornographic content, difficulty controlling the urge to watch, and the emergence of behavioral changes in academic activities and interactions with peers. In addition to the primary subject, this study also involved supporting informants consisting of the homeroom teacher, parents, and peers. The involvement of these informants aimed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the subject's behavior from different perspectives.

The data collection methods used in this study included participatory observation, in-depth interviews using a semi-structured guide, and a document analysis. Observations were conducted to gather data on student behavior in learning situations and interactions within the school environment. Interviews were conducted to explore students' experiences, understandings, and behaviors regarding pornography use, while the document analysis served as a supporting data source to supplement and strengthen the findings from the observations and interviews. The data collected were then analyzed inductively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. During the analysis phase, the researcher identified patterns and themes emerging from the data and then interpreted them based on theoretical concepts relevant to the research focus. Data validity was tested through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from subjects and supporting informants and cross-checking results from various data collection techniques. This process is carried out to ensure that the research findings possess a high degree of credibility and are scientifically sound.

Results and Discussions

Based on the results of the interviews and observations conducted, this study identified four main aspects that characterize patterns of pornography use among KA: repeated use; impaired concentration and emotional changes; sexual behavior toward peers; and feelings of loneliness and family conflicts accompanying the subjects' experiences. These four aspects were analyzed based on the participants' experiences, observation results, and supporting informant statements, and are summarized in Table 1, which presents a description of each finding along with its underlying data sources.

Table 1. Interview and Observation Results Based on Research Findings

Findings	Description	Data Source
Repeated Use of Pornography	KA reported using pornography about 1–2 times a day, with each viewing session lasting 15–40 minutes. This behavior occurred more frequently at home and, on certain occasions,	Wwcr/KA/21082026; Wwcr/KA/24082026.

Findings	Description	Data Source
Concentration Difficulties and Emotional Changes	at school during recess. It was accompanied by a desire to watch again and restlessness when unable to access the content. KA reported experiencing flashbacks of pornographic content while studying, which he felt disrupted his concentration. The informant's statements and observation results also indicated a tendency toward social withdrawal, moodiness, irritability, using coarse language, lack of engagement in academic activities, and infrequent submission of assignments.	Wwcr/KA/21082026; Wwcr/QC/26082026; Wwcr/S/26082026; Obs/KA/27082026.
Sexual Behavior Toward Peers	According to the informant's account, KA has touched a peer's private areas. The informant also stated that this behavior sometimes continued when the peer did not respond immediately. KA revealed that he felt more satisfied when his peer responded vocally. These findings highlight the need for attention to understanding bodily boundaries, consent, and behavioral control in social interactions.	Wwcr/N/26082026; Wwcr/KA/02092026.
Loneliness and Family Conflict as the Context for Use	KA described the conflict between his parents before they separated. When feeling lonely, sad, or facing problems at home, KA tends to isolate himself in his room and access pornography. This behavior can be understood as a form of distraction from unpleasant feelings, but it cannot be confirmed as the sole underlying factor.	Wwcr/KA/02092026.

Research findings indicate that KA's pornography use is characterized by repeated access to content, a desire to rewatch it, and anxiety when unable to access it. KA also reported experiencing flashbacks of previously viewed content while participating in learning activities. These experiences were perceived as disrupting his concentration. These findings illustrate that patterns of pornography use among subjects are not only related to the act of accessing content but also to cognitive experiences that arise during learning situations. These findings align with Mendrofa et al., (2026) which explain that pornography use can be linked to impaired concentration during learning because individuals are reminded of content they have previously viewed. According to Rambe (2023), children who view pornography may be haunted by the pornographic material they have seen, causing them to have difficulty concentrating while studying. This condition can reduce their attention to the teacher's explanations and disrupt their engagement in learning activities. In line with this, Anggraini & Maulidya (2020) explain that difficulty concentrating and a tendency to think about pornographic content may be linked to a decline in children's engagement and academic performance. Thus, KA's experience demonstrates that repeated exposure to pornography is not only related to the act of accessing the content but also to the emergence of thoughts about that content in situations that require concentration.

This situation also needs to be considered alongside findings regarding KA's involvement in academic activities. Based on informants' accounts and observational findings, KA tends to be less engaged in learning activities and rarely turns in assignments. Informants also described changes in KA's emotional expressions and social interactions. A study by (2025) shows that adolescents who use pornography may become more withdrawn and distance themselves from their friends due to feelings of shame and a sense of being different from others. Additionally, Maftukhah (2022) explains that pornography use may be associated with emotional disturbances, such as restlessness, irritability, and being easily offended when pornography-viewing activities are interrupted. Regarding concentration, findings on the emergence of memories of pornographic content during learning are also consistent with Prawitasari (2020), who explains that pornography use can be linked to difficulties with concentration, self-control, and delaying gratification. Furthermore, Shofiyah (2020) explains that adolescent exposure to pornography may be linked to difficulties maintaining concentration during study and daily activities, leading to decreased productivity. Meanwhile, Handayani & Iscahyani (2022) explains that exposure to pornography can leave a strong impression in memory and has the potential to affect long-term memory.

On the social front, KA's case indicates changes in interaction patterns with peers as well as the emergence of interpersonal behaviors that require attention. Findings regarding touching a friend's private areas suggest difficulties in understanding and respecting others' personal boundaries. The study by Asyari & Hasnah (2023) explains that sexual behavior in children and adolescents may be linked to experiences or exposure that encourage the tendency to imitate sexual acts. Research by Ariningrum & Aliyyah (2026) explains that excessive exposure to pornography may be linked to the function of the *prefrontal cortex* (PFC), which plays a role in

decision-making, self-control, and moral judgment. This condition has the potential to reduce a person's ability to control their impulses and increase the likelihood of deviant sexual behavior toward others.

Emotional and family circumstances also serve as contextual factors related to patterns of pornography use among KA. Based on interview results, such use occurs when the subject feels lonely, sad, or is facing family conflicts. In such situations, KA tends to isolate themselves in their room and sometimes access pornography as a form of distraction from unpleasant feelings. These findings align with those of Syahril et al. (2025), who explain that family disharmony or a lack of parental attention can drive adolescents to seek an outlet through risky behaviors. Wulandari (2022) also explains that parental divorce or arguments can cause psychological stress in adolescents, making them feel uncomfortable at home and leading them to seek activities to entertain themselves. From Beck's cognitive perspective, stressful situations can influence thoughts and emotions, which in turn are linked to an individual's behavioral responses to the conditions they face (Purwadi et al., 2026). This is also consistent with the research by (2026), which explains that high psychological stress in adolescents may be associated with a tendency to engage in maladaptive behaviors as a form of less adaptive *coping*. Furthermore, Mulyadi (2025) links adolescent pornography use to several factors, including psychological stress, loneliness, a lack of attention within the family, and peer group influences. The study Kamal (2026) also explains that parental conflict or divorce can cause psychological stress in adolescents, leading them to seek outlets or activities perceived as providing entertainment.

Based on the overall findings, pornography use among adolescents cannot be understood solely through the intensity or frequency of access but must be viewed in relation to cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental factors. Curiosity about sexuality, ease of access via digital devices, emotional states, family experiences, and the social environment are among the factors present in the subjects' experiences. This aligns with the study (2026), which indicates that pornography use among adolescents may be related to curiosity about sexuality, peer influence, parental supervision, and ease of access to technology. Thus, the findings of this study do not point to a single factor that can explain the behavior of KA, but rather reveal the presence of various interrelated conditions that shape the context in which such behavior emerges.

In practical terms, the findings of this study highlight the need for support that involves both schools and families in a balanced manner. Guidance efforts can begin by helping students identify behavioral triggers, and then focus on developing positive alternative activities aligned with the students' interests to manage their free time and cope with emotional distress in a more adaptive manner (Aswar et al., 2016). In the school context, guidance counselors can play a role through confidential individual counseling, helping students develop emotion regulation strategies, and reinforcing their understanding of personal boundaries and consent in social interactions. In addition to supporting students who struggle with managing their behavior, schools must also ensure protection for affected students when behavior violates a peer's personal boundaries, accompanied by educational interventions appropriate to the severity of the behavior. Meanwhile, within the family environment, support can be provided through open communication, guidance on the use of digital devices, and emotional support without shaming or stigmatizing the student. Thus, the involvement of both school and family is expected to support students in developing more adaptive ways to manage their emotions and behavior, while creating a safe and supportive environment for all students.

Overall, KA's case demonstrates that repeated pornography use coexists with difficulties concentrating, emotional changes, boundary issues in interactions with peers, as well as experiences of loneliness and family conflict. From Beck's cognitive perspective, the interconnection between situations, thoughts, emotions, and behavior can serve as a framework for understanding the subject's experience without attributing a single factor as the sole cause. The uniqueness of this case lies in the connection between patterns of pornography use and interpersonal behavioral issues that require attention to safety and the personal boundaries of peers. Therefore, understanding and addressing such behavior must take into account individual, family, academic, and social conditions in an integrated manner.

Conclusions

This study explored patterns of pornography use among a ninth-grade middle school student in Makassar through a qualitative exploratory single-case study. The findings revealed that KA had repeatedly accessed pornographic content since sixth grade, with a frequency of approximately one to two times per day and a duration of 15–40 minutes per session, accompanied by a desire to watch again and anxiety when access was unavailable. These patterns coincided with difficulties concentrating during lessons, emotional changes, social withdrawal, and reduced engagement in academic activities. Behaviors involving touching peers' private areas were also observed, highlighting the importance of education on personal boundaries, consent, and respect for others. However, the study cannot establish a direct causal relationship between pornography use and these

behaviors, as loneliness, emotional stress, and family conflicts may also contribute to the broader context of KA's experiences. Given the limitations of the single-case design, reliance on self-reports and informant statements, and observations within specific situations and time frames, the findings should not be generalized to other adolescents. Nevertheless, the study highlights the importance of collaborative support from guidance and counseling (BK) teachers and families through individualized counseling, emotional regulation strategies, digital literacy education, and guidance on healthy relationships and responsible digital media use. Support should be provided through open communication, emotional understanding, and non-stigmatizing approaches, while any behavior that violates personal boundaries must be addressed through appropriate safeguarding measures. Future research should involve more diverse participants and explore the relationships among pornography use, emotional well-being, family dynamics, sex education, digital media practices, and effective counseling interventions for adolescents.

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