THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY ADDICTION ON ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to reveal the impacts by adolescents who experienced internet addiction with pornographic content. It applied a qualitative approach, namely an instrumental case study. Participants were 18-25 years old, there were six adolescents who were obtained based on the initial screening, namely self-reporting through a pornography internet addiction questionnaire. The data were collected by in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Thematic analysis with NVivo 12 data management was used as the data analysis technique. The results show that adolescents experience changes in cognition and affection for sexual stimulation caused by the internet with pornographic content. The impact of cognition is shown from their obsessive-compulsive thoughts on sexual content. They always have the desire to see those photos or video over again, which lead them to sleep disorders due to visualizing scenes of sexual intercourse. The impact of affection can be seen from their desire to act in sexual activity, their being so passionate and pleased after seeing pornographic content, and their expectation to feel such immense affection. Furthermore, they might find difficulty in establishing interpersonal relationships with other people and tend to withdraw themselves from the social environment.

Keywords: psychological impacts, internet pornography addiction, adolescent addiction

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of internet has emerged many terms related to internet addiction with pornographic content. Several research results indicate a number of terms used, which are internet pornography use (Grubbs et al., 2017; Short et al., 2016); internet pornography addiction (Love et al., 2015); compulsive pornography use (Kohut & Štulhofer, 2018b; De Sousa, 2019); excessive pornography use (Błaszczyński, 2016) excessive internet pornography use (Essig, 2015); problematic pornography use (Gola et al., 2016, 2017); problematic internet pornography use (Chen & Jiang, 2020); compulsive pornography consumption (Noor, Rosser & Erickson, 2014; Rosser, Noor & Iantaffi, 2014); compulsive use of sexually explicit internet material (Doornwaard et al., 2016); internet pornography use disorder (Antons & Brand, 2018; Pekal et al., 2018). Therefore, the research uses the term internet addiction with pornographic content after reviewing research results in several scientific journals.

In fact, research on internet addiction with pornographic content still becomes a topic of debate for its existence by scientists and health practitioners. There is no specific diagnostic for addiction to internet pornography since it has not been included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders/DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2017) or the latest version of the International Classification of Diseases-11/ICD 11, which complicates this problem. Not to mention that there is still a debate whether internet pornography addiction is an extension of sexual addiction with the internet as a medium, which causes negative consequences in life (Griffiths, 2012) or is involving other types of addiction (Young, 2009).

Addiction, in the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus, is describes as the need or
strong desire to do or to have something, or a very strong liking for something. There are many experts who define internet addiction, however, the reference of experts in defining internet addiction is basically almost the same, especially definition of behavioral addiction (Caplan, 2002). Caplan et al. (2009) sees technology addiction as part of behavioral addiction; and internet addiction as one of the major components of addiction (i.e., significance, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse). Griffiths et al. (2016) defines internet addiction as addictive behavior which involves interactions between humans and machines without the use of drugs.

Young (1998, 2008) defines addiction as a habit forced to engage in certain activities or make use of substances, not by bearing adverse consequences on the physical, social, spiritual, mental and financial health of individuals. Instead of overcoming life's obstacles, dealing with everyday stressors, and/or dealing with past or present trauma, addicts respond maladaptively by turning to pseudo-coping mechanisms. Behavioral addiction is pre-occupation with the behavior, diminished ability to control the behavior, tolerance, withdrawal, and adverse psychosocial consequences (Grant et al., 2010).

Internet pornography is defined as the use of the internet for sexual activities, such as viewing pornographic images, chatting about sex, exchanging pictures or videos about sex which is sometimes followed by masturbation (Cooper et al., 2004). The definition of pornography in Law Number 44 of 2008 concerning pornography is sexuality material made by humans in the form of images, sketches, illustrations, photos, writings, sounds, videos, animations, cartoons, conversations, gestures, or messages, and others through various forms of communication media and public performances containing obscenity or sexual exploitation that violates the norms of decency in society.

Internet pornography is a merely attractive medium due to the nature of Triple A, namely accessibility, affordability, and anonymity (Cooper et al., 2003). Accessibility refers to the fact that the internet provides millions of pornographic sites and chat rooms allowing opportunities for pornographic activities online. Affordability, namely accessing pornographic sites provided by the internet, does not need to be expensive. Meanwhile, anonymity means that individuals do not need to be afraid of being recognized by others. Teens can hide their identity when accessing sensitive information about sexuality due to privacy and anonymity (de Alarcón et al., 2019; Shim & Paul, 2014). The characteristics of internet pornography as mentioned above provide opportunities for adolescents to fulfill their curiosity about sexuality without any restrictions that are appropriate for their developmental age. Exposure to pornographic content may have a risk to develop compulsive behavior and addiction (Grubbs et al., 2019; Wetterneck et al., 2012).

Young (1998) states that addiction to internet pornography can be seen in a person who compulsively searches porn sites or cybersex. Internet addiction behavior on pornographic objects based on internet addiction criteria can be seen from several compatible indicators (Griffiths et al., 2016), including immersion, excessive time, and lack of control. Immersion here is feeling immersed in or preoccupied with the internet with pornographic content. Excessive time means that individuals always need additional time to achieve a certain level of satisfaction when using the internet to access pornographic content. The absence of control means that individuals are no longer able to control, reduce, or stop using the internet to access pornographic content.

Addiction to internet pornography can be seen from several criteria according to the opinions of several figures. Internet porn addiction can be determined based on hours of use per week (Cooper et al., 1998) while others are based on reported increased usage patterns (Young, 2008). Pornography addiction relies on participatory evaluation of the behaviors and emotional experiences associated with use. This subjective evaluation is manifested in: the number of attempts made to access pornographic internet; lack of control over the use of pornographic content; and emotional distress associated with its use (Grubbs et al., 2015).

Therefore, based on the previous research, the researchers come up with the definition of addiction to internet pornography. It is an online compulsive behavior that dominates life in a maladaptive manner using the internet for excessive sexual content to raise sexual arousal with a loss of ability to control one self’s behavior towards sexual contents made by humans through various forms of communication media and public performances, which contain obscenity or sexual exploitation violating the norms of decency in society. The research, with theoretical contribution, aims to reveal the impact experienced by adolescents who experience internet addiction with pornographic contents.

METHODS

The qualitative approach is chosen to carry out an in-depth study on a phenomenon of internet pornography addiction by delivering clear and in-depth elaboration from the data. The research describes the psychological impact on adolescents who are merely addicted to pornographic contents on the internet. Creswell et al. (2007) states that a case study is a research strategy in which researchers carefully investigate a program, event, activity, process, or group of individuals, whereas Stake (2013) states that a case-study research is to reveal the peculiarities or uniqueness of the characteristics in the cases. Researchers chose to use instrumental case study research to examine and provide in-depth understanding or explain a generalization process. Through the cases, the researchers intend to show that...
there is something unique that can be learned, which is different from the explanations obtained from other objects.

Participants should be about 18-25 years old because based on the results of some studies this age range is included in the category of late adolescence towards adulthood. This period is characterized by exploration in the fields of sexuality and identity, as well as increased participation in risky behavior (Arnett, 2014). Six adolescents become the participants of this research. This number is obtained based on the initial screening, namely self-reporting through internet addiction questionnaires with pornography content and psychological examinations.

According to Yin (2018) data are collected from documents, archival records, interviews, observations and physical devices. Therefore, data collection procedures are conducted in-depth interviews, observation and documentation.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) an interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people directed by a person with the intention of obtaining information. Interviews are conducted with the principle of dialogue, discussion to build understanding and meaning in solving problems. Concurrent interviews can be carried out with participant observation, document analysis, or other techniques.

The research applies participatory observation, in which the role of the researcher is as an actor and as an observer (Willig, 2019). This participating observation is to observe adolescent behavior by indirect observation through secondary participants, which are the participants’ family and friends.

Documentation techniques are used to obtain supporting data that cannot be done by interviewing or observation techniques. The documentation turns out to be participant notes and psychologist examinations. Boyatzis (1998), in Alhojailan (2012) states that qualitative research data analysis is to find the meaning of natural truth believed by the researcher and understood by readers of the research report. The data are analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a process that allows the translation of qualitative symptoms/information into qualitative data as needed by the researcher. Researchers use data management software NVivo 12 Plus to organize data since researchers play a major role in the research and analysis process.

The six general steps for carrying out thematic analysis are guidelines, which should not be used as prescriptive, linear, and inflexible rules when analyzing data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These steps should be used in conjunction with the research question and available data. The first step is familiarizing the data by making a transcript of the interview results into verbatim, which are then read to obtain the initial ideas. The second step is generating the initial code, in which the researcher makes coding systematically based on interesting facts from data and collects relevant data for each code. The third stage is looking for themes, in which the researchers compile the code into potential themes and collects all relevant data with each potential theme.

The fourth step is reviewing the theme by checking whether the theme is functioning in relation to the results of reducing data to code (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2) and producing thematic 'maps' from the analysis. The fifth step is defining and naming the themes, in which the researcher carries out a continuous analysis to make the specifications of each theme and the overall verbatim analysis as suggested before, and then produces a clear definition and name for each theme. The sixth step is compiling the analysis report by selecting clear and interesting sample extracts. The final analysis of the selected extracts is linked with research questions and literature to produce a scientific report.

Transferability is external validity related to the degree of agreement or application of research results to the population where the sample is taken. The researcher should provide a detailed, clear, systematic, and reliable description. If the readers get a clear and coherent delivery, it can provide an overview of the research results which can be applied, thus the report meets the transferability standard.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section elaborates the results on the experiences of adolescents who are merely addicted to pornography internet. The results include two themes, namely the experience of accessing the internet with pornographic content and the impacts of accessing the internet with pornographic content.

The responses from experience of accessing pornographic content are made into three categories: (1) the first-time for participants being exposed to pornography; (2) the duration of viewing pornography on the internet; and (3) ways to access pornographic contents. Table 1 presents the experience of accessing the internet with pornographic content.
Table 1 Experience of Accessing the Internet with Pornographic Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First time accessing pornographic content on the internet</th>
<th>Start to access the internet with pornographic content when they were 11-13 years old.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The duration of the internet with pornographic content</td>
<td>Consumption of pornography is getting longer, and pornographic videos have various lengths of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way to access the internet with pornographic content</td>
<td>The participants use cellphones online, borrow cellphones from friends and are taught by friends how to access pornographic content internet, and use their parents' cellphones.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants can tell exactly at what age they accessed internet for pornography. Participants experience exposure to pornographic content when they were 11-13 years old, which is conveyed by all participants as seen in the following transcripts.

> Participants using social media applications have a dimension of accessing the pornographic content group from social media.

Regarding duration, consumption of pornographic content on the internet has become routine so that the duration of consuming is getting longer, not to mention that pornographic videos have various lengths of time. Accessing the internet with pornographic content became a routine habit of the participants. They have been doing it for six years due to the easy access to various porn sites. The transcript of interview results is:

> Participants access through various website.

> Participants using social media applications have a dimension of accessing the pornographic content group from social media.

Furthermore, participants have access through the website by entering to www.waptrick.com, selecting videos they desired and downloading them, as seen in the transcript of the interview.

> Participants using social media applications have a dimension of accessing the pornographic content group from social media, such as Facebook and WhatsApp. They use accounts to enter groups to get links that contain thousands of sexual content, choose a good front and a good panel, view Facebook posts that particularly discuss pornography, listen to conversations on Facebook, stalk on 18+ accounts to get information on pornographic content links, as seen in the following transcripts.

> Participants using social media applications have a dimension of accessing the pornographic content group from social media.

Reference coded [2,48% Coverage] “Gradually, the blue videos that I saw were getting longer in duration and having more various in style. The first blue videos I saw were only four to five minutes long. When I was in the end of my junior high school, the video I downloaded from the ‘waptrick’ site was fifteen minutes long.”

The third category is the way to access pornographic content. It is found that the participants use their own cellphones, borrow cellphones from friends as well as parents' cellphones to go online. They use a mobile phone application to share sexual content and use Bluetooth to obtain pornographic videos offline. Participants use an application from the Playstore to download pornographic videos, use additional applications such as UC Browser, Share It, VPN, YouTube, and Twitter. These data were taken based on the statement from participants.
Participants have obsessive compulsive thoughts on sexual content. Imagination and fantasy of sexual intercourse. Participants can picture women as sexual objects in their minds, namely imagining beautiful and sexy women. Women become the object of sexual fantasy by the participants. Participants have sexual passion, there are such feelings of lust and excitement of the urge to engage in sexual activity after seeing pornographic content. Participants have sexual satisfaction after sexual activity. Participants have difficulty in making friends and initiating communication, Participants like being alone, thus finding difficulty to get along with others and in group situations, Having difficulties in getting along with friends in organizations.

Sexual contents occurs to have impacts on cognition. Participants have obsessive compulsive thoughts on sexual content, namely remembering pornographic content that has been watched since they first consumed it. They cannot help to think, focus, expect to watch, and imagine the sexual content that has been watched. They find it hard to focus on doing things since they have trouble sleeping due to having fantasies about sexual intercourse scenes. The statement can be seen in the interview transcript.

In addition, women become the object of sexual fantasy of the participants since they memorize the women in the photos or videos. In their imagination, they choose the desired artist, teacher and friend to have sex with. It is stated in the interview script.

Participants can have imaginary dimensions of sexual intercourse scenes from videos they have seen. The appearance of strange sexual content images eventually disturbs them when having casual conversation with boyfriends or girls.

Participants are able to describe it in their minds, women as sexual objects, namely imagining beautiful and sexy women. Sometimes, they used their partners for sexual intercourse scenes in their minds or fantasize the women as in videos and in sexual scenes and fantasize about hiring prostitutes to have sex with. These are based on following statement quotes:

In addition, women become the object of sexual fantasy of the participants since they memorize the women in the photos or videos. In their imagination, they choose the desired artist, teacher and friend to have sex with. It is stated in the interview script.
What makes worse is that to find out that the teacher will teach biology subjects in my class for a year. At that time when I turned that beautiful teacher into my regular imagination in that hot slime-filled action.” Reference 4 - 1.54% Coverage.

Participants will photograph the teacher’s face in their mind and take the image to a quiet place. In his imagination, the teacher’s figure looks beautiful and real that he gasped for air in the room. This becomes his habits of hot slime-filled action. In fact, rape appears to be a sexual fantasy, namely imagining raping a woman. This is based on the following statement:

Psychologically, internet pornography addiction has effects on affection. Participants have sexual passion, such as feelings of lust and excitement of the urge to engage in sexual activity after seeing pornographic content. The participants want to do the same acts and intimate relationships in the video to vent lust and even always want to feel higher arousal. This fact was based on the following statement:

Sexual satisfaction occurs after sexual activity. Adolescent sometimes experience a feeling of pleasure and relief, convenience, excitement and joy and satisfaction. Pornographic content is a medium for sexual stimulation which has a passionate dimension when watching kissing scenes, feeling more lustful and attracted to women, wishing to have a sexually intimate relationship with their significant others.

Finally, pornographic contents on the internet is considered to impact viewers’ behavior. They tend to find it difficult making friends, initiating communication, and getting along with others in groups or organizations since they would prefer being alone.

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Since being familiar with the internet, pornography maniacs have spent a lot of time in their room and tend to cover up this habit from anyone around them.

Pornography addicts have tendency to feel disturbed when they have visiting relatives to their houses since they are not as free to view sexual

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Contents as when they are alone. They tend to stay in their room until parents tell them to come out and greet the guests. Not to mention that they tend to be more sensitive as they feel not much comfortable in having conversations with others.

Participants are uncomfortable being in a crowd with strangers. It occurs that they feel dizzy and embarrassed, in some ways, to be surrounded by people. They tend to be reluctant to make small talk when meeting people, thus they would rather be lonely yet busy with their cellphone.

Exposure to pornographic content on the internet leads to pornography addiction, especially in adolescents who are still experiencing puberty, in which they have not reached the stage of adolescents’ social psychological maturity. This finding is in line with research by Joyal, Cossette and Lapierre (2015). Second, affection impact consist of sexual arousal and sexual satisfaction are: (1) desire and pleasure from seeing pornographic content; (2) the urge to perform sex scenes to achieve higher pleasure from seeing pornographic content; (2) the urge to perform sex scenes to achieve higher sexual satisfaction. Another psychological effect is a significant relationship between the intensity or frequency of accessing pornography and feelings of loneliness, including major depression (Kohut & Štulhofer, 2018a).

Participants initially just felt curious to know things related to sexual content. On the other hand, participants have entered the range of puberty in which sexual development begins to appear. When participants accessed pornography for the first time, they were at the stage where they have not had any understanding on their biological and hormonal changes. Viewing pornographic content at such early stage of puberty is a shocking, lurid and fearful experience. The individuals might experience a loss of control over their habits which eventually lead to addiction.

Addiction to internet pornography is based on the symptoms of internet addiction as stated by Young (1998). The research findings show that the participants experience the immersion, which is the condition when the participants feel carried away by watching the pornographic scenes so that they tend to repeat the search and download the videos to watch them all over again. Tolerance means that the longer experience leads to longer duration and more video variations. Salience is a participant fantasizing by imagining a woman who is considered attractive to be the object of masturbation. Mood modification is a state when participants feel an unprecedented desire to kiss a woman even in public. Participants feel increasingly unsatisfied due to years of masturbation. Craving for pornographic contents has become something that is very much desired by participants. They consider porn videos to have become part of their body. Withdrawal symptoms is a condition when the participants regret that they have made consumption of pornographic videos as a part of their daily activities. However, the participant participants find it difficult to remove pornographic videos from their minds.

Furthermore, participants experience intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts. For instance they find difficulties in socializing since they are much more comfortable being alone in the room. Not to mention that they might also be insecure to confess their feelings for the opposite sex. Relapse is a condition when participants re-access and download pornographic content after trying to hold back, but failing.

Based on the interview transcripts, it occurs pornographic content in the era of modern technology is different from the previous time. Simple pictures and videos start to become meaningless because internet pornography is replaced as an unlimited reality and transforms into a new force. The power of internet pornography is far more powerful as it produces an endless drive of addiction that can never be satisfied. The first-time participants begin to be exposed to pornographic content is at the time of puberty. This shows that the sexual information on the internet are potentially consumed by early teenagers. The participants recall that they were in elementary school and junior high school when they first accessed pornographic content in the internet. Participants
pornography offline or different means. Addiction to internet pornography also affects the emotional life of adolescents so they are prone to nightmares, feelings of shame, guilt, anxiety and confusion as well as self-esteem, feelings of dissatisfaction with one's body and sexual anxiety. This finding is in line with research by (Doornwaard et al., 2016).

Behulu et al. (2019) show that adolescents receive information through pornographic content that emphasizes physical appearance and masters sexual intercourse techniques. Pornography will have an impact on sexual attitudes, beliefs, behavior and sexual aggression, self-concept, body image, social development, and brain function and physical development of adolescents (George et al., 2019). It is further explained by Jonsson et al. (2014) who have conducted a research on 3,503 youths in Sweden. They mention that the experience of intentional online sexual exposure is related to internet behavior, social background and psycho-social health including parent-child relationships. They prove a significant association between intentional sexual exposure online and a number of different forms of online harassment. Respondents have significantly worse psycho-social health and problematic relationships with parents. Moreover, pornography addiction in adolescents lead to an attitude of approving prostitution, supporting sexual relations without love and affection, and underestimating love (van Oosten & Vandenbosch, 2020). Gradually, pornographic display can have a negative influence on changes in attitude or behavior from the results of the learning process through imitation. At the next stage, pornography addicts tend to experience a process of increasing need which will eventually lead to deviant behavior among adolescents.

These findings show that the pornographic content by adolescents contains complex messages about gender, power, sexual health, body, pleasure, consent, performance, sexuality and sex. Repeated exposure to pornography results in findings that there is a decrease in the sensitivity of adolescents to the material being viewed and it leads to a distorted view of "acceptable" behavior in relationships. Duffy et al (2016) furtherly explain that cognitive distortions are related to the use of pornographic content. Pornographic display will gradually have a negative influence on changes in attitudes or behavior from the results of the learning process through imitation will eventually trigger deviant behavior among adolescents.

CONCLUSIONS

Internet pornographic content have huge impacts for adolescents, especially on their cognitive and affective changes in their sexual stimulation. There are many behaviors that the impacts of cognition can be seen from: (1) obsessive compulsive thoughts on sexual contents; (2) recalling pornographic contents when consuming it for the first time; (3) thinking about sexual contents that have been watched; (4) focusing on the sexual content; (5) starting to be addicted to them by imagining sexual content that has not been viewed; (6) having lack of focus on doing things and (7) having difficulty in sleeping due to fantasies about sexual intercourse scenes.

The impacts of affection can be found from their emergence of passion and pleasure from watching pornographic content, the urge to perform scenes and intimate relationships in the video to vent lust and feel such immense affection. Furthermore, internet addiction with pornography has an impact on social behavior, which these adolescents may find difficulty in establishing interpersonal relationships with other people and tend to withdraw themselves from the social environment.

The research represents a limited number of participants so that it cannot be used to generalize to other individuals who are addicted to the internet with pornographic content. In addition, enforcement of internet addiction with pornographic content considers that there has not been a standard to determine the severity and lightness of the pornography addiction. Not to mention that internet addiction with pornographic content based on self-reporting questionnaires is not a psychologist's diagnosis.

Internet addiction with pornography content is a problem that requires handling from several parties, namely the government, parents, and the community. Teenagers need to get internet pornography literacy to fortify themselves from exposure to the internet with pornographic contents that are increasingly circulating without limits. Further research is suggested to examine related variables such as self-efficacy, self-concept and social relations of adolescents who experience pornography internet addiction.

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