

# Measuring Sensitive Constructs in Conservative Contexts

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# Main Goals of the Research Project

Designing *“Iranian Scale for Problematic Online Pornography Use”*

Determining the psychometric properties of the scale

How did we design  
the “Iranian Scale  
for Problematic  
Online Pornography  
Use”

Conducted a thorough literature review  
on **excessive pornography use**

Examined its **conceptualisation and  
epidemiology**

Identified **corelates and  
consequences**

Explored **risk factors and treatment  
strategies**

## Assessment Tool

## Authors

Internet Sex Screening Test (ISST)

Delmonico and Miller (2003)

Cyber-Pornography Use Inventory (CPIU)

Grubbs, Sessoms, Wheeler, and Volk (2010)

Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS)

Downing, Antebi, and Schrimshaw (2014)

Pornography Craving Questionnaire (PCQ)

Kraus and Rosenberg (2014)

Compulsive Pornography Consumption (CPC)

Noor, Rosser, and Erickson (2014)

Problematic Pornography Use Scale (PPUS)

Kor et al. (2014)

Cyber-Pornography Use Inventory-9 (CPUI-9)

Grubbs, Volk, Exline, and Pargament (2015)

Online Sexual Activities (s-IAT-sex)

Wéry et al. (2015)

Cyber Pornography Addiction Test (CYPAT)

Cacioppo et al (2018)

Problematic Pornography Consumption Scale (PPCS)

Bóthe et al.(2017)

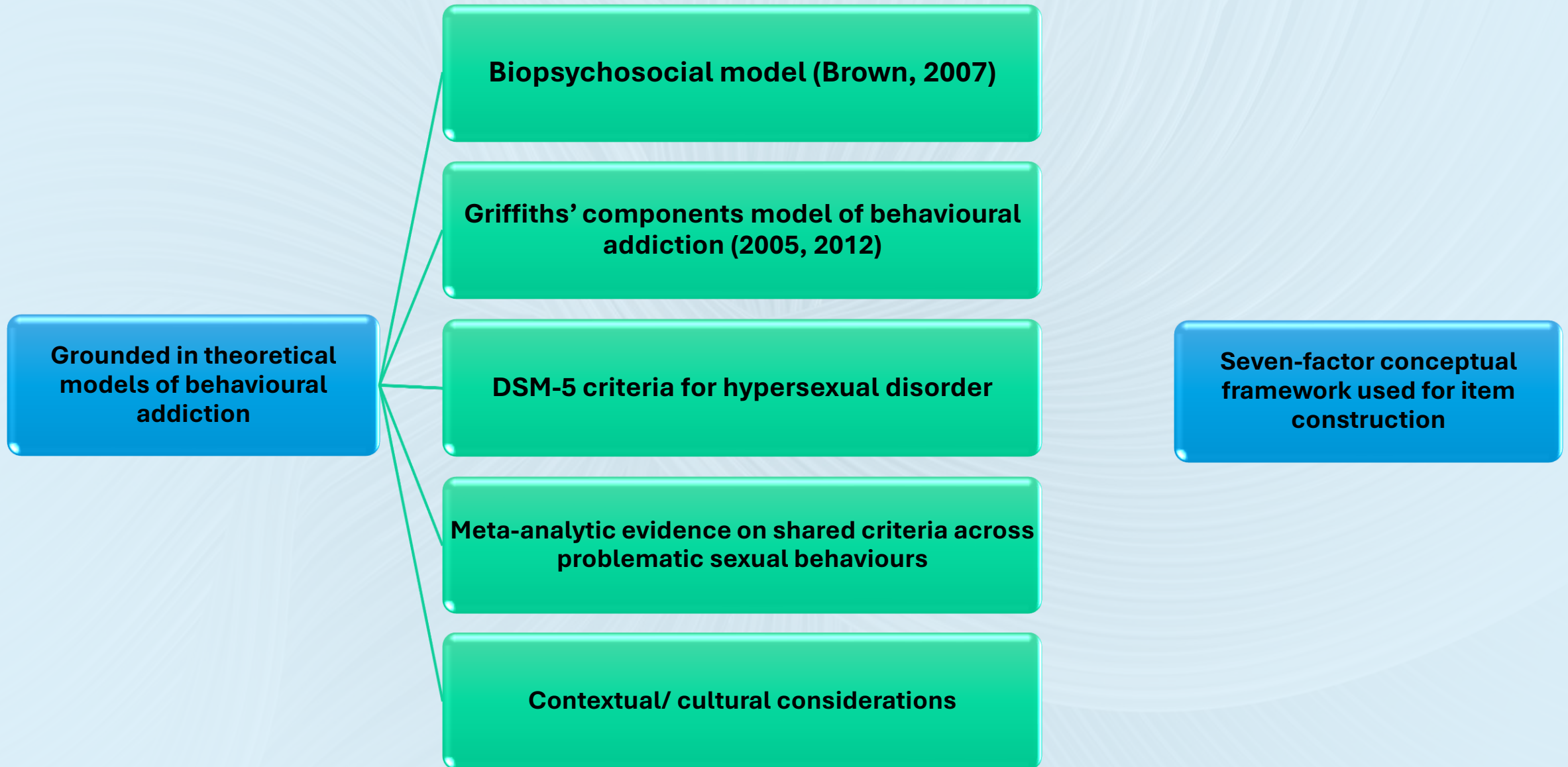
Pornography addiction, Psychosocial and Academic adjustment Instrument (PPAI)

Ephraim, Chinweike & Michael (2012)

Pornography Consumption Inventory (PCI)

Reid, Li, Giliand, Sten & Fong (2011)

# “Iranian Scale for Problematic Online Pornography Use”



# Item Design



Iterative item development by a psychology research team



Item refinement process: Initial pool: **33 items**/ Pilot version: **30 items**/ Final scale: **24 items**



Pilot study (n = 31):

Inter-item and item-total correlations

Contribution of items to scale reliability

Qualitative participant feedback

# Sample & Data Collection

- ❑ **Sampling method:** Non-random online snowball sampling
- ❑ **Rationale:** Effective for researching sensitive constructs
- ❑ **Recruitment platforms:**
  - Large Telegram channels & Instagram page
  - Psychology-focused audiences
- ❑ **Data collection:**
  - Anonymous online questionnaires (Google Forms)
- ❑ **Inclusion criteria:**
  - Age  $\geq$  18
  - Having watched pornographic material at least once during the past 6 months



# Ethical Safeguards



## **Informed consent:**

Study purpose, sensitive content, and voluntary participation explained



## **Anonymity & confidentiality:**

No identifying information collected  
Responses non-traceable; securely stored



## **Participant support & incentives:**

Optional free workshops and assessments

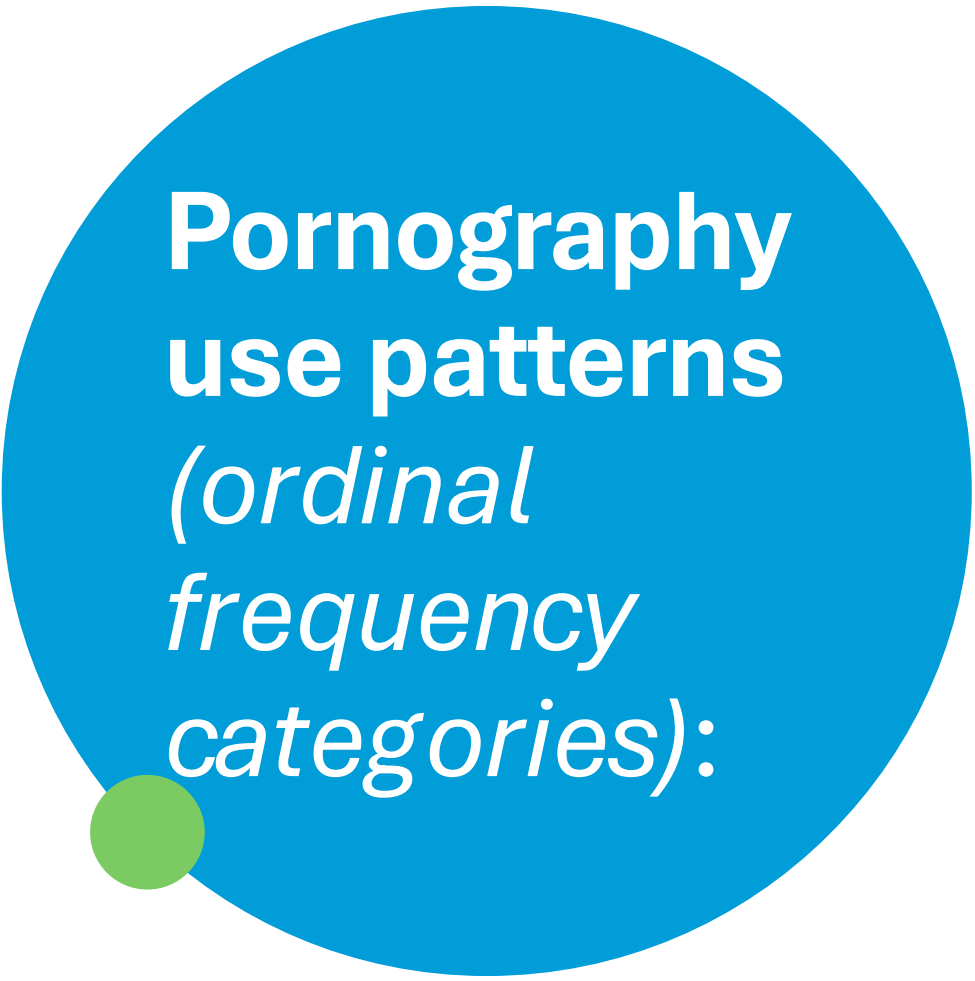


## **Data managing:**

Stored in Excel; analysed with statistical software


# Additional Measures and Single-Item Indicators

- **Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)**
- **Demographic variables** (*categorical / ordinal*): age, gender, sexual orientation, household income, educational level
- **Relational and sexual satisfaction** (*5-point Likert-type questions*):  
*completely satisfied – somewhat satisfied – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – somewhat dissatisfied – completely dissatisfied*  
(*plus “not in a relationship” for emotional relationship satisfaction*)



## Pornography use patterns (ordinal frequency categories):

- Frequency of pornography viewing (*from “once every six months” to “several times per day”*)
- Duration per viewing session (*<5 minutes to >1 hour; 7 ordinal categories*)
- Use of pornography for masturbation (*ordinal frequency categories*)
- Masturbation without pornography (*ordinal frequency categories*)
- Age of first exposure to pornography (*continuous*)



**Context and mode  
of use**  
*(binary / multiple-  
response items)*

- Access methods (*internet, social media, messaging platforms, etc.*)
- Pornography use in the workplace (*yes/no*)
- Sharing of pornographic content (*yes/no*)
- Devices used to access pornography  
*(multiple response)*

**A total of 1,921  
adults  
(813 women,  
1,108 men)  
completed the  
scales!**



# High Engagement in a Sensitive Study: Why?

High response rates may reflect topic salience, curiosity arising from limited access to scientific information in restrictive contexts, and the anonymity afforded by online data collection.





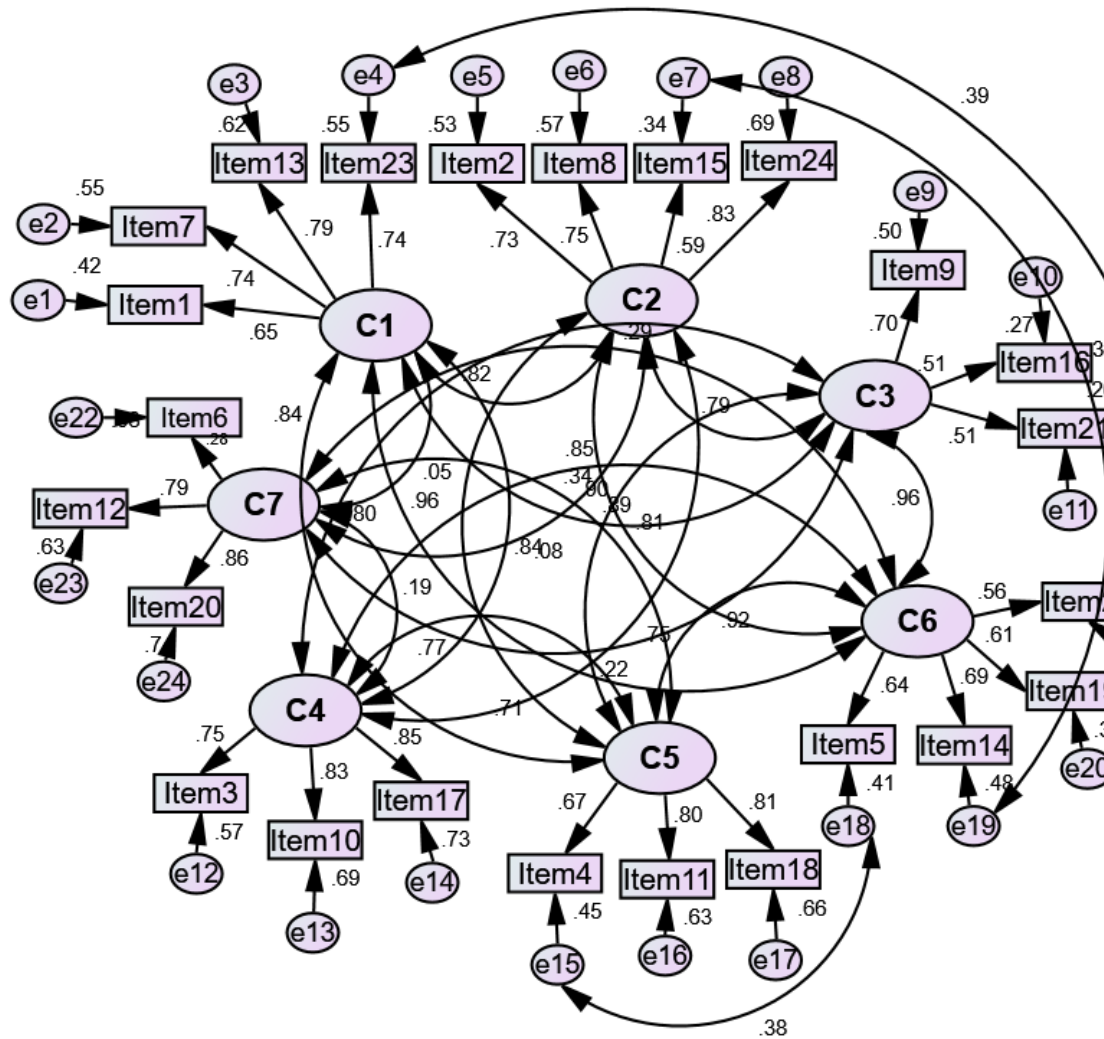
# Data Quality Screening

None of the 1,921 respondents showed uniform extreme responding (e.g. endorsing “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree” across all items), suggesting no evidence of careless or unreliable response patterns.

No missing data were observed, as all items were set as mandatory using the required-response option in Google Forms.

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# Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results (Construct Validity)



- ❑ Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) was used to estimate and test the full model.
- ❑ I first check normality (skewness and kurtosis) and outliers
- ❑ Confirmatory factor analysis supported the seven-factor model (RMSEA=0.07, CFI=0.91, df=228).
- ❑ Standardized Estimates (Confirmed Model) are depicted in the picture.

<b>Subscale</b>	<b>Core Concept</b>	<b>Key Features</b>	<b>Items</b>
<b>Salience</b>	Centrality of pornography use	Persistent preoccupation, craving, anticipation, dominance over thoughts, emotions, and behaviour	1, 7, 13, 23
<b>Mood Modification</b>	Emotional effects of use	Arousal or relaxation, euphoria/flow, mood improvement, escapism, coping with stress or negative affect	2, 8, 15, 24
<b>Tolerance</b>	Increasing intensity or amount	Need for longer use or more novel, intense, or extreme content to achieve prior effects	9, 16, 21
<b>Withdrawal</b>	Negative reactions to reduction	Irritability, sadness, emotional discomfort when use is reduced or unavailable	3, 10, 17
<b>Relapse / Loss of Control</b>	Failed self-regulation	Repeated return after abstinence, unsuccessful control attempts, impaired self-regulation	4, 11, 18
<b>Conflict &amp; Problems</b>	Psychosocial impairment	Interpersonal, academic/work, and intrapsychic conflicts; prioritising pornography over obligations	5, 14, 19, 22
<b>Guilt</b>	Emotional distress	Guilt, shame, regret, difficulty accepting sexual desires	6, 12, 20

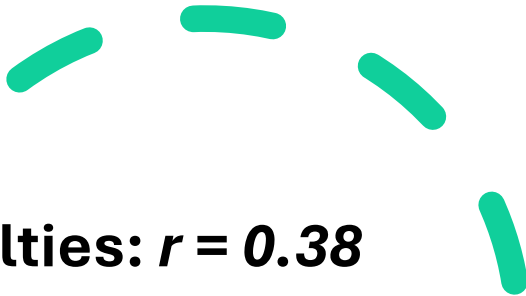
<b>Salience</b>	<p>1. I plan my schedule in a way that allows me to watch pornography.</p> <p>7. I have a strong desire to watch pornography.</p> <p>13. Watching pornography is an important part of my life.</p> <p>23. I spend a lot of time watching pornography or planning to do so.</p>
<b>Mood Modification</b>	<p>2. I use pornography to relieve (escape from) my emotions and to achieve calmness.</p> <p>8. When I have experienced unpleasant emotions (e.g. feeling depressed, tired, restless, ashamed, or anxious), I have used pornography.</p> <p>15. Sometimes I watch pornography as a reward for completing my tasks.</p> <p>24. When I feel low or upset, watching pornography soothes my mood.</p>
<b>Tolerance</b>	<p>9. I feel that the amount of time I spend watching pornography is constantly increasing.</p> <p>16. Compared to before, I am more interested in violent pornography because what I previously watched is no longer satisfying.</p> <p>21. Recently, I have watched videos/images that I was previously not interested in (e.g. child pornography and/or incest and/or bestiality, etc.).</p>
<b>Withdrawal</b>	<p>3. If something prevents me from watching pornography, I experience tension and distress.</p> <p>10. When I cannot access pornography, I feel upset.</p> <p>17. When the opportunity to watch pornography has not arisen, I have become distressed, nervous, and irritable.</p>
<b>Relapse / Loss of Control</b>	<p>4. I have tried to watch less pornography, but I have not been successful.</p> <p>11. When I decided not to watch pornography anymore, I was only able to follow my decision for a short time.</p> <p>18. I feel that I do not have much control over my pornography viewing.</p>
<b>Conflict and Problems</b>	<p>5. Even though I know that watching pornography causes problems for me, I continue to watch it.</p> <p>14. I prefer watching pornography over other leisure activities.</p> <p>19. Because of watching pornography, I have experienced problems with important people in my life.</p> <p>22. Due to watching pornography, I have put my occupational/educational opportunities or positions at risk.</p>
<b>Guilt</b>	<p>6. I do not like others to find out that I watch pornography.</p> <p>12. I feel that by watching pornography I am committing a sin.</p> <p>20. After watching pornography, I feel ashamed.</p>

# Validity and Reliability Evidence

- ❑ **Construct validity:** Supported by correlations among subscales and with total score
- ❑ **Discriminant validity:** Acceptable (Fornell–Larcker criterion, 1981)
- ❑ **Convergent validity:** AVE > 0.50 for all subscales
- ❑ **Criterion validity:** Significant correlations with pornography-related behaviours:
  - Viewing frequency (past 6 months):  $r = 0.56$
  - Viewing duration per session:  $r = 0.35$
  - Masturbation with pornography:  $r = 0.56$
  - Masturbation without pornography:  $r = 0.25$
- ❑ **Reliability:**
  - Composite Reliability:  $CR = 0.98$
  - Cronbach's alpha:  $\alpha = 0.93$



# Correlations

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- ✓ Emotion regulation difficulties:  $r = 0.38$
  - ✓ Age of first exposure to pornography:  $r = -0.15$
  - ✓ Relational satisfaction:  $r = -0.16$
  - ✓ Sexual life satisfaction:  $r = -0.27$
  - ✓ Age:  $r = -0.16$

# Group differences

Workplace  
pornography use:  
higher scores  
*(t = 9.78)*

Sharing pornography  
with others: higher  
scores  
*(t = 6.86)*

Men > women  
*(t = 12.79)*

Single individuals  
without sexual  
relationships > other  
relationship statuses  
*(F = 17.55)*

Straight women <  
other groups  
*(F = 42.87)*



# **Key Challenges Along the Way**

# Global Frameworks vs Local Context: A Key Design Challenge

How strongly to rely on international addiction frameworks while accounting for the **local cultural and normative context**?

❑ **Approach:** Conducted a **comprehensive literature review** to understand how problematic pornography use is conceptualised globally

❑ **Limitations identified in existing measures:**

- Most measures **overlook the lived realities of individuals living within religious or morally conservative contexts**
- Assumptions of partnered sexual activity in existing measures may not fit conservative contexts, where solitary activity is more common but less acknowledged.

❑ **Local adaptation rationale (Iranian context):**

- Behaviour shaped by **religious and moral norms**, regardless of individual religiosity
- Consideration of Islamic legal and moral views on pornography
- Clinical input from collaborating psychologists



## Key methodological decision:

Inclusion of **Guilt** as a model component, recognising that guilt may be experienced **even by non-religious individuals** living in a religious or morally conservative social environment

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# Language and Cultural Sensitivity in Item Design

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selecting language that was clear, precise, and acceptable in a sensitive context

## ❑ Item design principles:

- Simple, everyday language
- Easy to understand and precise
- Unidimensional and unambiguous while consistent with the overall scale
- Non-aggressive tone

## ❑ Cultural considerations:

- Conservative and religious social context
- Evidence that religious individuals may overestimate use and **self-label as “addicted”**

## Methodological decisions

Explicit operational **Clear** definition of pornography:

Provided at the start to ensure a **shared understanding**

Reduced ambiguity and **response bias**

“By pornography (explicit images or videos), we mean any internet-based content that depicts sexual activity and is intended to create or increase sexual arousal in the viewer.”

Use of “*problematic use*” rather than “*addiction*” due to limits of self-report data and over-estimation

Use of neutral, direct wording to reduce resistance

# Balancing ethics and engagement in participant recruitment message

## Key questions:

- How much information is sufficient for **ethical transparency**?
- Can overly detailed descriptions **discourage participation** in sensitive research?
- Should recruitment messages be **brief and accessible** or **detailed and academic**?

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## Risk considerations:

- Long, formal messages may reduce response rates
- Overly brief messages may compromise **informed consent**

# Final approach:

- Concise, clear messaging
- Essential ethical information included (eligibility, anonymity, right to withdraw)
- Avoidance of clinical or judgmental language to reduce stigma

Dear friend 🙌

We kindly invite you to participate in our research, should you wish to do so 📄 ✨

Eligibility criteria: being over 18 years of age and having watched pornography at least once during the past six months

Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential and cannot be traced back to you 🔒. You are free to discontinue participation at any point 🕊️

Your participation will help us better understand this phenomenon and contribute to addressing related problems.

Thank you very much 🙏

Questionnaire link: 🔗 <https://bit.ly/49l11g8>

👉 If you are willing, please also share the link above with your friends and acquaintances 🌻