

PORN IN LOCKDOWN: CHANGES IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S PORNOGRAPHY VIEWING FREQUENCY DURING AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WAVE OF COVID-19

Authors:

Lim MSC^{1,2,3}, Raggatt M^{1,2}, Eddy S¹, Wright CJC^{1,4}

¹ Burnet Institute, ² Monash University, ³ University of Melbourne, ⁴ Menzies School of Health Research

Background:

In response to COVID-19, Australia entered a period of lockdown from March 2020. Internationally, analyses of search engine data show substantial increases in pornography viewing during this time. However, big data do not provide insight into more nuanced trends among sub-groups of people. Young adults and teenagers, who view pornography more frequently than older adults, were particularly affected by COVID-19 restrictions in terms of loneliness, mental health, disconnect from education, and unemployment. There are therefore reasons to expect differential impacts on behaviours such as pornography use. This study describes self-reported changes in young people's pornography use before and during COVID-19 lockdown in Australia.

Methods:

From April to June 2020, we surveyed young people aged 15 to 29 years in Australia about their health, wellbeing, and behaviours (n=2000). Recruitment was through social media advertisements and online market research panels. Participants reported past-week pornography viewing frequency and pre-COVID usual frequency. Multinomial logistic regression was used to determine characteristics associated with increasing and decreasing pornography viewing frequency.

Results:

The median frequency of viewing was two days per week, both before and during lockdown. After lockdown commenced, 31% did not change their frequency of pornography viewing, 33% decreased viewing, and 36% increased. Increased pornography viewing was associated with female gender, younger age (15-19 years), identifying as LGBTQI+, not living with a partner, being a student, being unemployed, and higher levels of loneliness, anxiety, depression, and stress.

Conclusion:

In our study, overall rates of pornography viewing did not significantly change, but at an individual level, 67% changed their viewing frequency. Understanding differential impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns within populations can help inform prevention and support services. Changes in pornography use during lockdown were associated with adverse mental health outcomes. Pornography is sometimes used to alleviate stress and boredom, which may explain these findings.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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