

Willingness and Challenges to Change among Female Emerging Adults Compulsively Viewing Pornography: Impact for the Motivational Interviewing (MI) Approach

Kesediaan dan Cabaran untuk Berubah dalam Kalangan Wanita Dewasa Awal Menonton Pornografi Secara Kompulsif: Implikasi terhadap Pendekatan Temu Bual Motivasi (MI)

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ABSTRACT

Compulsive pornography viewing during adolescence poses risks to self-esteem, mental health, and sexual development, with long-term consequences. Motivational Interviewing (MI) is recognised as a useful approach in addressing behavioural addictions, including pornography use. This study explores female emerging adults' readiness to stop viewing pornography and the challenges they encounter, while identifying themes that can strengthen MI-based interventions. Using a phenomenological design, five female participants aged 19–21 were purposively sampled and interviewed with a semi-structured guide grounded in the Transtheoretical Model. All participants expressed a desire to change and acknowledged the harmful impact of pornography. Five key challenges to cessation were identified: (i) inability to control desire, (ii) the allure of internet content, (iii) coping with loneliness, (iv) habitual behavior, and (v) perceived lack of harm to others. The findings highlight how MI can address these barriers through empathetic dialogue, affirmations, and reflective techniques that respond to both cognitive and emotional needs. By mapping lived experiences to MI strategies, the study provides culturally sensitive guidance for supporting behavioural change. This research contributes original insights into an under-researched and culturally sensitive area in Malaysia, offering practical implications for interventions with young women.

Keywords: pornography; adolescent, female; motivational interviewing; readiness

ABSTRAK

Menonton pornografi secara kompulsif semasa zaman remaja menimbulkan risiko terhadap harga diri, kesihatan mental dan perkembangan seksual dengan kesan jangka panjang. Temu Bual Motivasi (MI) merupakan pendekatan yang dianggap berkesan dalam menangani ketagihan tingkah laku termasuk menonton pornografi. Kajian ini meneroka kesediaan wanita dewasa awal untuk berhenti menonton pornografi serta cabaran yang mereka hadapi, di samping mengenal pasti tema yang dapat memperkukuh intervensi berasaskan MI. Menggunakan reka bentuk fenomenologi, lima informan wanita berumur antara 19 hingga 21 tahun telah dipilih secara bertujuan dan ditemu bual menggunakan panduan separa berstruktur berasaskan Model Transtheoretical. Semua peserta menyatakan keinginan untuk berubah dan mengakui kesan buruk pornografi. Lima cabaran utama untuk berhenti dikenal pasti iaitu (i) ketidakupayaan mengawal keinginan, (ii) tarikan kandungan internet, (iii) menangani kesunyian, (iv) tingkah laku kebiasaan, dan (v) tanggapan bahawa ia tidak membawa mudarat kepada orang lain. Dapatan menunjukkan bagaimana MI dapat menangani halangan ini melalui dialog empatik, penegasan dan teknik reflektif yang memenuhi keperluan kognitif serta emosi. Dengan memetakan pengalaman sebenar kepada strategi MI, kajian ini menyediakan panduan yang peka budaya bagi menyokong perubahan tingkah laku dan menyumbang pandangan baharu terhadap bidang yang kurang diterokai di Malaysia, dengan implikasi praktikal untuk intervensi dalam kalangan wanita muda.

Kata kunci: pornografi; remaja, perempuan; temu bual motivasi; Kesediaan

INTRODUCTION

The internet has become an integral part of everyday life for adolescents and young adults, driven by rapid technological advancements and the widespread availability of digital media platforms. This shift has not only transformed how young individuals communicate and access information, but also how they consume various types of content. One critical consequence of this digital accessibility is the increased exposure to sexually explicit materials, including pornography. As highlighted by Paulus et al. (2024), the pervasive nature of online platforms has heightened the vulnerability of youth to such content, often without adequate parental or institutional safeguards.

Research over the past two decades has consistently demonstrated how technological progress has made pornographic content more accessible than ever before (Elisabeth, 2018; Harris, 2011; Jacobson, 2016). With the widespread use of smartphones, social media, and streaming services, access to sexually explicit material has become more immediate, private, and frequent. Ashton (2018) observes that this digital convenience not only increases access but often enhances the frequency of use and perceived pleasure. As a result, sexually explicit imagery and interactions are seamlessly integrated into the everyday digital experiences of many young people, including adolescent girls.

All behaviours associated with the viewing of pornographic material are classified as pornography. Pornography refers to visual or written content intended to elicit sexual arousal or stimulation. It may take the form of images, videos, texts, or other materials disseminated through various media platforms. The implications of exposure to pornography extend beyond psychological health. Lawless, Karantzas and Knox (2023) states that pornography users may compare their partners to unrealistic standards and expectations about sexual experiences. This view is supported by Owens (2012), who noted that such exposure may result in heightened sexual obsession and deviant beliefs about relationships. Peter and Valkenburg (2016) emphasised that adolescence is a developmental phase characterised by sexual experimentation, which may be influenced by content that promotes sexual encounters. Of greater concern, Adarsh and Sahoo (2023) found a correlation between frequent pornography consumption and earlier onset of sexual behaviour, a trend that aligns with growing concerns regarding the rise in premarital sexual activity among Malaysian adolescents.

Empirical data suggests that adolescents who engage in premarital sex are often influenced by prior exposure to sexual content, peer pressure, and their own sexual curiosities. This behavior has contributed to the rise of amateur pornography creation and sexting, particularly among youth. While pornography consumption is most common between the ages of 14 and 17, Štulhofer, Buško, and Schmidt (2012) suggest that some adolescents reduce or stop viewing explicit material as they mature, often due to shifting interests or involvement in emotionally meaningful romantic relationships. Nonetheless, for many, the behavioral patterns formed during adolescence can have lasting effects.

Given the psychological and behavioral risks associated with pornography consumption, particularly among young women, there is a pressing need for comprehensive interventions. Psychological approaches such as Motivational Interviewing (MI) have shown promise in helping individuals manage behavioral addictions, including pornography use. Studies by Nugraha and Khasanah (2023), Şahin and Ayaz-Alkaya (2024), and Wood et al. (2024) demonstrate that MI can effectively foster behavioral change by enhancing individuals' intrinsic motivation and readiness to improve. By tailoring sessions to reflect the client's personal challenges and level of readiness,

therapists can create a client-centered therapeutic environment conducive to sustained transformation.

Within this broader framework of prevention and intervention, Motivational Interviewing (MI) has emerged as a relevant and effective therapeutic method for addressing problematic behaviors, including pornography use. As a client-centered and goal-directed approach, MI is designed to help individuals resolve ambivalence, enhance intrinsic motivation, and commit to meaningful behavioral change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). This technique is particularly suitable for adolescents and young adults, as it respects their developmental need for autonomy, facilitates self-reflection, and promotes emotional safety during intervention (Nugraha & Khasanah, 2023). In the context of pornography consumption, MI has shown promising outcomes by fostering greater self-awareness, encouraging personal responsibility, and guiding individuals particularly young women towards healthier coping strategies and more adaptive self-perceptions (Şahin & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2024; Wood et al., 2024).

Thus, incorporating MI into school-based counseling, university wellness programs, or mental health services offers a practical, evidence-based avenue to address the psychological and behavioral impacts of pornography exposure. Through such comprehensive, research-informed, and gender-sensitive strategies including the integration of MI can the negative consequences of pornography consumption among young Malaysians be effectively understood, mitigated, and prevented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pornography consumption has become increasingly prevalent among adolescents due to the accessibility of internet-connected devices and unfiltered digital content. Adolescents, especially females, are particularly vulnerable as they undergo cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial development, making them susceptible to external influences such as sexually explicit material (Faisal, 2022). The consequences of early and repeated exposure to pornography are concerning, ranging from emotional dysregulation to risky sexual behaviors (Sutrisno & Saputra, 2025; Wang et al., 2024).

Pornography has been found to share neurobiological similarities with other forms of addiction. According to Wang et al. (2024), it can cause a diminished sensitivity to non-sexual rewards and impaired decision-making processes, further complicating cessation efforts. This is particularly relevant for female adolescents, who may find pornography exceptionally stimulating and thus challenging to resist. Studies by McCutcheon and Bishop (2015) and Smith (2013) further affirm that women can be aroused by pornographic content just as men, challenging the gendered assumptions around pornography use.

Dwulit and Rzymiski (2019) reported that many female pornography users perceive themselves as addicted, although this perception does not always meet the clinical criteria for addiction. Similarly, Faisal (2022) conducted a systematic review of 20 studies and emphasized that pornography use among adolescents especially girls can disrupt brain development, impair impulse control, and lead to the formation of compulsive habits akin to drug addiction. This is often accompanied by emotional disturbances, obsessive thoughts, and even sleep disorders.

Pornography use among female university students, although less frequently reported than among males, is still significant. Karim et al. (2025) revealed its prevalence even among nursing students, with a sample of 828 showing clear evidence of exposure. In the Malaysian context, Ali et al. (2021) reported that 25.4% of female university students admitted to intentionally viewing pornography. Janung and Choi (2022) further discovered a moderate positive correlation between pornography exposure and increased sexual activity among female students, suggesting that the behavioral impact extends beyond mere media consumption.

These findings are consistent with national data, Vieira and Griffiths (2024) documented a 74.5% lifetime exposure rate among Malaysian university students, while Goh et al. (2023) observed a typical exposure range between 70% and 90% among Malaysian youth. Although males were more likely to engage in solitary viewing, the steady increase in female viewership highlights an urgent need for gender-sensitive research and interventions. Research conducted by Azam and Nor (2022) revealed that many female informants turned to pornography during moments of loneliness, boredom, or emotional vulnerability. This suggests that pornography consumption may serve as a coping mechanism, particularly in private and unstructured environments.

As a long term effect, early exposure to pornography has been closely linked to more serious issues during later adolescence. Kadavala et al. (2021) found that Problematic Pornography Use (PPU) affects 14.6% of Malaysian youth, with males comprising 19% and females 3.3%. While the male predominance is evident, the data should not obscure the vulnerability of adolescent girls. Zaini et al. (2024) connected frequent pornography use with negative mental health outcomes, such as depression and difficulties in interpersonal relationships, particularly among early users those exposed before the age of ten. According to Rahman et al. (2022), Generation Z, those aged between 11 and 22, are particularly at risk due to their high digital fluency. This digital accessibility makes it easier for them to stumble upon explicit content, reinforcing the argument that youth-centered intervention models are urgently needed.

Social influences also play a role in shaping adolescents' engagement with pornography. Pratama and Notobroto (2017) identified that 60% of adolescents who had engaged in premarital sex had previously imagined sexual activity, 50% had watched pornographic videos, and 40% were affected by peer pressure. These findings point to a complex interplay of internal and external factors. The social consequences are also evident in behavioral shifts, such as the rise of "sexting" and the creation of amateur pornographic content. Elizabeth (2010) warned of the growing trend among youth to exchange sexual images through mobile devices. Stanley (2016) found that European adolescents frequently viewed pornography between the ages of 14 and 17, raising concerns about how sustained this behavior might be into adulthood. However, there is some evidence of natural reduction in pornography consumption over time. Willoughby and Young-Petersen (2018) found that some adolescents tend to decrease their use during late adolescence, often due to emerging romantic relationships or shifting interests. Peter and Valkenburg (2016) echoed this trend, noting that pornography consumption may naturally decline as adolescents mature and their values evolve.

Given the multi-dimensional consequences of adolescent pornography use, particularly among females, educational interventions are essential. Testa (2023) highlighted the efficacy of media literacy programs in equipping adolescents with the critical thinking skills necessary to understand and deconstruct pornographic content. Fernandez (2021) argued that abstinence from pornography is a realistic and attainable goal when supported by the right tools and education. Group-based interventions, as shown by Hall and Larkin (2020), tend to be more effective than individual approaches, potentially because of the shared experiences and peer support involved.

A promising therapeutic approach for addressing PPU among female adolescents is Motivational Interviewing (MI). MI is a client-centered, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence. Bóthe (2020) introduced an intervention module that integrated MI to tackle PPU, demonstrating promising outcomes. Bischof et al. (2021) confirmed that MI is effective in fostering behavioral change and promoting adherence to treatment protocols in populations affected by behavior-linked health problems. Ulfa et al. (2020) suggested that embedding MI within intervention programs could be key to reducing or even preventing pornography viewing among adolescents.

One of MI's strengths is its adaptability to student populations. The OARS technique, open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summarizing forms the foundation of MI and fosters a collaborative and empathetic environment (Adella, Arsini, & Putri, 2024). Roza et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review and found that MI-based treatments were highly effective for managing PPU, even among female participants. Rodda and Luoto (2023) further confirmed that many women, when engaged in MI and mindfulness-based online programs, chose abstinence as a treatment goal and experienced psychological improvements.

Despite the growing body of research on pornography and its implications, there remains a gap in Malaysia regarding studies that specifically focus on female users. While Western research has contributed significantly to understanding female pornography consumption, localized studies are limited. This raises the need for culturally sensitive interventions that consider the unique societal and religious values of Malaysian communities.

The current study, therefore, aims to address this gap by exploring the readiness for change and the specific challenges faced by female emerging adults (those transitioning from adolescence to adulthood) in abstaining from pornography. Through this exploration, MI strategies are tailored to align with the lived experiences and psychological barriers encountered by participants.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. According to Creswell (2013), the phenomenological approach aims to explore the essence of human experiences concerning a particular phenomenon. Husserl (2002) posited that through phenomenology, researchers can gain insight into how phenomena in the world are shaped by human consciousness. In the context of this study, it was assumed that the informants were consciously aware of their own experiences with pornography viewing and the difficulties they encountered in attempting to stop the behavior. The researcher further assumed that the informants were capable of articulating how this phenomenon occurred in their lives and how it shaped their lived experiences. This aligns with Husserl's (2002) perspective that human beings cannot separate objects from the experiences they undergo.

STUDY SAMPLE

In Malaysia, pornography is considered a taboo subject, and its consumption is generally perceived as sinful, reflecting negative social traits and immoral individual values (Ali et al., 2021). Consequently, this study employed purposive sampling, based on predetermined criteria; participants had to be emerging adults aged between 19 and 21 years who had experiences of habitual pornography viewing.

The research process began by interviewing informants who were participants in a university-based program. Although the initial informants agreed to participate, only a few voluntarily expressed willingness to cooperate. Subsequently, the researcher contacted those who had given verbal consent and sought formal approval for participation. In total, five informants were successfully interviewed after data saturation was reached in addressing the research questions. The reliance on a small, purposively selected sample of five participants limits the generalisability of the findings. As participation was voluntary and only a few informants agreed to be interviewed, the results primarily reflect the experiences of individuals who were willing to disclose sensitive information. Therefore, while the study provides valuable insights, the findings should be interpreted cautiously and may not represent the broader population of female emerging adults in Malaysia.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Data were collected using in-depth interviews. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide to facilitate the process. The interview data were then analyzed using thematic analysis. Data analysis began immediately following the first interview session.

The analysis followed the phenomenological approach proposed by Giorgi (2003), which involved four main steps. First, the researcher developed a holistic understanding of the entire transcript to capture the overall essence of the participants' experiences. Next, the text was segmented into distinct meaning units that reflected significant ideas or emotions conveyed by the informants. These meaning units were then condensed and compared across cases to identify commonalities. Finally, the researcher synthesized these insights by generalizing the themes and constructing conceptual explanations based on the recurring patterns that emerged from the data.

RESULT

A total of five informants agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. All informants were classified as emerging adults, specifically in the transitional stage from late adolescence to early adulthood, ranging in age from 19 to 21 years. All participants were Malay, Muslim, university students, and unmarried. Only one of the informants reported being in a romantic relationship. A summary of the informants' demographic information is presented in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1. Socio-Demographic Information of Informants

Informant	A	B	C	D	E
Age	20	19	20	21	20
Status	Student	Student	Student	Student	Student
Ethnicity	Malay	Malay	Malay	Malay	Malay
Boyfriend	None	None	None	Yes	None

READINESS TO CHANGE

The findings of the study revealed two main themes that explain the participants' readiness to change their behavior regarding pornography consumption. First, the participants demonstrated an awareness of the negative consequences associated with viewing pornography. Second, all participants expressed a desire to change and cease the behavior.

AWARENESS OF THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY

All informants acknowledged that watching pornography constitutes a negative behaviour. They admitted that in the past, they frequently gave in to the urge to view pornographic content without experiencing guilt or engaging in much reflection. As shared by Informant E:

...When watching videos with friends or alone, I didn't feel guilty at the time. Back then, I didn't do anything about it. If I felt like watching, I'd watch. Just for fun. As a kid, I didn't think much about it.

Informant E further noted that advice from a religious teacher at school regarding the consequences of pornography had influenced her awareness and maturity, prompting her to begin reducing the behaviour:

...But as I grew older, I realized it's not good. The teacher at school also said that it's sinful to watch such things... I'd be lying if I said I've completely stopped. I still watch, but only occasionally, not as much as before. I'm trying to reduce it.

Similarly, Informant B, who was part of a peer group that also engaged in pornography viewing, acknowledged exposure to inappropriate conversations. Nevertheless, she demonstrated an awareness of the moral implications and sometimes reminded her peers of the negative impact,

"My friends watch too. Sometimes, when we talk about inappropriate things, a friend would remind us that it's not good because it darkens the heart, and we won't absorb what the teacher is teaching."

DESIRE TO CHANGE

The findings also suggest that frequent expressions of intention to reduce pornography viewing may reflect a genuine desire for behavioural change, despite the associated challenges. None of the informants described specific or structured efforts to modify their behaviour. Instead, they conveyed a general sense of willingness to change, albeit accompanied by feelings of inadequacy or uncertainty about how to do so. The following section presents selected statements that reflect the participants' seriousness and internal struggle regarding the change they hope to achieve.

TABLE 2. Informant Statements on Willingness to Change

Informant Statements	Units of Meaning
<i>"It would be a lie if I said I had completely stopped watching... I still watch, but only occasionally, not as frequently as before. I try to reduce it."</i>	• The informant is trying to reduce the behavior of watching pornography. • Still watches pornography. • Watches less frequently compared to before.
<i>"Sometimes I try to avoid it, but sometimes I still want to watch."</i>	• The informant tries to avoid watching but still ends up watching pornography

<i>"I don't know why... It's hard to stop completely."</i>	Informant finds it difficult to stop watching pornography altogether.
<i>"I know it's wrong, but how do I put it... If I haven't watched for a long time, I feel the urge to watch again."</i>	Informant knows that watching pornography is wrong.
<i>"We've been watching for so long, so to say 'don't watch anymore' feels dishonest to me..."</i>	- Has become accustomed to watching pornography. - Does not want to deceive oneself by claiming not to watch pornography anymore.

CHALLENGES IN CEASING PORNOGRAPHY VIEWING

The findings of this study identified six major themes that explain the challenges faced by the informants in their attempts to stop viewing pornography; inability to control desire, the allure of internet content, coping with loneliness, habitual behavior, and perceived lack of harm to others.

INABILITY TO CONTROL DESIRE

All informants admitted to having difficulty controlling the urge to watch pornography. Despite their efforts to avoid it, they repeatedly failed to suppress the desire. Informant A admitted that whenever the urge arose, they would watch pornographic videos, and conversely, watching pornography would also heighten their arousal,

"It's quite stimulating. Sometimes the mood just comes, and when we see those videos, we get aroused. Sometimes I just feel turned on, so I'll watch the videos."

Many informants reported that although they tried to avoid pornography, they often failed and were unsure why they continued to engage in the behavior. For example, Informant D shared that the desire often emerged when browsing the internet, making it difficult to resist watching, even when they had tried to stop, “

Sometimes I try to avoid it, but I still end up watching. If I haven't opened anything yet, I won't. But once I'm on Facebook or something, I just feel like opening it. If I'm already browsing, the urge just comes."

Some informants found it difficult to resist because watching pornography offered a sense of calm. Informant B described it as a way to escape from stress and likened it to indulging in fantasy:

...I don't know how to explain it... it's hard to just stop completely. Watching feels good, maybe even better than thinking about problems. It feels relaxing, like daydreaming, but I'm not doing anything with anyone.

THE ALLURE OF INTERNET CONTENT

All informants acknowledged the powerful influence of the internet, which made it difficult for them to stop watching pornography. They reported that they often lost control when exposed to sexually suggestive advertisements online. Informant C stated that although they knew it was wrong, such ads triggered the urge to view pornographic content:

...At first, I just wanted to open Instagram or Facebook... but I'd end up stumbling upon porn. I know it's not good, but I don't know... when you open your phone, scrolling Twitter or something, and those sexy ads pop up, it just makes you want to look. That's when it all starts, and then I'd go to porn sites.

Informants also shared that the ease of internet access facilitated their engagement with pornographic content. Informant E, who initially browsed the internet to look up information about body aesthetics, ended up being directed to related pornographic material,

"It's so easy now, everything's at your fingertips. I just wanted to look at people with nice bodies because I was curious, but those sites are usually linked to porn... eventually, I got hooked."

COPING WITH LONELINESS

Several informants reported that boredom and being alone often triggered their pornography viewing habits. Informant A shared that being alone in a room with nothing to do after completing tasks led to the temptation to access porn sites,

"I often feel alone... mostly just stay in my room. Not much to do after finishing some study stuff. So I start scrolling and opening porn sites. I get absorbed in it... it's distracting."

Informant C mentioned locking the door to ensure privacy and avoid being caught,

"When I'm alone in my room... that's the best time, no interruptions. I lock the door because I'm scared people will find out."

They also described the experience as instant gratification, especially when they had no one to talk to,

"I don't know... the urge is so strong, so I make sure no one sees. When I'm alone, with no one to talk to... watching porn feels like instant pleasure..it keeps my eyes wide open."

Informant D, who sometimes stayed in the dorm, said that watching English movies alone in the evening would trigger the urge to switch to pornographic content;

...When I'm not sure what to do in the evening, the dorm gets quiet... I'll start watching a movie but only get halfway before switching to porn. When you watch Western films, they often have suggestive scenes, and being alone, I just start thinking about watching porn instead.

HABITUAL BEHAVIOR

Informants recognized that frequent exposure to pornography created a habitual pattern that made abstinence uncomfortable. Informant E shared that despite knowing it was wrong, the routine made it difficult to stop:

...Once you're used to it, it feels like something is missing if you haven't watched in a while... I try to distract myself from thinking about it, but it's not easy. I'll try to stop, but eventually, I tell myself, just a quick look.

Informant A, who usually watched alone, expressed that they would think about it again if they hadn't watched in a while:

...I don't dare to watch with others...too embarrassed. Talking about it is fine, but if you really want to know what happens, you do it alone, quietly in your room. I know it's wrong, but when I haven't watched for a while, I feel like I want to again.

Informant C admitted that once it became a habit, quitting wasn't immediate,

"That's why I said it's not easy to stop suddenly because I'm used to it... so when I try to stop, I still end up watching occasionally. Just not as frequently, but sometimes the urge comes out of nowhere."

PERCEIVED LACK OF HARM TO OTHERS

Some informants believed that watching pornography was a personal act that did not harm anyone. Informant B viewed it as merely self-indulgence,

"For me, it's just for fun. I don't have any intention of doing it for real... it's just to entertain myself. Once everyone's out for work, I just 'window shop'."

Informant D shared the belief that since no one else was involved, the act was not a major wrongdoing,

...Once you watch it, it stays in your mind... but that was in the past. At first, I didn't understand, and it stayed in my mind for a day or two. But now, I don't really think about it anymore. I know it's wrong, but I watch alone, it doesn't hurt anyone. It's not like I'm acting it out with someone or calling anyone... no."

Similarly, Informant C did not view their actions as serious misconduct, believing that they could trust themselves not to take it further:

...Maybe it's because I'm used to it... I'm not trying to be bad, just watching for the sake of watching. I trust myself not to go overboard. I know it's wrong, but I've watched so much already that it's hard to stop suddenly. I mean, I know it's wrong—but I guess I've just gotten used to it. Plus, it's not like I'm doing anything to anyone... just watching.

DISCUSSION

According to recovery model principles, an individual's awareness that pornography viewing constitutes a negative behaviour is critically important for initiating change. This recognition plays a central role in facilitating long-term behavioural modification, particularly when supported by structured intervention models. In the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1984), behavioural change is viewed as a process that unfolds over time and involves five distinct stages: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. This model allows for a nuanced understanding of how individuals move from awareness to sustained change, which is essential when addressing deeply rooted behaviours such as pornography use.

From the findings of this study, all informants were identified to be in the preparation stage. This stage is characterized by the intention to take action in the immediate future, typically within the next month, and the presence of small, initial behavioural shifts. In the context of pornography use, these shifts were evidenced by attempts to reduce the frequency of viewing. However, it is

notable that none of the participants had yet reached the action stage, which involves direct and sustained efforts to change the problematic behaviour. Their minor efforts to reduce pornography consumption, while commendable, had not yet developed into a full commitment to behavioural cessation. This indicates a need for further support to transition into the next stage of change.

Although their minor efforts may serve as precursors to more significant change, transitioning to the action stage requires more robust psychological and emotional readiness. The Transtheoretical Model suggests that the transition between stages is not automatic but must be supported by increased motivation, clear goal-setting, and adaptive coping strategies. Participants in this study reported difficulty progressing further due to habitual exposure and challenges in controlling sexual urges barriers that are common among individuals dealing with compulsive behaviours. These findings reinforce the notion that readiness alone is not sufficient; it must be paired with structured, evidence-based support to generate meaningful change.

To address such challenges, Wood et al. (2024) proposed a desire and readiness for change model that integrates Motivational Interviewing (MI), a counselling approach that enhances clients' motivation by helping them explore and resolve ambivalence. In practice, counsellors and mental health practitioners could apply MI in school counselling sessions, university wellness programs, and community-based interventions. Practical strategies include structured goal-setting, skills training to manage online triggers, and culturally sensitive psychoeducation that aligns with Malaysian values and norms.

MI is particularly useful in addressing behavioural addictions, including problematic pornography consumption. Within the MI framework, therapists aim to build self-awareness in female adolescents regarding the implications of their behaviour. This is achieved through open-ended questioning, reflective listening, and affirmations techniques designed to promote internal motivation and help clients explore their personal values. In cases where clients acknowledge the harms of pornography use but struggle to act, MI becomes a bridge between intention and sustained behavioural change.

MI can be applied effectively by therapists, including counsellors, psychologists, and social workers, to help clients manage five primary obstacles in the process of ceasing pornography consumption. The first challenge revolves around difficulty in controlling urges, as many individuals find pornography both pleasurable and mood-enhancing. Through reflective listening techniques, MI enables clients to process the temporary relief gained from pornography versus its long-term emotional cost. For example, a therapist might ask, *"You mentioned that watching pornography improves your mood, how do you feel afterward? Does it truly help, or is the effect only temporary?"* This prompts the client to reflect on the underlying emotional patterns driving their behaviour. Furthermore, therapists may encourage "change talk" by posing questions such as, *"How would your life be different if you could control this urge?"* This enables clients to imagine a future in which their actions are aligned with their values and goals.

Another significant barrier revealed by the study was the ubiquitous availability of internet access, which creates a constant environment of temptation. This includes pop-up advertisements, sexually explicit thumbnails, and algorithmically recommended content. Therapists using MI may gently introduce discomfort to raise awareness of these triggers by asking, *"You know watching pornography is not beneficial... so how much does the lure of the internet affect your goal to change?"* In doing so, they encourage clients to critically evaluate the conflict between short-term gratification and long-term goals. Therapists may also introduce proactive strategies such as installing content filters or restricting access to specific platforms. For instance, they might ask,

“Would you be willing to take small steps, like reducing your screen time or avoiding certain apps, to help you manage this issue?”

The study also found that many female emerging adults turn to pornography when experiencing loneliness or isolation. While such behaviour may initially be perceived as an individual choice, it often reflects a lack of emotional support or healthy coping strategies. In this scenario, MI becomes a valuable tool for identifying unmet emotional needs. A therapist might ask, *“Does watching pornography help you feel more connected, or does it leave you feeling more alone?”* In this way, the client is prompted to evaluate whether the behaviour genuinely fulfills their emotional void. Therapists can also recommend social alternatives or coping mechanisms, such as joining community groups, participating in hobbies, or reconnecting with family and friends. These interventions aim not only to reduce pornography consumption but to replace it with more fulfilling activities.

In addition to loneliness, the study uncovered another key finding that some participants did not perceive their pornography use as problematic because it was a private activity with no apparent external consequences. This perspective can hinder self-reflection and reduce the urgency for change. MI interventions can be structured to encourage a values-based dialogue in such situations. By asking, *“How does watching pornography align with your long-term goals and values?”* the therapist redirects the focus to the client’s broader life purpose. Reflective questioning also helps clients uncover internal conflicts they may not have previously considered. For example, *“You feel this is just personal entertainment that doesn’t harm others, but you also say you feel unfulfilled why do you think that is?”* Such questions bring latent discomfort into conscious awareness, creating an opportunity for growth.

The implementation of Motivational Interviewing must align with each client’s stage of readiness for change. One of MI’s most empowering aspects is its respect for individual autonomy. Rather than dictating solutions, the therapist collaborates with the client to co-create a path forward. MI techniques such as affirmations, reflective questions, and summarizing allow clients to feel heard, validated, and encouraged. This is especially important when working with female adolescents who are still forming their identity and navigating complex social and emotional pressures. Supporting self-efficacy and reinforcing the client’s ability to change can have long-lasting benefits for emotional regulation and behavioural resilience.

Ultimately, this approach promotes a safe therapeutic environment in which female clients can critically assess their behaviour without fear of judgment. By addressing the psychological, emotional, and environmental factors contributing to pornography use, MI provides a holistic framework for change. Therapists who are trained in MI techniques can adapt their strategies to each unique case, fostering long-term resilience and self-regulation. As this study suggests, integrating MI within behavioural interventions tailored for female adolescents holds promise as a powerful method to support meaningful and sustainable recovery from pornography-related behaviours.

Furthermore, although Motivational Interviewing (MI) is widely used by professionals, this study also highlights its potential to assist parents in managing children who are involved in pornography. This is particularly relevant in light of Rahman and Abdullah’s (2021) findings, which indicate that parents still lack in-depth knowledge regarding informal social control strategies. While methods such as persuasion and punishment have proven effective in shaping children’s behaviour, their implementation remains incomplete especially in terms of using positive reinforcement, which could encourage sustained positive behaviour.

CONCLUSION

The lack of readiness among female emerging adults to cease pornography consumption is not primarily due to a lack of awareness regarding its negative consequences, but rather stems from the complex challenges they face particularly those related to addiction. Motivational Interviewing (MI) presents a viable approach to fostering internal change, as it does not rely on coercion but instead facilitates the development of intrinsic motivation to support behavioural transformation.

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