



Ana Simão Marques
“ Do I really need to ask?” : Relationship between pornography and sexual consent

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Universidade do Minho

Escola de Psicologia

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Dissertação de Mestrado
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Psicologia

Trabalho efetuado sob a orientação da
Professora Doutora Joana Arantes

Despacho RT - 31 /2019 - Anexo 3

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STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration.

I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

Braga, 4 de junho de 2022

Ana Simão Marques

“Preciso mesmo de perguntar?”: Relação entre pornografia e o consentimento sexual

Resumo

Os estudos sobre o consentimento sexual são ainda bastante escassos, apesar deste ser extremamente relevante para a investigação relativa a assédio e ao seu impacto psicológico. O consumo de pornografia tem vindo a aumentar cada vez mais e é muitas vezes utilizado como forma de aprendizagem sexual para a população jovem. Deste modo, o presente estudo tem como objetivo principal compreender a relação entre o consumo de pornografia e as atitudes sobre consentimento sexual. Este estudo incluiu 1329 adultos (340 homens; 962 mulheres), que responderam a um questionário sociodemográfico, questões sobre consumo de pornografia, à Escala de Consumo de Pornografia Parafilica, à Escala de Consentimento Sexual, questões sobre o uso de comportamentos verbais e não verbais de consentimento sexual e, por fim, à Escala de Impulsividade de Barrat. Os resultados indicam que participantes que não vêem pornografia possuem mais atitudes positivas relativamente ao consentimento sexual. Não se verificaram diferenças entre os géneros na forma como se dá ou pede consentimento sexual. Por fim, conclui-se que o género, a impulsividade, comportamentos verbais, controlo percebido, normas de consentimento sexual e consciência e discussão são bons preditores de atitudes positivas acerca do consentimento sexual.

Palavras-chave: Consentimento Sexual, Pornografia, Atitudes Positivas, Comportamentos Indiretos

“Do I really need to ask?”: Relationship between pornography and sexual consent

Abstract

The study of sexual consent is still quite scarce, although it is a factor of extreme relevance for the investigation of harassment and their psychological impact. Pornography consumption has been increasing and is often used as a sex education tool for people. The main objective of this study is to understand the relationship between pornography consumption and attitudes about sexual consent. This study included 1329 adults (340 men; 962 women), who answered a sociodemographic questionnaire, questions about pornography consumption, Paraphilic Pornography Consumption Scale, Sexual Consent Scale, questions about the use of verbal and nonverbal sexual consent behaviors and, finally, Barrat Impulsivity Scale. The results indicate that participants who don't watch pornography have more positive attitudes towards sexual consent. There are no gender differences in the way people give or ask for sexual consent. In addition, it is concluded that gender, impulsiveness, verbal behaviors, lack of perceived control, sexual norms and awareness and discussion are good predictors of positive attitudes about sexual consent.

Keywords: Sexual Consent, Pornography, Positive attitudes, Indirect Behaviors

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Relationship between pornography and sexual consent

Everyone seems to agree that the communication between two people appears to be the base of healthy relationships, in order to avoid misunderstandings. If so, then why do we, when it comes to sexual relationships, seem to assume everything “just happens” and “just go with the flow”? The concept of sexual consent does not yet seem to have a completely clear definition, which translates into a very limited investigation on the subject (Beres et al., 2004; Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2013; Jozkowski et al., 2014). There are multiple definitions of sexual consent, some of which interpret the concept as a mental act, others as a physical act, or even as an act of moral transformation (Beres, 2007). Hickman and Muehlenhard (1999) inclusively define sexual consent, as “the communication of a feeling of will”. It is also important to understand the internal feelings associated with the person's willingness to engage in sexual activities, as it is possible for someone to engage in consensual sex that they do not want (*compliant sex*), or, on the other hand, to wish to have sexual intercourse, but not to consent to it (*token resistance*) (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007).

Hall (1998) states that sexual consent may be any expression of agreement in having sex, however, unlike Dripps (1992), he affirms that it is necessary to be given freely, either verbally or nonverbally. It is also important to discuss the possible social influences that may exist to initiate sexual activity (e.g., peer pressure, gender stereotypes) as a form of social coercion which, in turn, may imply the impossibility of consent. Nevertheless, this argument is rebutted by conceptualizing sexual consent as something not imposed by interpersonal coercion (therefore, excluding social influences) (West, 2002). Consequently, it is necessary to admit the complexity of the theme and how sexual consent is more than a simple “yes” to a certain person, in a certain place, at a certain time, but is also an act with various social expectations (Beres, 2007). Thus, the present study considers sexual consent as any expression (verbal or nonverbal) of agreement in having sexual intercourse, in the absence of force, coercion, or threats.

Studies have shown that permission for sexual activity is often given through behaviors such as gaze, body movement, kissing, increased physical proximity, intimate touch, and, less often, smiling (Hall, 1998; Jozkowski, 2011). Hall (1998) reports that, even though in the case of heterosexual sexual intercourse, consent is usually implicit, in certain sexual activities, it is more likely to be explicitly communicated, such as oral sex and initiation of sexual behavior (e.g., kissing). The more intimate the behavior, the greater the probability of consent being given verbally (Hall, 1998; Willis et al., 2021).

Research has shown that nonverbal behaviors are used more often than verbal behaviors to communicate consent, both in heterosexual and homosexual couples (Beres et al., 2004; Fantasia, 2011; Hall, 1998; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2005; Humphreys & Herold, 2007).

In fact, most studies mention that individuals are reluctant to use verbal cues when expressing sexual consent for many reasons, namely because: i) they consider it embarrassing; ii) the social norms state that one should not talk about sex; iii) verbal communication is seen as lack of spontaneity and romanticism in these situations; and iv) models in the media do not represent explicit communication (Curtis and Burnett, 2017; Humphreys and Herold, 2003).

Sexual consent and gender

Jozkowski and collaborators (2014) claim that sexual consent is a highly gendered issue, and the results of their research go according to the traditional sexual script: men are expected to always want to engage in sexual relations, and women are sexual gatekeepers, meaning they are the ones who decide whether there will be sexual relations or not (Jozkowski, 2011). Thus, while men feel less inhibited about their internalized feelings regarding sexual consent, for women consent can be an ambiguous and complex act, either because they are expected to be sensual and engage in casual sexual intercourse (Armstrong et al., 2006), or they will be judged for engaging in too many sexual encounters (Kim et al., 2007). Some studies indicate that women are more likely than men to indicate verbal consent, especially after the partner questions their interest in engaging in sexual activity (Jozkowski, 2011). Other studies conclude that men are more likely than women to use explicit verbal cues in sexual consent (Jozkowski et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2019). Finally, some studies claim that men and women give non-verbal consent in a similar way (Fegley, 2013; Jozkowski et al., 2019).

Sexual consent and type of relationship

There are also contradictory results in the literature about the influence of the type of relationship on the behaviors used to give sexual consent. Some researchers claim that individuals in committed relationships use nonverbal cues more often than in recent or casual relationships (Jozkowski et al., 2019; Marcantonio et al., 2018). One possible explanation is that individuals in committed relationships speculate what their partners want as they have a better understanding of who their partners are, and do not feel the need to always ask them for consent (Willis et al., 2021). However, other researchers found that individuals tend to communicate more passively in situations of sexual intercourse with casual partners, compared to partners in serious relationships possibly because they feel less comfortable having open communication with someone they do not have romantic feelings with and have a higher fear of

rejection (Foubert et al., 2006; Righi et al., 2019). In addition, some researchers have concluded that the type of relationship people are in does not influence the way they externally express their sexual consent (Freitas, 2017).

Pornography Consumption

The media normalize the use of nonverbal and implicit behaviors in the act of consent, which may influence future beliefs and, consequently, sexual behaviors of individuals who observe these actions (Brown, 2002; Freitas, 2017). According to the Theory of Cultivation (Gerbner, 1969), the perceptions of reality are cultivated through the observation of the media, and the longer we observe fictional realities, the more we believe that these scenarios reflect the current reality (Gerbner et al., 2002). Nowadays, nonverbal clues, whether explicit or implicit, dominate the representation of consent in mainstream films (Jozkowski et al., 2019), which is an important data, as social media is a source of learning and observation of sexual behavior, especially for younger people (Brown, 2002). An important topic in mass media is its role in pornography through proliferation of programming with over sexual content (Lin et al., 2020).

Pornography consumption has been growing exponentially, especially due to the accessibility provided by the Internet (Greenfield, 2004; Löfgren-Mårtenson & Månsson, 2010; Luder et al., 2011; Peter & Valkenburg, 2007). The concept of pornography has several definitions, however, the present study identifies it as "representations of written nudity and sexual behavior, in image or audiovisual format" (Silva, 2018).

Some researchers suggest that pornography consumption has no impact on attitudes about sexual behaviors (Linz et al., 1988; Löfgren-Mårtenson & Månsson, 2010; McKee, 2007). However, studies have shown that when pornography bring up situations of aggression, it has a negative effect on the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of those who observe them (Donnerstein et al., 1987).

Bridges and collaborators (2010), after analyzing scenes from popular pornographic videos, found that, in general, those videos contained high levels of physical and verbal aggression. In addition, they found that the majority of those who assaulted were men, and the targets, showing pleasure or responding neutrally to the aggression, were mostly women (Bridges et al., 2010).

Thus, those who consume pornography (at least, mainstream) are possibly learning that aggression during a sexual encounter may bring pleasure to partners (Bridges et al., 2010; Fritz & Paul 2017), which may lead to negative consequences on people's sex lives, implying the neglect of sexual

consent. In addition, studies have shown that individuals who view paraphilic pornography, such as sadomasochistic and "hardcore", are more likely to accept rape myths, and are less likely to intervene in a situation of sexual violence, suggesting that the type of pornography may influence the understanding of mutual and reciprocal relationships and, consequently, sexual consent (Brosi et.al, 2011).

In general, pornography consumption seems to be associated with several negative effects, such as depression, lack of motivation, sexual dysfunctions, and problems in personal relationships, which lead to the belief that pornography use is perhaps incompatible with healthy relationships (Philaretou, 2005; Silva, 2018). There is also evidence of a connection between pornography addiction and impulsiveness traits (Antons & Brand, 2018). However, research has also shown some positive aspects of pornography consumption, such as women developing a sexual vocabulary, learning various sexual practices, and reducing shame around their sexual desire, as well as a positive correlation between women's acceptance of pornography and their psychological well-being (Carroll et al., 2008; Parry & Light, 2014).

Current study

According to Willis and collaborators (2020), pornography represents subtle sexual scripts regarding the communication of sexual consent, such as "verbal consent is not natural", "women are indirect, while men are direct", "sex can occur without constant communication" and "people who receive sexual behaviors can consent by doing nothing".

However, there is a lack in the literature, as no study has yet explored whether the attitudes towards sexual consent are influenced by viewing pornography.

Therefore, the main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between pornography consumption and sexual consent. The secondary aims of the study are to investigate: (a) Gender differences regarding sexual consent behaviors; (b) Differences in sexual consent behaviors depending on the type of relationship; (c) The relationship between impulsivity and sexual consent; (d) The relationship between paraphilic pornography consumption and sexual consent.

The hypotheses of the study are as follows: (a) Individuals that consume more pornography have less positive attitudes about sexual consent; (b) Men use more verbal and explicit sexual consent clues than women because even though there is no consistency in the literature regarding gender difference in the use of verbal behaviors in sexual consent, some recent studies point into this direction (Jozkowski et al., 2014b; Willis et al., 2019); (c) Individuals in casual relationships are more likely to use verbal and

explicit sexual consent cues than people in serious relationships as although there are also no consistency in several studies on this topic, recent literature point into this direction (Marcantonio et al., 2018; Jozkowski et al., 2019); (d) More impulsive individuals give less importance people give to sexual consent which is a hypotheses never investigated in literature; (e) Individuals who consume paraphilic pornography are less likely to have positive attitudes about sexual consent than individuals who do not consume this type of pornography as previous research has shown that aggressive pornography seems to have a negative impact in the viewers attitude and behavior towards sexual relationships (Brosi et.al, 2011; Malamuth et al., 2012).

Method

Participants

Our sample consisted of 1329 adults (340 men, 962 women and 27 non-binary) with an average age of 26.79 years ($DP = 7.24$, minimum = 18, maximum = 78).

Most of the participants were heterosexual ($n = 1074$; 82.4%), Portuguese ($n = 1261$; 96.7%), employed ($n = 624$; 47.9%) and have a bachelor’s degree ($n = 582$; 44.6%). The majority of them had started their sexual activity ($n = 1151$; 89.3%), had sexual intercourse three or more times in the last month ($n = 567$; 51.6%) and had their last sexual intercourse in the last month ($n = 796$; 72.7%). Over half of the participants were currently involved in an intimate relationship ($n = 885$; 71.7%). From those, the majority were in that relationship for at least one year ($n = 671$; 77.1%), were dating or engaged ($n = 466$; 53.5%) and approximately half of them were living with their partner ($n = 434$; 49.8%).

When asked about the frequency of pornography consumption, most participants answered they watched “sometimes a month”, or “sometimes a year” ($n = 749$; 64.4%).

Table 1. *Sample Sociodemographic Characteristics*

Sociodemographic Variables	N	%
Gender		
Masculine	340	25.6
Feminine	962	72.4
Non-binary	27	2
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	1074	82.4
Homosexual	41	3.1
Bisexual	154	11.8
Other (e.g., pansexual)	35	2.7
Nationality		
Portuguese	1261	96.7
Brazilian	31	2.4

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Other	12	.9
Level of Education		
Less than high school	18	1.5
Highschool	348	26.7
Bachelor’s degree	582	44.6
Master’s degree	337	25.8
Ph.D. or higher	18	1.7
Occupation		
Student	489	37.5
Working-student	113	8.7
Employed	624	47.9
Unemployed	62	4.8
Retired	4	.3
Other (e.g., internship)	12	.9
Have started sexual activity		
Yes	1151	89.3
No	138	10.7
Frequency of sexual intercourse in the last month		
0	282	25.6
1 to 2	251	22.8
3 to 4	254	23.1
5 or more	313	28.5
Time of last sexual intercourse		
Less than a month	796	72.7
1 month to 3 months	144	13.2
3 months to 6 months	56	5.1
More than 6 months ago	99	9.0
Intimate relationship		
Yes	885	71.7
No	350	28.3
Type of relationship		
Casual relationship/ friends with benefits	99	11.4
Dating or engaged	466	53.5
Married or in fact union	292	33.6
Polyamorous	13	1.5
Relationship length		
Less than 6 months	124	14.3
6 months to 1 year	75	8.6
1 year to 5 years	347	39.9
More than 5 years	324	37.2
Live with the partner		
Yes	434	49.8
No	437	50.2
Pornography frequency		
Never	312	31.0
Sometimes a year	383	38.0

Sometimes a month	366	26.4
Every day or more than once a day	47	4.7

Measures

Sociodemographic Questionnaire, Sexual Activity and Relationship Questions. Participants were asked several sociodemographic questions, including gender, age, sexual orientation, nationality, level of education and professional situation. Then they were asked several questions related to sexual activity: if they have initiated sexual activities with a partner, how old they were when they started, how frequently they had sexual intercourse in the last month and when was the last time they had sexual intercourse. Participants were also asked if they were currently in an intimate relationship (e.g., casual relationship, “friends with benefits”, dating, marriage). If they answered “yes” to this question, they were asked to specify the type of relationship, its duration, if they lived with their partner, and how satisfied they were with the relationship.

Pornography Use. Since the main objective of the study involves the frequency of pornography consumption, it was necessary to have the following questions 1) How frequently do you consume pornographic content (for example, in magazines, books, websites)? (*Never; Sometimes a year; Sometimes a month; Daily or more than once a day*) and 2) How old were you when you first watched pornographic content? They were retrieved from a dissertation called “Values, attitudes and meanings of pornography: a study with a Portuguese sample.” (Castro, 2019), for being very clear, even though they weren’t from a scale.

Paraphilic Pornography Use Scale (PPS; Hald & Štulhofer, 2015; translated and validated to Portuguese by Raposo, 2018). The PPS aims to assess paraphilic pornography use, and consists of five factors, namely Sadomasochism, Bondage and dominance, Violent sex, Bizarre/extreme and Fetish. Participants need to i) indicate how much they viewed each type of paraphilic pornography (total of 5 items) in the last 12 months (*0 = Nothing; 1 = A little; 2 = Moderately; 3 = For the most part; 4 = A lot*). The scale shows good internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha of .82 (Hald & Štulhofer, 2015) and .80 (Raposo, 2018).

Sexual Consent Scale (SCS; Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010; translated and validated to Portuguese by Abreu & Cardoso, 2016). The SCS evaluates the behaviors and attitudes regarding sexual consent. It is composed of 39 items that are rated using a Likert-type scale of 7 points, ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). The items are subdivided into 5 factors: two behavioral (Indirect Consent

Behaviors and Awareness of Consent) and three attitudinal factors: (Lack of perceived Behavioral Control, Positive Attitude toward Establishing Consent, and Sexual Consent Norms). The scale has items like “I think that verbally asking for sexual consent is awkward” and “I always verbally ask for consent before I initiate a sexual encounter”. The authors of the original scale indicated a good internal consistency value, either for the total scale ($\alpha=.87$) or for the subscales: i) Lack of perceived Behavioral Control ($\alpha=.86$); ii) Positive Attitude toward Establishing Consent ($\alpha=.84$); iii) Indirect Consent Behaviors ($\alpha=.78$); iv) Sexual Consent Norms ($\alpha=.67$); and v) Awareness of Consent ($\alpha=.71$). Similarly, the translated scale has good reliability for most of the subscales.

The use of verbal and nonverbal behaviors in sexual consent. (based on “How young women and men communicate sexual consent in heterosexual situations” from Hickman e Muehlenhard, 1999; translated and validated from Humphreys, 2001). The participants were asked to answer a few multiple-choice questions, which have the purpose of measuring how many verbal and nonverbal sexual consent behaviors were used in most recent sexual encounter they had. A few examples of behaviors are: “You undressed yourself”, “You suggested one of you should get a condom” and “You did not say no”. There were total of 37 items (15 examples of nonverbal sexual consent behaviors and 14 verbal sexual consent behaviors). The present study added the options “None of the above” and “Other (please, specify), to obtain a more complete sample of answers.

Barratt Impulsiveness Scale – 11, short version (BIS-11; Patton et al., 1995; Stanford et al., 2009; adapted and translated to Portuguese by Pechorro, 2018). This scale has 18 items that are rated by a four-point Likert Scale (*1 = Rarely/Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Frequently; 4 = Almost always/ Always*), subdivided in to three subscales: Attention (5 items), Motor (7 items) and Self-Control (6 items). Examples of those items are: “I do things without thinking” and “I am self-controlled”. The translated and validated scale has good internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha of above .70 for the total scale and the three subscales.

Procedure

Participants did not receive any monetary compensation and were recruited through personal and institutional emails and online social networks (e.g., Facebook). Participants’ responses were recorded anonymously on an Internet webpage using Qualtrics software, Version 2021 of the Qualtrics Research Suite. For all participants, sociodemographic, sexual activity and relationship questions were presented first. Then, they answered to questions about pornography consumption, PPC, SCS, questions on the use of verbal and nonverbal behaviors to obtain consent and the BIS – 11, short version, in a

counterbalanced order. The questionnaire had an average duration of 10 minutes, and was previously approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Minho.

Data analysis

All collected data were exported to an Excel spreadsheet. Analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS; v. 27), and included: i) Descriptive analysis; ii) Pearson's correlations to examine the association between the different variables; iii) Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) to compare individuals with different frequencies of sexual intercourse in the last month, times of last sexual intercourse, types of relationship, relationship lengths and pornography consumption frequencies. A criterion of $p < 0.05$ was used for significance tests.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the variables used, separately for males and females. Independent sample t tests showed that there are statistically significant differences between male and female participants. More specifically, male participants started to watch pornographic materials earlier ($M = 13.23$; $SD = 2.21$) than female participants ($M = 15.83$; $SD = 3.99$), $t(641.16) = -10.62$, $p < .001$.

In addition, male participants tend to consume more Paraphilic Pornography ($M = 1.48$; $SD = .63$) than female participants ($M = 1.33$; $SD = .53$), $t(398.23) = 2.92$, $p = .001$.

Results also showed that male participants have a tendency to score higher on the subscale Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control ($M = 2.00$; $SD = .98$) and Sexual Consent Norms ($M = 4.29$; $SD = 1.10$) than female participants ($M_{\text{beh_control}} = 1.75$; $SD_{\text{beh_control}} = .82$; $M_{\text{sex_con_norms}} = 3.80$; $SD_{\text{sex_con_norms}} = 1.14$), $t(286.82) = 3.08$, $p < .001$ and $t(749) = 5.18$, $p < .001$, respectively. Similarly, males scored higher on the subscale Awareness and Discussion ($M = 4.94$; $SD = 1.58$) than females ($M = 4.68$; $SD = 1.69$), $t(749) = 1.87$, $p = .031$, and have a tendency to be more impulsive ($M = 1.89$; $SD = .35$) than females participants ($M = 1.76$; $SD = .35$), $t(964) = 4.10$, $p < .001$.

However, results showed that female participants tend to score higher on the Positive Attitudes subscale ($M = 5.54$; $SD = 1.07$) than males ($M = 5.16$; $SD = 1.14$), $t(749) = -4.11$, $p < .001$.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics ($M = \text{Mean}$; $SD = \text{Standard Deviation}$) for gender

	Female		Male		p
	M	DP	M	DP	
Age of first exposure to pornography	15.83	3.99	13.23	2.21	<.001

Paraphilic Pornography	1.33	.53	1.48	.63	.001
Lack of perceived control	1.75	.82	2.00	.98	<.001
Positive Attitudes	5.54	1.07	5.16	1.14	<.001
Sexual Consent Norms	3.80	1.14	4.29	1.10	<.001
Indirect Behaviors	4.99	1.06	4.86	1.07	.089
Awareness and Discussion	4.68	1.69	4.94	1.58	.031
Impulsiveness	1.76	.35	1.89	.35	<.001

Correlational analyses

We examined correlations between age, relationship satisfaction, age of the first exposure to pornography, sexual consent subscales Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control, Positive Attitudes Toward Establishing Consent, Sexual Consent Norms, Awareness and Discussion, Indirect Behaviors, Paraphilic Pornography, Impulsiveness, Verbal Consent Behaviors used in their last sexual intercourse, and Nonverbal Consent Behaviors used in their last sexual intercourse. Results are shown in Table 3.

Pearson correlations showed that age was positively correlated with first exposure to pornography ($r = .190, p = .000$) and Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control ($r = .101, p = .005$), indicating that older people had their first exposure to pornography later in life and perceived less control over asking for sexual consent. On the other hand, age was negatively correlated with Relationship Satisfaction ($r = -.074, p = .029$), Awareness and Discussion ($r = -.142, p = .000$) and Nonverbal Consent Behaviors ($r = -.135, p = .000$). This shows that older people tend to be less satisfied with their relationship, to discuss sexual consent less frequently and to use fewer nonverbal consent behaviors in their most recent sexual encounter.

Relationship satisfaction was positively correlated with Indirect Behaviors ($r = .089, p = .028$) and Verbal Consent Behaviors ($r = .172, p = .000$) and negatively correlated with Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control ($r = -.332, p < .001$), Paraphilic Pornography consumption ($r = -.104, p = .024$) and Impulsiveness ($r = -.099, p = .009$). This shows that people more satisfied with their relationship tend to use more indirect behaviors to indicate sexual consent, but also more verbal consent behaviors in their last sexual encounter. In addition, they perceived expressing sexual consent as an easy behavior, consume less paraphilic pornography and are less impulsive.

Age of first exposure to pornography was negatively correlated with Awareness and Discussion about sexual consent ($r = -.109, p = .014$), Paraphilic Pornography consumption ($r = -.236, p = .000$) and Impulsiveness ($r = -.139, p = .001$). This indicates that people that had their first exposure to

pornography later in life tend to discuss sexual consent with partners and peers less frequently, to consume less paraphilic pornography and be less impulsive.

Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control was positively correlated with Sexual Consent Norms ($r = .224, p = .000$), Indirect Behaviors ($r = .141, p = .000$) and Impulsiveness ($r = .180, p = .000$). In addition, Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control was negatively correlated with Positive Attitudes ($r = -.433, p = .000$), Awareness and Discussion about sexual consent ($r = -.320, p = .000$), Nonverbal Consent Behaviors ($r = -.095, p = .009$) and Verbal Consent Behaviors ($r = -.238, p = .000$). These results suggest that individuals that perceive expressing sexual consent as a difficult task tend to have higher social norms about sexual consent, to use more indirect sexual consent behaviors, to be more impulsive, to have less positive attitudes towards sexual consent, to discuss sexual consent less, and to use fewer nonverbal or verbal consent behaviors.

Positive attitudes toward establishing consent was positively correlated with Awareness and Discussion ($r = .385, p = .000$) and Verbal Consent Behaviors ($r = .258, p = .000$) and negatively correlated with Sexual Consent Norms ($r = -.267, p = .000$), Indirect Behaviors ($r = -.169, p = .000$) and Impulsiveness ($r = -.157, p = .000$). This indicates that individuals who have more positive attitudes towards sexual consent tend to discuss it more with their friends and partners, to use more verbal sexual consent behaviors in their last sexual encounter, to have less social norms about sexual consent, to use less indirect behaviors and to be less impulsive.

Sexual Consent Norms was positively correlated with Indirect Behaviors ($r = .396, p = .000$) and Impulsiveness ($r = .097, p = .007$). On the other hand, Sexual Consent Norms was negatively correlated with Awareness and Discussion ($r = -.224, p = .000$) and Verbal Consent Behaviors ($r = -.091, p = .012$). This shows that participants that have higher social norms about sexual consent, use more indirect behaviors, are more impulsive, discuss sexual consent less frequently and use less verbal consent behaviors.

Awareness and Discussion was positively correlated with Nonverbal Consent Behaviors ($r = .115, p = .001$) and Verbal consent Behaviors ($r = .259, p = .000$). On the other hand, it was negatively correlated with Indirect Behaviors ($r = -.161, p = .000$), these results suggest that individuals that discuss sexual consent regularly with peers and partners tend to use less indirect behaviors and more verbal and nonverbal behavior of sexual consent in their most recent sexual encounter.

“DO I REALLY NEED TO ASK?”: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PORNOGRAPHY AND SEXUAL CONSENT

Indirect behaviors was positively correlated with Nonverbal Consent Behaviors ($r = .114, p = .001$) and negatively correlated with Verbal Consent Behaviors ($r = -.154, p = .000$). These results indicate that participants that mention they use more indirect behaviors to indicate sexual consent, also use more nonverbal and verbal sexual consent behaviors in their last sexual encounter.

Paraphilic pornography content was positively correlated with Impulsivity ($r = .101, p = .011$) and Nonverbal Consent Behaviors ($r = .094, p = .025$). Individuals who view more paraphilic pornography tend to be more impulsive and to use more nonverbal consent behaviors.

Finally, Nonverbal Consent Behaviors was positively correlated with Verbal Consent Behaviors ($r = .353, p = .000$), showing that individuals who use more nonverbal consent behaviors, also tend to use more verbal consent behaviors in their last sexual encounter.

Table 3 Correlation between age, Relationship Satisfaction, age of first exposure to pornography, Lack of Perceived Control, Positive Attitudes, Sexual Consent Norms, Awareness and Discussion, Indirect Behaviors, Paraphilic Pornography, Impulsiveness, Nonverbal and Verbal Consent Behaviors

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Age	-	-.074*	.190**	.101*	.041	.014	-.142**	.048	-.037	-.029	-.135**	-.060
2. Relationship Satisfaction		-	.041	-.175**	.056	-.044	.059	.089*	-.104*	-.099**	.051	.172**
3. Age of first exposure to pornography			-	.017	.041	.040	-.109*	.032	-.236**	-.139**	-.024	-.021
4. Lack of Perceived Control				-	-.433**	.224**	-.320**	.141**	.044	.180**	-.095**	-.238**
5. Positive Attitudes					-	-.267**	.385**	-.169**	-.032	-.157**	.029	.258**
6. Sexual Consent Norms						-	-.224**	.396**	-.030	.097**	.036	-.091*
7. Awareness and Discussion							-	-.161**	.039	-.058	.115**	.259**
8. Indirect Behaviors								-	-.011	-.014	.114**	-.154**
9. Paraphilic Pornography									-	.101*	.094*	.027
10. Impulsiveness										-	.040	-.013
11. Nonverbal Consent Behaviors											-	.353**
12. Verbal Consent Behaviors												-

* p < .05, ** p < .01

Pornography consumption frequency

A one-way ANOVA showed a main effect of Relationship Satisfaction, $F(3, 707) = 5.20, p = .001$. Post Hoc Tukey tests showed that participants that watch pornography approximately a couple times a month tend to be less satisfied with their relationship ($M = 5.73; SD = .1.25$) than participants that do not watch pornography ($M = 6.17; SD = 1.19$) and those that watch only a couple times a year ($M = 6.09; SD = 1.03$), $p = .001$ and $p = .007$, respectively.

Results also showed a main effect of Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control, $F(3, 753) = 3.89, p = .009$. Post Hoc Tukey tests showed that participants that watch pornography every day or more than once a day tend to be more uncomfortable asking or giving sexual consent ($M = 2.12; SD = .99$) than participants that watch pornography a couple of times a year ($M = 1.72; SD = .84$), $p = .042$.

Moreover, our data showed a main effect of Positive Attitudes, $F(3, 753) = 5.64, p < .001$. Post Hoc Tukey tests suggested that participants that do not watch pornography tend to have more positive attitudes toward sexual consent ($M = 5.47; SD = 1.09$) than participants that watch pornography every day or more than once a day ($M = 4.94; SD = 1.41$), $p = .035$. In addition, participants that watch pornography a couple of times a year tend to have more positive attitudes toward sexual consent ($M = 5.59; SD = .98$) compared with participants that watch it a couple of times a month ($M = 4.29; SD = 1.17$) and with those that watch it every day or more than once a day, $p = .017$ and $p = .004$, respectively.

Results also showed a main effect of Sexual Consent Norms, $F(3, 753) = 3.09, p = .027$. Post Hoc Tukey tests indicated that participants that do not watch pornography tend to have lower assumptions about sexual consent ($M = 3.76; SD = 1.19$) than participants that watch pornography a couple times a month ($M = 4.05; SD = 1.21$), $p = .050$.

Finally, our data showed a main effect of Impulsiveness, $F(3, 927) = 11.01, p < .001$. Post Hoc Tukey tests suggested that participants that do not watch pornography tend to be less impulsive ($M = 1.71; SD = .35$) compared with participants that watch pornography a couple times a year ($M = 1.80; SD = .35$), with those that watch pornography a couple times a month ($M = 1.87; SD = .38$) and with those that watch it every day or more than once a day ($M = 1.94; SD = .35$), $p = .009$, $p < .001$ and $p < .001$, respectively.

Frequency of sexual intercourse in the last month

A one-way ANOVA showed a main effect of Relationship Satisfaction, $F(3, 848) = 22.09, p < .001$. Post Hoc Tukey tests indicated that participants that did not have sexual intercourse in the last

month tend to be less satisfied in their relationship ($M = 5.58$; $SD = 1.44$) than participants that had sexual intercourse three or four times in the last month ($M = 6.21$; $SD = 1.01$), or that had sexual intercourse five times or more in the last month ($M = 6.37$; $SD = .90$), $p_s < .001$. In addition, participants that had sexual intercourse once or twice in the last month tend to be less satisfied with their relationship ($M = 5.75$; $SD = 1.19$) than participants that had sexual intercourse three or four times in the last month ($M = 6.21$; $SD = 1.01$), or participants that had sexual intercourse five times or more in the last month ($M = 6.37$; $SD = .90$), $p_s < .001$.

Results also showed a main effect of Indirect Behaviors, $F(3, 762) = 10.64$, $p < .001$. Post Hoc Tukey tests suggested that participants that did not have sexual intercourse in the last month tend to use less Indirect Behaviors ($M = 4.63$; $SD = 1.04$) than participants that had sexual intercourse three to four times in the last month ($M = 5.13$; $SD = 1.09$) or those that had sexual intercourse five or more times in the last month ($M = 5.15$; $SD = 1.00$), $p_s < .001$. In addition, participants that had sexual intercourse once or twice in the last month tend to use less Indirect Behaviors ($M = 4.87$; $SD = 1.06$) compared with participants that had five or more times in the last month, $p = .046$.

Type of relationship

A one-way ANOVA showed a main effect of Relationship Satisfaction, $F(3, 857) = 26.37$, $p < .001$. Post Hoc Tukey tests showed that participants that were in casual relationships or friends with benefits were less satisfied with their relationship ($M = 5.11$; $SD = 1.28$) than participants that were dating or engaged ($M = 6.19$; $SD = 1.066$) or were a polyamorous relationship ($M = 6.15$; $SD = 1.05$), $p < .001$ and $p_s < .001$.

Results also showed a main effect of Indirect Behaviors, $F(3, 610) = 2.93$, $p = .033$. Post Hoc Tukey tests showed that participants that were in casual relationships or friends with benefits used less Indirect Behaviors ($M = 4.75$; $SD = 1.01$) than participants in a polyamorous relationship ($M = 5.16$; $SD = 1.03$), $p = .027$.

In addition, results showed a main effect of Awareness and Discussion, $F(3, 610) = 4.03$, $p = .007$. Post Hoc Tukey tests showed that participants in a polyamorous relationship tended to discuss sexual consent less with their peers ($M = 4.41$; $SD = 1.746$) than participants that were in casual relationships or friends with benefits ($M = 5.08$; $SD = 1.57$) and that were married or in a non-marital partnership ($M = 5.33$; $SD = 2.18$), $p = .023$ and $p = .038$, respectively.

Finally, our data showed a main effect of using Nonverbal Consent Behaviors in their most recent sexual encounter, $F(3, 711) = 4.04, p = .007$. Post Hoc Tukey tests showed that participants that were in casual relationships or friends with benefits tended to use more Nonverbal Behaviors ($M = 7.66; SD = 3.66$) than participants in a polyamorous relationship ($M = 6.27; SD = 2.98$), $p = .005$.

Relationship length

A one-way ANOVA showed a main effect of using Nonverbal Consent Behaviors in their most recent sexual encounter, $F(3, 710) = 4.97, p = .002$. Post Hoc Tukey tests showed that participants that have been in a relationship for less than six months tend to use more Nonverbal Behaviors ($M = 7.61; SD = 3.49$) than participants that have been in a relationship between one and five years ($M = 6.57; SD = 2.98$) and that have been in a relationship for more than five years ($M = 6.34; SD = 3.05$), $p = .031$ and $p = .005$, respectively.

Regression analysis predicting Positive attitudes towards sexual consent

We performed multiple regression analyses wherein the frequency of pornography consumption was regressed onto seven predictor variables. On Table 4 it is possible to see that the model measured the variables collectively explained approximately 30% of the total variance in Positive attitudes towards sexual consent (29.9%). The standardized regression coefficients (β s) for the specific variables indicated that gender, Impulsiveness, Verbal Consent Behaviors, Lack of Perceived Control, Sexual Consent Norms, Awareness and Discussion, and Verbal Consent Behaviors were the strongest and unique predictors of Positive attitudes towards sexual consent. These patterns support the deduction that gender, Impulsiveness, Verbal Consent Behaviors, Lack of Perceived Control, Sexual Consent Norms, Awareness and Discussion, and Verbal Consent Behaviors were strong and unique predictors of Positive attitudes towards sexual consent.

Table 4. *Multiple regression models predicting Positive attitudes towards sexual consent*

	Positive attitudes towards sexual consent		
	R^2 (R^2 adjusted)	β	p
Gender		.089	.005
Impulsiveness		-.078	.013
Verbal Consent Behaviors	.299 (.293)	.117	<.001
Lack of Perceived Control		-.279	<.001
Sexual Consent Norms		-.114	<.001
Awareness and Discussion		.239	<.001

Discussion

Compared to the literature related to sexual assault, there is a lack of empirical work on the communication of sexual consent, which would be fundamental for a better understanding of sexual violence (Beres, 2007). In addition, the study of consent is also important from the perspective of normative situations, since sexual communication is significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction (Timm & Keiley, 2011; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2011). As previously mentioned, the consumption of pornography may have a negative impact in the viewers' sexual activities being as though, in mainstream pornography, scenes with positive behaviors are significantly less likely to occur compared to those that contain aggression, for example (Donnerstein, Linz, & Penrod, 1987; Bridges et al., 2010). Thus, in addition to the lack of studies related to sexual consent, there is also a lack of research on pornography's role in peoples' sexual consent attitudes (Fegley, 2013; Terán & Dajches, 2020). The focus of this study was pornography consumption's influence on sexual consent attitudes and behaviors, while also investigating the relationship between sexual consent and paraphilic pornography consumption and impulsiveness, which is a novelty in current literature. Furthermore, it was also relevant to investigate some inconsistencies in the present research, such as the influence that the type of relationship and gender have in sexual consent behaviors.

Results showed that participants that watch pornography every day or more than once a day tend to perceived they had less control in asking for sexual consent than those that do not watch it that often, which means they feel less comfortable talking in a direct manner about what they (or their partner) want, because of possible negative reactions, like feeling awkward or spoiling the mood (Humphreys and Brousseau, 2010; Humphreys, 2004).

Results also showed that participants that do not watch pornography tend to have more positive attitudes toward sexual consent than those that watch it every day or more than once a day. These results are consistent with the first hypothesis: Individuals that consume more pornography have fewer positive attitudes about sexual consent. Our data suggest that participants that do not watch pornography give higher importance to negotiating consent verbally and disagree that consent can be assumed, which is the opposite of certain assumptions that pornography often represents, such as “verbal consent is not natural”, and that “sex can occur without constant communication” (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010; Willis et al., 2020). Our results also support Terán and Dajches (2020) research, that pornography's lack of risk and responsibility messages may encourage the viewers' assumption that refusing sex is not normative within sexual interactions. Additionally, results also indicate that people who watch pornography

every day or more than once a day think that sexual consent is more important in certain activities rather than all sexual activities and do not acknowledge that consent needs to be discussed even if during a single encounter, which is consistent with some of the inaccurate depictions of sexual consent in pornography (Willis et al., 2020).

Our second hypothesis is that men use more verbal and explicit sexual consent clues than women. Consistently, our results showed that men perceived they had less control in asking for sexual consent, had less positive attitudes, and more perceived social norms about sexual consent than women. However, men showed a higher value of awareness and discussion about sexual consent than women, meaning that they tend to discuss it with partners and friends more, compared to women, which was an unexpected find. In addition, there were no statistically significant differences between the use of nonverbal behaviors in sexual consent between men and women, which is not consistent with our second hypothesis. However, our results go accordantly with Fegley' research (2013), that suggest that men and women use non-verbal consent cues equally. The present study goes one step further by analyzing the relationship between positive attitudes related to sexual consent and gender. Given that men have less positive attitudes towards sexual consent, it is possible that gender differences may not be noted through behaviors, but rather attitudes and thoughts regarding sexual consent, and that the relationship between thoughts and actions, in sexual relationships is not as linear as we may think. Thus, we can agree that gender remains an important construct to consider in future sexual consent research (Willis et al., 2021).

Results showed that here was no significant difference in the use of verbal or nonverbal behaviors to indicate sexual consent between people in serious relationships (dating or engaged) versus people in casual relationships or friends with benefits, which is inconsistent with our third hypothesis. After analyzing previous articles, we can conclude that there is not much consensus on how the type of relationship can influence how sexual consent is given (Freitas, 2017). Our data ads to the research on sexual consent, since the only previous study that found no influence on the type of relationship and the way people externally express their sexual consent, used a sample of only female participants (Freitas, 2017). Additionally, we found that individuals that are in casual relationships or friends with benefits tend to score lower in the subscale indirect behaviors than participants in a polyamorous relationship but used more nonverbal behaviors in their last sexual relationship than participants in a polyamorous relationship. It is important to note that a main difference between these two types of relationships is that one has emotional and romantic implications, whereas the other does not (Klesse, 2006). And, although our data may seem contradictory, the subscale indirect behaviors evaluate how people think they give indirect

behaviors in sexual consent (e.g., “I don’t have to ask or give my partner sexual consent because my partner knows me well enough”), and the other questions how many nonverbal behaviors were used in the last sexual relationship. Thus, results suggest that individuals in polyamorous relationships tend to use more nonverbal behaviors, even though they think they use less indirect behaviors, when compared to people in casual relationships. Since there is no literature on this topic, it would be interesting for future investigations to consider the perspective of polyamorous relationships on sexual consent behaviors.

Our data showed that impulsiveness is positively correlated with perceiving less control over asking for sexual consent, which can be explained by the fact that impulsive sexual decision-making refers to patterns of choices surrounding sexual behaviors with little regard for potential negative consequences (Holcomb et al., 2019). Our data also indicates that impulsiveness is negatively correlated with positive attitudes towards establishing consent, which is a novelty in current literature and confirm our fourth hypothesis that more impulsive individuals give less importance to sexual consent. These findings demonstrate the importance of future research focusing on the relationship between impulsiveness and sexual consent, given that impulsiveness is associated with both sexual assault perpetration and victimization (Holcomb et al., 2019).

Paraphilic pornography is described as content where sexual excitement relies on unusual sexual behaviors between what’s considered “normal” and “abnormal” (Stefanska et al., 2022). Since consent became the key criterion for distinguishing normal sexual activity from pathological and criminal forms, it is important to understand the relationship between this type of pornography and sexual consent (Giami, 2015; Stefanska et al., 2022). Results did not show a statistically significant relationship between paraphilic pornography consumption and positive attitudes towards sexual consent, which is inconsistent with our fifth hypothesis. This result suggests that consuming paraphilic pornography does not impact what people think about sexual consent, perhaps because only viewing that specific type of pornography doesn’t have an impact on sexual consent attitudes, but executing that kind of behaviors does (Abreu & Cardoso, 2016).

Even though our hypothesis was not confirmed, we found that paraphilic pornography consumption was positively correlated with impulsiveness and nonverbal behaviors, which support the findings by Chan (2021b), that concluded that individuals who have more paraphilic interests are more likely to engage in sexual risk-taking behaviors, which is also common for people with high impulsiveness traits.

Our study has some important limitations that should be acknowledge. First, most of the participants are women, and since men are typically the gender that consumes more pornography, it would have been important to have more male participants. In addition, since it was used self-report measures, the participants responses could have been influenced by non-controlling factors like tiredness (from answering the questionnaire), distraction and difficulty understanding the instructions and questions. Finally, because it was a convenience sample, the participants were recruited through social networks (Facebook e Instagram), and thus we advise caution generalizing the results.

The impact of pornography consumption has been related to numerous negative consequences of sexual behavior, such as sexually deviant tendencies, an increased risk of committing sexual offenses, endorsement of rape myths, and sexual harassment of women (Foubert et al., 2011; Lam & Chan, 2007; Paolucci et al., 1997). Fegley (2013) defends that even though pornography can be an appropriate tool for sexual fantasies for many individuals, it should not be considered a model of sexual behavior. Thus, studying the impact that pornography has on sexual consent is fundamental for sex education by acknowledging how consent communication is modeled in pornography and by teaching about pornography literacy, as many young people use pornography as a way of learning sexual acts (Willis et al., 2020). Depending on pornography for sexual education can be a very dangerous thing, given that, according to the present study, a higher frequency of pornography consumption is related to lower positive attitudes towards sexual consent.

In summary, how consent is used may vary by context, and it's important for educators, professionals, investigators, and everyday people to know that communicating consent should not ever be taken for granted (Willis et al., 2019). Finally, it is important to acknowledge the clinical and social implications that this study has, being a contribution to other sexuality studies and sexual assault prevention as it deepens the understanding of sexual consent, its contexts, and the behaviors and attitudes associated with it.

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Universidade do Minho

Conselho de Ética

Comissão de Ética para a Investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas

Identificação do documento: CEICSH 044/2021

Relatores: Emanuel Pedro Viana Barbas Albuquerque e Marlene Alexandra Veloso Matos

Título do projeto: *Consequências do isolamento social nos relacionamentos amorosos devido à Covid-19*

Equipa de Investigação: Diana Raquel Henriques Teixeira e Leticia Dias da Costa (IRs), Mestrado Integrado em Psicologia, Escola de Psicologia, Universidade do Minho; Joana Arantes (Orientadora), Escola de Psicologia, Universidade do Minho

PARECER

A Comissão de Ética para a Investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas (CEICSH) analisou o processo relativo ao projeto de investigação acima identificado, intitulado *Consequências do isolamento social nos relacionamentos amorosos devido à Covid-19*.

Os documentos apresentados revelam que o projeto obedece aos requisitos exigidos para as boas práticas na investigação com humanos, em conformidade com as normas nacionais e internacionais que regulam a investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas.

Face ao exposto, a Comissão de Ética para a Investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas (CEICSH) nada tem a opor à realização do projeto nos termos apresentados no Formulário de Identificação e Caracterização do Projeto, que se anexa, emitindo o seu parecer favorável, que foi aprovado por unanimidade pelos seus membros.

Braga, 31 de maio de 2021.

O Presidente da CEICSH