

Using Q-Methodology to Explore Stakeholder Views about Porn Literacy Education

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Abstract

Introduction

‘Porn literacy education’ is emerging as a pedagogical strategy to support youth in navigating the new technological pornography landscape. However, the characteristics of effective porn literacy education according to those who will be most affected by it—young people, their caregivers, and educators—is unknown. Yet, end user views are imperative to policy development in sexuality education worldwide.

Methods

Using Q-methodology, the commonalities and idiosyncrasies of these stakeholder views were explored. In 2019, 30 participants recruited through nine schools in New Zealand completed an online Q sort, and 24 also took part in a follow-up interview.

Results

There were two distinct discourses regarding porn literacy education among stakeholders: (i) the pragmatic response discourse and (ii) the harm mitigation discourse.

Conclusions

Stakeholders hold nuanced and ideologically charged perspectives about porn literacy education and educational initiatives more generally. It is important that policy acknowledges that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach may be unattainable, and allows for different perspectives.

Policy Implications

It is crucial that policy development is guided by evidence about what constitutes successful sexuality education. The social discourses reported here are important to consider in developing policy about porn literacy education, and require further research if we are to more fully understand the potential of porn literacy as pedagogy.

Keywords: Internet pornography, porn literacy education, Q-methodology

Introduction

Internet pornography is one of the many cultural resources youth draw on to make sense of their sexual selves, and is fast assuming the role of a key sexual socialisation agent for young people (Ingham, 2005; Wright, 2014). There is an unprecedented and “immediate need to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and understanding to deconstruct and reconstruct these representations in line with the reality of gender, sex, power, sexuality and respectful relationships” (Ollis, 2016a, p. 51). A relatively recent approach to steering youth through the “sex tech nexus” (Comella & Tarrant, 2015, p. 3) is “porn literacy” education, a media literacy intervention (Albury, 2014). This approach aims to support youth in navigating and critically reflecting on Internet pornography by equipping caregivers and educators to talk with young people about the representations of sex and sexuality in pornography (Albury, 2014).

Porn literacy education is emerging as a favourable alternative to other strategies, such as censorship or legislation (Buckingham & Chronaki, 2014), but is not yet widely integrated within school curricula in New Zealand or internationally. Research has highlighted the value of teaching porn literacy skills and the ways that it could be a useful addition to sexual and reproductive health curricula (Dawson et al., 2019; Hutchings, 2017; Oosterhoff et al., 2017). However, curricula and models are being developed with very little understanding of the perspectives of those who will be most affected by porn literacy education, including young people as recipients as well as caregivers (parents or guardians) and educators as potential implementers (Davis et al., 2020; Rothman et al., 2018). Each of these end user groups may have a particular view of porn literacy education (Cousins, 2017), and we know that caregivers and educators address the topic of Internet pornography with young people in diverse ways (Education Review Office, 2018; Ollis, 2016b; Rothman et al., 2017).

However, there is limited evidence on the perspectives of young people, caregivers, and educators (Dawson, 2019, 2020), and we do not know how these end users perceive their role

1 in porn literacy education delivery. While British teachers support the discussion of Internet
2 pornography as part of sexuality education with youth, in terms of highlighting the ‘issues’ and
3
4 ‘dangers’ of pornography (Baker, 2016), some teachers report feeling awkward in delivering
5 sexuality education (Allen, 2020). Research in Australia suggests that, unless a teacher feels
6
7 prepared, supported by the community, and equipped with resources, classroom discussions
8
9 about sexual media are unlikely to occur (Albury, 2013, 2018). Similarly, some parents may
10
11 consider that pornography negatively affects youth (Dawson, 2020), and that discussions about
12
13 Internet pornography should take place in the classroom (Baker, 2016; Weaver et al., 2001). A
14
15 Flemish survey found that over 70% of adults ($N = 3543$) (although not all may have been
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17 parents) agreed that including sexually explicit material in sexual education classes would be a
18
19 valuable opportunity for teachers to discuss sexuality with students, and that it was important
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21 to develop material to support teachers with this work (Van Puyenbroeck et al., 2017).
22
23 Incorporating structured porn literacy education strategies may better support educators and
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25 caregivers in their potential role as sexuality educators (Albury, 2014). Research with young
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27 people indicates that some youth want Internet pornography be addressed in sexuality education
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29 (Allen, 2008; Löfgren-Mårtenson & Månsson, 2010; Pound et al., 2016).
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39 However, these studies of stakeholder groups do not provide a detailed understanding
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41 of the perspectives of educators, caregivers, and youth about the characteristics of effective
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43 porn literacy education. Furthermore, the lack of research on young people’s perspectives
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45 reflects a more general failure to consult young people on issues related to youth sexuality
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47 (Morison & Herbert, 2019) and sexuality education (Allen, 2007b), despite their insights being
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49 crucial to the success of sexuality education initiatives (Allen, 2007a, 2007b; Beyers, 2013).
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51 The lack of consideration of young people’s perspectives motivated the inclusion of young
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53 people in this study. Knowledge of stakeholder views can provide valuable insights for effective
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55 programme design and implementation. We sought to understand the views of end users about
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1 porn literacy education, and what porn literacy education might look like in practise (Albury,
2 2014; Dawson et al., 2019; Vandenbosch & van Oosten, 2018), using the unique approach of
3 examining the perspectives of all three end user groups within our study. We used Q-
4 methodology to explore stakeholder perspectives. This study was part of a larger mixed
5 methods project exploring stakeholder perspectives about understanding and responding to
6 youth encounters and engagement with Internet pornography in New Zealand.

14 **Method**

16 **Participants**

17 Young people aged 16- to 18-years-old, caregivers, and educators were recruited from
18 nine schools of different types (e.g., co-ed, single sex, rural, urban, and from differing decile¹
19 groupings) to ensure a diverse range of views. Participants were first invited to participate (via
20 the principal at their school) in an online survey about youth engagement with Internet
21 pornography. After completing the survey, participants were asked about their interest in taking
22 part in a Q-sort and follow-up interview. Snowballing techniques were used to recruit an
23 additional five young people due to difficulty in recruiting student participants through the
24 survey alone.

25 The online Q-sort was completed by 30 participants; 15 adults (6 men, 9 women) and
26 15 youth (7 boys, 8 girls) of varying ethnicities. Of these, 24 participants took part in a semi-
27 structured follow-up interview conducted by the first author; 10 were youth (5 boys, 5 girls)
28 and 14 were adults (6 men, 8 women) and were caregivers ($n = 7$), educators ($n = 1$), or both
29 caregivers and educators ($n = 6$). Table 1 provides demographic information for the participants.

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¹ In New Zealand, school deciles indicate the extent a school draws students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools have the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10 schools have the lowest.

Q-Methodology Overview

Q-methodology uses factor analysis along with interview data to identify factors representing a shared and coherent perspective on a topic, which we understand as a discourse. Interview data are used to interpret these perspectives (Stainton-Rogers, 1998; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q-methodology was suited to our aims because it is expressly designed “to explore the subjective dimension of any issue towards which different points-of-view can be expressed” (Stenner et al., 2017, p. 212). It allows for a richer and more rigorous exploration of diverse opinions than traditional surveys. Rather than measuring understandings in relation to a researcher-imposed operational definition, Q-methodology illuminates participants’ own perspectives, understandings, and definitions (Kitzinger, 1999), which was of particular importance to this study. The addition of follow-up interviews adds further nuance, enabling exploration of why participants may agree or disagree with an item or to “tease out the complexities that underpin seeming polarisation” (Beckner et al., 2019, p. 1228). Given these benefits, the methodology is often used in order to explore stakeholder perspectives about complex or contested social matters, such as porn literacy education (Webler et al., 2009). We utilised this methodology as a way to “know your audience” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 176) and to disentangle shared and differing perspectives about porn literacy education.

We used a discourse analytic approach to Q-methodology, to demarcate distinct discourses regarding porn literacy education (Mckenzie & Macleod, 2012; Stainton-Rogers, 1998). By discourse we refer to “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (Burr, 2015, pp. 74–75). Following Stainton-Rogers (1998), the perspectives identified through Q-methodology are treated as discourses or sets of representations of the issue at hand (Kitzinger & Rogers, 1985). Thus, we used Q-methodology to demarcate distinct discourses regarding porn literacy education (Mckenzie & Macleod, 2012).

1 The intention of Q-methodology is not to generalise, but rather to dig deep and identify
2 shared understandings. This methodology accommodated an exploration of the multiple ways
3 of constructing porn literacy education as an object of knowledge. As such, the discourses
4 identified can be useful for informing further research directions that seek to explore the
5 nuances and diversity of stakeholder views, considering their social context and culture (Webler
6 et al., 2009).

14 **Data Collection**

16 A Q-sort involves participants arranging a set of statements about a topic (called the Q-
17 set) into a response matrix representing a normal distribution, to provide their subjective
18 rankings of agreement and disagreement about a topic. Meaning is constructed through
19 participant engagement with and evaluation of the statements they agree or disagree with
20 (Mckenzie & Macleod, 2012). The Q-set comprised a set of 25 statements about porn literacy
21 education derived from a careful review of scholarly literature and media communications (e.g.,
22 news reports; see Appendix for the list of items). It was completed online using sorting software
23 (HtmlQ, 2019) and piloted prior to data collection which took place in February-July 2019.

36 All participants sorted the 25 statements along the dimension of relative dis/agreement,
37 ensuring that every statement was allocated a place on the scale (-4 to +4) in the Q-set (see
38 Appendix). Each participant's sorting pattern reflected their distinct perspective on the topic.
39 Sorting patterns were then compared to determine similarities and divergences. The data for
40 analysis comprised of each participant's sorting pattern from their Q-sort and their explanatory
41 comments from the end of the Q-sort or at follow-up interview (Stainton Rogers & Stainton
42 Rogers, 1990; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Follow-up interviews were conducted by the first author
43 between August and November 2019. Those who completed the Q-sort were invited to take
44 part in an individual, in-person interview. The interviews were semi-structured and most took
45 place on school premises during school hours. After giving informed consent, participants were

reminded of the working definition of Internet pornography used in the present study: “sexually explicit material displaying genitalia with the aim of sexual arousal or fantasy” (Short et al., 2012, p. 21). Interviews took approximately 40 to 90 minutes and gave participants an opportunity to elaborate on their perspective, and explain why they completed the Q-sort in a particular way (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1990; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Data Analysis

Q-methodology reformulates Spearman’s factor analysis method to enable the “holistic identification and rich description of a finite range of distinct viewpoints” (Stenner et al., 2017, p. 213). Completed Q-sorts were extracted from the HtmlQ sorting software and imported to a Q-method analysis programme. The programme identifies similar placements of statements using factor analysis with varimax rotation to derive factor analytic patterns (Zabala, 2014; Zabala et al., 2018). Factor solutions for each Q-sort were adopted on the basis that they provide clear factors. Q-sorts that load significantly on the same factor represent a shared understanding or perspective (Watts & Stenner, 2012; see Table 2). Thereafter, the data are considered in terms of each participant’s entire pattern of response, rather than looking for individual differences item by item across participants.

Interviews “cross validate” and enhance the insights from the Q-sort in a “mutually informative” manner. Thus, rather than analysing interviews in accordance with a structured theoretical qualitative method (e.g., narrative analysis), the factor analysis guides how the interview data are drawn on to assist with factor interpretation. We familiarised ourselves with the interview data through repetitive reading and took direction from the distinguishing and consensus statements (which indicate if each statement is of consensus or distinguishing for one or more of the factors) retrieved from the factor analysis. This allowed us to identify and unpack themes that related to underlying ideologies and cultural values which informed the

discourses. This combination provides a holistic picture of each discourse and how they may relate to one another (Kitzinger, 1999; Kitzinger & Rogers, 1985, p. 171).

Results

The Q-methodology approach indicated two distinct overarching discourses across youth, caregivers and educators (see Tables 1 and 2). The first factor had an eigenvalue of 14.38 and explained 47.94% of the variance, while the second factor had an eigenvalue of 4.13 and explained a smaller amount of variance (13.78%). Each of these factors represent a distinct discourse in relation to porn literacy education, which we named (i) the pragmatic response discourse, and (ii) the harm mitigation discourse, respectively.

The pragmatic response discourse constructs porn literacy education as essential; a pragmatic response to young people's current realities in which contact with online pornography is unavoidable. The heavy weighting on this discourse (47.94% of overall variance) might indicate that those supportive of porn literacy education were more interested in taking part in the study. The pragmatic response discourse was drawn on by participants of varying ages, ethnic groups, and from all three end user groups, as 24 significant sorts loaded on this factor, from five educators (2 men, 3 women), three caregivers/educators (2 male, 1 female), five caregivers (1 male, 4 female), and 11 young people (7 female, 4 male) (see Table 1).

The harm mitigation discourse represents a more conservative view, in favour of censoring Internet pornography and teaching about potential harms. The data indicate that this view was held by a smaller group of participants but also includes both adult and youth views. Four significant sorts loaded on this factor, from one female caregiver aged between 46-55 years and three male youths (two 16-year-olds and one 18-year-old). Participants were affiliated with both co-ed and single sex schools (see Table 1).

1 Membership of a stakeholder group (youth, caregiver, educator) does not appear to
2 explain the particular discourse used, as these three seemingly diverse stakeholder groups were
3 not siloed into cohorts (Cousins, 2017). Thus, the use of a particular discourse was not shaped
4 by age, group membership, or other socio-demographic variables. We discuss each of these
5 discourses in more detail below.
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11 **Pragmatic Response Discourse**

12 The pragmatic response discourse was characterised by a need for open dialogue, as
13 argued by one young woman: “These issues need to be talked about rather than hidden away
14 from us as students” (Q-sort 27, female youth). Porn literacy education was constructed as a
15 pragmatic response to a new social and cultural reality; something that cannot be ignored or
16 censored. As stated by a father: “There's not much point in trying to avoid talking about Internet
17 pornography as statistics and anecdotes from teenagers show that many are exposed from an
18 early age no matter how censored we try to be” (Q-sort 20, male caregiver). Censorship was
19 therefore construed as futile (#25: -3²), as well as conservative, judgmental and ‘sex negative’.
20 Focusing on censorship rather than education was described as “sweeping it under the rug” and
21 thereby “furthering taboo” (Q-sort 23, female youth). As one youth participant maintained: “If
22 it is blocked, then it will make pornography a topic that is discussed even less and make people
23 feel bad for watching it” (Q-sort 26, female youth). Censorship was therefore constructed as
24 potentially detrimental.
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46 Rather, it was stated that youth should receive “critical literacy skills” (Q-sort 18, female
47 youth) in a “non-judgemental” manner (Q-sort 15, male youth), and education about broader
48 issues related to Internet pornography, such as racism and consent (#19: +3). For example, one
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56 ² #25 refers to statement number 25 (i.e., “Our efforts should be focused on censorship (blocking
57 and restricting access to internet pornography), rather than porn literacy education”), and -3
58 refers to the position of this statement on the Q-set distribution for this discourse, in the
59 direction of strong agreement.
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1 mother highlighted how porn literacy should include discussions relating to: “The whole
2 straight, straight, [*sic*] gay you know blonde woman black woman. There’s a whole lot of
3 misconceptions about sexualising women of colour, men of colour even as well, you know.
4 Disabilities, how there's no diversity...” (Interview 3, female parent). Thus, critical engagement
5 with Internet pornography as an academic topic and teaching about how to ‘make sense of it’
6 (#4: +4) was considered more practical than focusing on the potential negative effects and
7 avoiding access to Internet pornography (#6: -2).

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9 According to this discourse, delivering porn literacy education is “essential” (Q-sort 3,
10 male caregiver/educator) and “vital” (Q-sort 11, male youth) (#1: +3). Opposition to this view
11 was construed as conservative moral panic (#2: -2). Porn literacy was described as necessary,
12 as one participant explained: “It is important for young people to be educated by a professional
13 and not just figure it out alone as they may have unanswered questions or be unsure of what is
14 wrong and right in terms of what porn portrays and the real world” (Q-sort 29, female youth).
15 Thus, Internet pornography was constructed as something that youth are not necessarily
16 equipped to make sense of alone (#5: +3/#1: +3) without “professional” guidance.

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18 In terms of how and when this education might be delivered, participants constructed
19 early intervention as ideal, with 16 years old considered “too late” (#21: -1), and 13 regarded
20 as a more realistic and beneficial age, if not younger (#20: +2). In addition, ongoing porn
21 literacy education was deemed necessary rather than a single session (#14: +2). In this regard,
22 one caregiver-educator participant constructed repetition as important because “kids today do
23 not remember anything if they are told just once. I can tell them the same thing every day for a
24 week and they still don't learn it” (Q-sort 8, male caregiver/educator). Finally, porn literacy
25 education was deemed to be best taught in schools as part of the broader sexual health agenda
26 (#16: +2/12: 0/#10: -4), rather than an after-school programme that may prove logistically
27 difficult to manage (#13: -2/#15: -1). School-based education as opposed to online resources

(#3: -1) was construed as more equitable, given that children come from varying backgrounds where there may not be interest in engaging with these conversations (#7, #8, #9 & #17: +1). As one teacher maintained, “Some students will not get any information from home so schools should be providing it” (Q-sort 19, female educator). Concern with access further reinforced the construction of porn literacy education as essential for all young people.

However, there was also the suggestion that a preference for school may be related to the view of parent-child conversations as challenging or “uncomfortable”, as one young person explained:

So [school is] definitely a better place to have the conversation rather than, like, one-on-one with a parent or guardian. You don't want to have that conversation with your mum or dad just, like, in your bedroom at some point ... That would just make you feel uncomfortable (Interview 20, male youth).

In this vein, education as part of the school curriculum—whether delivered by teachers or unknown external providers—was considered preferable to “uncomfortable” conversations between youth and caregivers. Nonetheless, young people expressed that school-based porn literacy education could potentially be “awkward” (Interview 24, male youth) and students may not be inclined to take it seriously as a result.

Thus, although schools were constructed as more appropriate sites for porn literacy education, the topic was further deemed to require “professionals” (Q-sort 7, male educator) to deliver it. Porn literacy was regarded as too sensitive for parents or possibly too much for teachers to take on (#11: -1/#18: 0). One young man commented: “Although it would be good if parents had education and educated their children, professionals would be better as it would be less awkward and students could learn properly” (Q-sort 25, male youth). Here, “professionals” are positioned as superior sex educators to parents, although there is an implication that caregivers *could* be good educators if they were equipped.

Participants assigned more responsibility to teachers or external providers as “experts” (Interview 12, female caregiver) than to caregivers (#9: +1/#11: -1/#18: 0). As one mother explained, “As a parent I would think that, yes, I’d be grateful for the input of experts” (Interview 12, female caregiver), and another teacher maintained: “This would be better occurring at school where teenagers are getting consistent messages from trained professionals rather than biased learnings from parents” (Q-sort 7, male educator). Thus, youth are positioned as needing guidance and being unable to critically consume Internet pornography themselves. Parents are positioned as not expert enough and too biased. Unknown ‘experts’ are then talked about as being needed, which does not recognise the expertise of youth, or that teachers or parents are experts about their children. Nevertheless, parental involvement was construed as valuable (e.g., attending information sessions). As one young man stated, “I think it would help for the student to have support from the school and from the parent at the same time” (Interview 10, male youth).

In terms of content, showing images or videos of sexual interactions as part of porn literacy education was constructed as a complex issue (#22, #23, #24: 0). The ranking of statements pertaining to this idea at zero is not necessarily indicative of indifference but may reflect a tentative or curious acquiescence, with some support for the idea. However, as a young woman stated, “It’s a bit taboo to show in school” (Interview 23, female youth). The legality of doing so was raised as an issue since Internet pornography is age restricted. Young people also construed being shown images or videos in school as potentially uncomfortable for them. However, rather than constructing this as out of the question, interview discussions often focused on how these resources could be implemented effectively.

Given that exposure to Internet pornography was deemed inevitable, viewing it with adult guidance was considered preferable to encountering it alone. This construction is evident in the following statement, for instance: “I think that they’re going to see it anyway, so they

might as well see it in a chaperoned fashion, or a curated fashion, where somebody is explaining something” (Interview 12, female parent). Here “explaining” is deemed the rationale for viewing Internet pornography in class, resonating with the construction of youth as ill-equipped to make sense of Internet pornography alone. The proposition here is that young people will not understand content, so that implicitly an authorised adult’s guidance—from an ‘expert’ or otherwise—needs to be provided. There was also the suggestion that viewing Internet pornography without adult guidance could be detrimental. As one participant put it: “I think that as long as it is followed by a pre-discussion and a post-discussion it is OK... You have no idea what is going on in their life and so how are you safeguarding that child so that when they come out there’s support around them” (Interview 19, female caregiver/educator). Thus, in line with the support for porn literacy education, adult intervention was constructed as crucial to “safeguarding” young people.

Thus, the first discourse—a pragmatic response—represented agreement with the central premise of porn literacy education that youth should be supported in building critical analytic skills to make sense of Internet pornography. This discourse endorsed young people’s critical engagement with Internet pornography, but preferably with expert guidance. Professionals were construed as less biased and uncomfortable than parents, and the most appropriate people to implement porn literacy education. Notably, this discourse supported a pragmatic stance regarding the use of sexual or pornographic imagery for educational purposes.

Harm Mitigation Discourse

The second discourse, the harm mitigation discourse, was distinguished by a more conservative approach to addressing young people’s engagement with Internet pornography. It encompassed broad and varied interpretations of what porn literacy education means. Both “porn literacy skills” and a focus on “Internet pornography’s negative effects” were rendered important (#1: +2/#6: +3). Nevertheless, as in the previous discourse, Internet pornography *was*

constructed as requiring adult attention and intervention. Internet pornography was deemed an important topic for sexuality education. As in the previous discourse, education was constructed as needing to be integrated and ongoing (#13: -1/#14: +1/#16: +1) from an early age (13 rather than 16 years) (#21: -1/#20: +1) and delivered by adults (#2: -3/#5: -3/#3: -2). Even those who positioned themselves as anti-pornography for religious reasons constructed education about Internet pornography as necessary. Again, this could reflect that those who agreed to take part believed that intervention is required, but using a different approach than outlined in the first discourse.

This discourse was characterised by different understandings to the previous discourse as to what should be taught, who should teach it and why such education is needed. While schools were described as a place that could offer support, caregivers were positioned as ultimately responsible for delivering porn literacy education (#11: +1/ #18: +2/ #8: +2), rather than the school, government (#10: -2/#11: +1/#12: 0/#15: -2/#18: +2), teachers or external providers (#7: 0/#9: 0/#17: -1). Caregivers would therefore decide on the content delivered and potentially keep discussions in line with their values and belief system. For some, the family unit was depicted as preferable to school-based delivery, if the familial relationship is open and valued.

In terms of the content of porn literacy education, this discourse was explicitly focused on the negative effects of Internet pornography viewing. Unlike the previous discourse, broader issues like racism, sex work, sense-making about Internet pornography were not considered to be as pertinent (#4: 0/#6: +3/#19: 0). The following explanation from a young person illustrates how the need for focusing on harm was constructed:

Pornography has numerous harmful effects and ignoring these is invalidating of both those who are addicted and the trauma the actors endure. Pornography is known to wreck relationships, cause addiction, low mental health and it causes physical harm to

1 the actors. For one to say porn is ok is to say that violence, addiction and ill mental
2 health is also ok (Q-sort 22, male youth).
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4 Here, a psychological discourse of “addiction” and “trauma” is drawn on. An implicit appeal is
5 made to evidence of harmful consequences—not only to the viewer but also the performers—
6 which are constructed as “known”. A moral argument is mobilised, as condoning pornography
7 is construed as tantamount to accepting its “known” “harmful effects”.
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10 In addition to an explicit focus on harm, advocacy of censorship was a key aspect of
11 this discourse, including education about how to self-censor Internet pornography viewing (#6:
12 +3/#25: +3). The idea of utilising sexual images or videos as part of porn literacy education as
13 educational resources was strongly rejected (#24: +4/#22: -4/#23: -1): “There is no such thing
14 as healthy pornography. Because imagery and videos are part of the problem and images could
15 serve to reinforce an opposite message to what is being discussed” (Q-sort 5, female caregiver).
16 Accordingly, Internet pornography was rendered inherently problematic. Cause-effect rhetoric
17 was invoked to maintain that the implicit unhealthy effects of pornography would override the
18 educator’s “message”. From this harms-based perspective, viewing sexual images or videos
19 (even with adult guidance) was constructed as leading to potential harm:
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38 I know for myself and for other guys we try and like limit the amount of sexual content
39 we see... because stuff like that is an addiction. The last thing personally I would want
40 to do is provide material that while it might not fuel most people's arousal, it could fuel
41 this one person's addiction (Interview 13, male youth).
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48 In this instance, Internet pornography was constructed as “triggering” and addictive, so that
49 showing such material was rendered dangerous. Instead, participants argued that alternative
50 modes of visualisation (e.g., drawings, cartoons, scientific illustrations) could be used that were
51 more appropriate.
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The construction of pornography as inherently harmful, and thus dangerous, does not allow for the pragmatic response of viewing Internet pornography with adult guidance endorsed by the previous discourse. Rather, censorship—in conjunction with self-regulation and self-control—was constructed as a valuable outcome to be instilled by any intervention. One participant explained that: “One of the best things I've found with young people with porn is accountability. If you've got someone who's going to text you ‘Hey how's the week going? You watch porn? You masturbate? You done anything like that?’, you're a lot less likely to do it than if it was just like “freedom!” (Interview 13, male youth). In this way, both watching Internet pornography and masturbation were constructed as undesirable activities to abstain from and be held “accountable” for.

Thus, the arm mitigation discourse was focused on protection and self-regulation. Intervention was construed as most appropriately involving (i) restricting access to pornography, (ii) educating young people about its inherent dangers, and (iii) equipping them to avoid it. Caregivers were positioned as the most trusted adults responsible for this task. This view was underwritten by moral arguments that appeal to the privacy and sanctity of the family, and the need for caregivers to safeguard the values and beliefs of their families; a task that cannot be trusted to outsiders. This discourse constructed youth sexuality as risky, making youth vulnerable to potential violence, victimisation and thwarted sexual morals (Bay-Cheng, 2003). It therefore supports the view that youth should be shielded from explicit or pornographic material, even for educational purposes, with a strong opposition to educational visual displays of 'healthy pornography' or 'healthy consensual sex'.

Discussion

We explored perspectives about porn literacy education delivery to young people in New Zealand, uniquely drawing from all three end user groups of youth, caregivers, and educators in our study. We identified two discourses which represent two distinct ways that

1 porn literacy education was constructed by stakeholders. Many stakeholders, including young
2 people, constructed porn literacy education as a valuable endeavour for supporting youth to
3 make sense of Internet pornography. This common construction was evidenced by parallels
4 between the “opinion domain” drawn on to formulate the Q-set and the interviews with
5 participants (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 58). Overall, participants supported the introduction of
6 the topic of Internet pornography in sexuality education. A concern with how young people
7 may be affected by pornography was common to both discourses, though decidedly more
8 pronounced in the harm mitigation discourse.

19 The impact of pornography on young people is a complex issue that requires further
20 study, and additional research is required to explicitly understand the potential influence of
21 pornography on the sexual socialisation of younger people (Wright, 2014). Fear-based news
22 reporting overwhelmingly portrays Internet pornography as dangerous, addictive and the cause
23 of a range of negative effects (Albury, 2013). Young people are considered especially
24 vulnerable due to the common construction of childhood as a time of innocence and sexual
25 dormancy, which historically renders youth asexual until they are deemed mature enough to be
26 sexual (Spišák, 2016). According to this construction, childhood innocence must be protected,
27 and youth kept from sexual corruption and “prematurely” engaging in sexual activities such as
28 viewing pornography. In this way, adult surveillance and intervention is justified (Buckingham
29 & Bragg, 2003; Egan, 2013).

46 Based on this shared construction of youth sexuality and the associated concern about
47 young people’s welfare, both discourses support adult intervention at an early age (as indicated
48 by consensus statements 2, 3, 5, and 14). Nevertheless, there were significant differences
49 regarding *how* to intervene. The positions supported by the two discourses were differentiated
50 by: (i) whose responsibility it is to educate young people about Internet pornography (indicated
51 by significantly distinguishable statements 5, 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, and 25), (ii) whether the key

1 message should be about negative effects or critical engagement, and (iii) the role of censorship
2 (indicated by significantly distinguishable statements 22, 23, and 24).
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4 In line with previous literature, this study indicates how some stakeholders view porn
5 literacy education as a way to fundamentally address the shame associated with viewing
6 Internet pornography, and to encourage young people's critical thinking regarding pornography
7 as a social construct and socialising agent (Goldstein, 2019). For others, porn literacy education
8 is seen as a harm-reduction technique which aims to teach youth about the potential dangers of
9 pornography (Rothman et al., 2018). These diverging views correspond with emerging
10 scholarly approaches to porn literacy education based on underlying understandings of youth,
11 particularly youth a/sexuality (Albury, 2018; Byron et al., 2020; Goldstein, 2020).
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24 **Implications**

25 In response to the interplay between Internet pornography and young people's sexual
26 socialisation, it has been suggested that developing sound, evidence-based educational policy
27 would be a valuable next step (Albury, 2014; Smith, 2013). To that end, stakeholder
28 engagement is critical to developing and implementing policy in porn literacy education (Baker,
29 2016; Ollis, 2016a, 2016b). Currently, there is insufficient research based on end user
30 perspectives to support evidence-based policy and practice for the development of such
31 curricula, which we sought to address (Albury, 2014; Dawson, 2020). Our research
32 demonstrates that participant perspectives of porn literacy education are not associated with
33 membership of a stakeholder group (youth, caregivers, or educators). Rather, participants from
34 across the three stakeholder groups drew on each of the two discourses. This implies that both
35 youth and adults consider Internet pornography as requiring attention in young people's sexual
36 socialisation. Focusing on this commonality as a starting point may be a useful first step in
37 breaking down some of the diverging views between groups.
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1 In line with the common construction of the need to address Internet pornography, our
2 findings also show that stakeholders, including young people, emphasise a need for adult-led,
3 top-down guidance. This approach is premised on the construction of young people as naïve
4 and emotionally unequipped to navigate Internet pornography independently. In the absence of
5 sufficient evidence to inform policy, along with widespread societal ‘moral panic’ related to
6 the effects of Internet pornography on young people, there is a risk that sexuality education
7 policy and curricula may be developed in response to concerns motivated by this dominant
8 harms-based view. Emerging solutions to technological changes are often based on dominant
9 cultural and popular narratives, and are frequently built on regulation and restriction (Moore &
10 Reynolds, 2017).

11 This dominant taken-for-granted assumption about youth needs to be challenged in
12 order to move away from a deficit view of youth sexuality towards a more empowering view.
13 Such a view potentially allows for more purposeful and productive conversations about sex and
14 sexuality than risk and harm-focused responses, which youth frequently experience as
15 patronising and irrelevant (Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015, 2017). For example, sex
16 education that takes a dialogic approach rather than an adult-centred one engages young people
17 as sexual subjects in interactive and non-linear discussion, generating curiosity about and
18 engagement with complex topics like Internet pornography. Such an approach, with its more
19 complex and empowering view of youth sexuality, has been found to be more productive than
20 a harms-focused, adult-centred approach to sexuality education (Allen, 2005; Goldstein, 2021;
21 Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015, 2017).

22 Effective approaches to sexuality education and health promotion thus require a shift
23 from a “focus on ‘what porn does to young people’ [to] ... what young people do with porn –
24 and why” (Albury, 2018, p. 107). Indeed, recent research indicates that youth are more readily
25 able to reflect on and reflexively navigate Internet pornography than is typically assumed in

public discussion (Healy-Cullen et al., 2021a; Goldstein, 2019; Löfgren-Mårtenson & Månsson, 2010). More context-sensitive research on young people's digital media practices and sense-making is needed to highlight the specificities of youth engagement with Internet pornography (Goldstein, 2019; Spišák, 2016).

Given the nuanced and ideologically charged perspectives that our study has highlighted, it is quite possible that there will be some parties who do not agree with interventions that are developed, even if they are evidence-based. It is important that policy acknowledges that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach may be unattainable and allows for different views. For example, parents could 'opt out' youth in their care who are under 16 from certain sexuality education sessions on religious grounds, or a young person older than 16 years could make this decision themselves (Sex Education Forum, n.d.).

Finally, policy makers should consider how to account for the varied perspectives that we identified when devising optimal intervention strategies. Future research regarding educational policy related to Internet pornography could consider alternative approaches that may align and unite educators, caregivers and youth, rather than further polarise end user groups. In considering different perspectives about who should deliver porn literacy education (e.g., public service departments, or family), and what kind of response may be most desirable (e.g., pragmatic or harm mitigation), a suite of resources grounded in sexual ethics and sexual citizenship could prove useful if made available for end users (Lamb & Randazzo, 2016; Macleod & Vincent, 2014). Such an approach could reduce tensions between opposing views, as it shifts focus away from the individual responsibility of the educator or caregiver to "teach" in a didactic way about Internet pornography, to a dialogical approach that considers Internet pornography as an object of enquiry within a socio-historical and ethical context. By drawing on an ethically orientated pedagogical approach to pornography, it is possible to discuss Internet pornography as a pleasure technology while concurrently reflecting on how it can recreate

1 unhelpful portrayals across racial, sexual, and socio-economic lines (Goldstein, 2019). Such an
2 approach may be a less polarising position to take for the future of policy development, because
3 it shifts focus away from the ‘harmful effects/no harmful effects’ debate. Rather, discussions
4 turn to sexually ethical practices that encourage care of the self but also care of others
5 (Goldstein, 2019; Macleod & Vincent, 2014).
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11 **Limitations**

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14 There were some limitations to this research. Notably, the implications of definitional
15 uncertainty regarding porn literacy was apparent in, for example, the second discourse, where
16 participants valued both porn literacy education delivery *and* teaching about negative
17 effects/avoidance. On reflection, this may have been exacerbated by the use of double barrelled
18 items in the Q-sort (see Appendix). This contradictory position is also reflective of
19 developments in the academic field of porn literacy education (Byron et al., 2020).
20 Albury (2014, 2018) notes that, on account of varying ideologies, some teaching may stem
21 from an inoculation framework, while other approaches centring
22 around ethical erotics are beginning to transpire. Thus, it may have been the case that
23 participants held different understandings as to what is meant by ‘porn literacy’ and what it
24 means to be ‘porn literate’ (Healy-Cullen et al., 2021b). Definitional clarity is important to
25 consider when evaluating these results, and communicating about the topic in future research.
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43 **Conclusion**

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46 Porn literacy education is one pedagogical strategy currently being considered in New
47 Zealand and internationally with regard to intervention development. Thus, impending
48 decisions regarding policy have global implications for sexuality education (Albury, 2014;
49 Office of Film and Literature Classification, 2018). Understanding how the discourses outlined
50 in this study may hinder or enable forward-thinking conversations regarding porn literacy
51 education is an important step in further exploration of this topic. Exploring how these
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discourses work to influence policy related to educational initiatives would be valuable in future research. In particular, there is scope for using a critical lens when considering how these discourses position youth as uncritical consumers of Internet pornography, and passive ‘receivers’ of didactic teachings on porn literacy education (Chronaki, 2013, 2019; Goldstein, 2019). To this end, it is crucial that the youth voice is foregrounded alongside other stakeholders in future research that considers the potential for porn literacy as pedagogy.

Declarations

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Conflicts of interest/Competing interests

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Availability of data and material

Please contact the lead author to request access to the data.

Code availability

Not applicable

Authors’ contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Siobhán Healy-Cullen. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Siobhán Healy-Cullen and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors contributed to interpretation of the data and approved the final manuscript.

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Ethics Declarations

This research was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee on 27th September 2018 (SOB 18/51). Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study, and the procedures used in this study adhere to the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki.

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Table 1*Participant Details and Q-Sort Factor Loadings*

Q-sort	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Participant	School	Factor 1	Factor 2
1	36-45	Female	NZE	Caregiver	Co-ed	0.68	0.33
2	17	Female	NZE	Youth	Co-ed	0.74	0.05
3	36-45	Male	NZE	Caregiver	Single sex	0.81	0.22
4	46-55	Female	NZE	Caregiver	Single sex	0.71	0.44
5	46-55	Female	NZE	Caregiver	Single sex	-0.19	0.83
6	36-45	Female	American	Caregiver	Single sex	0.77	0.03
7	26-35	Male	NZE	Educator	Single sex	0.64	-0.06
8	46-55	Male	NZE	Caregiver/Educator	Single sex	0.72	-0.04
9	46-55	Female	NZE	Educator	Single sex	0.72	0.42
10	17	Male	NZE/NZM	Youth	Single sex	0.72	0.03
11	16	Male	NZM	Youth	Single sex	0.73	0.06
12	26-35	Female	NZE	Educator	Single sex	0.77	0.16
13	26-35	Male	NZE	Educator	Single sex	0.79	0.41
14	16	Female	NZE	Youth	Co-ed	-0.38	-0.03
15	16	Male	Sri Lankan	Youth	Single sex	0.68	0.37
16	16	Female	Not Specified	Youth	Co-ed	0.76	0.43
17	36-45	Male	NZE	Educator	Co-ed	0.25	0.13
18	17	Female	NZE	Youth	Single sex	0.62	0.55
19	55+	Female	NZE	Educator	Single sex	0.89	0.23
20	46-55	Male	NZE	Caregiver	Co-ed	0.79	0.50
21	16	Male	NZE	Youth	Co-ed	0.18	0.60
22	16	Male	NZE/Other	Youth	Co-ed	0.02	0.88
23	17	Female	NZE/NZM	Youth	Co-ed	0.74	0.29
24	46-55	Female	Asian	Caregiver/Educator	Co-ed	0.71	0.40
25	18	Male	NZE/NZM	Youth	Single sex	0.07	0.54
26	18	Female	NZE	Youth	Single sex	0.80	0.04
27	16	Female	NZE	Youth	Single sex	0.87	0.19
28	36-45	Female	NZE	Caregiver	Single sex	0.92	0.01
29	18	Female	Irish	Youth	Single sex	0.85	0.26
30	18	Male	NZE/NZM	Youth	Single sex	0.88	0.05

Note. New Zealand Māori (NZM) are the indigenous people of New Zealand. Pākehā (NZE) refers to New Zealanders of non-Māori /non-Polynesian heritage (Ranford, 2015). Significant factor loadings are in bold.

Table 2*Factor Arrays and Z-scores*

Statement	Z-scores		Factor arrays	
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
1	1.26	0.70	3	2
2	-1.39	-1.79	-2	-3
3	-0.85	-0.74	-1	-2
4	1.54	0.06	4	0
5	-1.40	-1.67	-3	-3
6	-1.08	1.78	-2	3
7	0.70	0.08	1	0
8	0.88	0.70	1	2
9	0.65	0.23	1	0
10	-1.62	-1.04	-4	-2
11	-0.31	0.48	-1	1
12	-0.12	0.17	0	0
13	-0.93	-0.23	-2	-1
14	0.98	0.49	2	1
15	-0.58	-0.66	-1	-2
16	1.05	0.37	2	1
17	0.79	-0.34	1	-1
18	-0.18	0.64	0	2
19	1.45	0.03	3	0
20	0.98	0.27	2	1
21	-0.39	-0.47	-1	-1
22	0.16	-1.91	0	-4
23	0.25	-0.65	0	-1
24	-0.24	1.89	0	4
25	-1.60	1.61	-3	3

Appendix

Q set distribution and items

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree			
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
(1)								(1)
	(2)						(2)	
		(3)				(3)		
			(4)		(4)			
				(5)				

1. Porn literacy education is needed, and young people should be taught porn literacy skills.
2. There is no need for porn literacy education, this suggestion is just a reaction to a societal moral panic.
3. Young people do not need porn literacy education, they just need good online resources/platforms with information about internet pornography.
4. Since internet pornography is here to stay, young people should be taught how to make sense of it, and the messages it delivers.
5. Porn literacy education is a waste of time, it is just something that young people figure out themselves as they get older.
6. Young people should just be taught about internet pornography's negative effects, and how to avoid internet pornography online.

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7. School teachers should receive training on how to deliver porn literacy education to young people in schools.
8. Both parents/guardians and school teachers should to be trained to deliver porn literacy education to young people.
9. External providers should be brought in to schools to delivers porn literacy training to young people.
10. Schools should not be teaching anything to young people about internet pornography
11. Parents/guardians should be provided with training to help them understand and talk about porn literacy with young people in their care, rather than leaving it to educators.
12. Porn literacy education should be separate to sexuality education, and should be delivered as a stand-alone programme by schools.
13. Porn literacy should be a once off session delivered by an external body, at some stage during secondary school.
14. Porn literacy education should be taught on an ongoing basis throughout the secondary school years.
15. Porn literacy education should be run as an after school programme delivered over a number of weeks, at some stage during secondary school.
16. Porn literacy education should be integrated as part of the sexuality education curriculum in secondary schools.
17. Ultimately, it should be the responsibility of the ministry of education to ensure young people receive porn literacy education as part of their sexuality education.
18. Ultimately, it should be the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure young people receive porn literacy education as part of their sexuality education.
19. Porn literacy should be used as a platform for talking about bigger issues like consent, racism and sex work.

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20. Porn literacy should be taught from the age of 13.

21. Porn literacy should be taught from the age of 16.

22. Showing ‘healthy pornography’ videos in classrooms could be a useful educational tool.

23. Showing photos of healthy consensual sex could be a useful educational tool.

24. I do not think imagery or videos need to be shown as part of porn literacy education or sexuality education, but I do think we need to talk about the imagery and videos.

25. Our efforts should be focused on censorship (blocking and restricting access to internet pornography), rather than porn literacy education.