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Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Great Sexpectations:

An Examination of Female Adolescents' Perspectives About Pornography and Sexual Health Education

Aoife O'Carroll

CARL Research Project

in collaboration with

The Sexual Health Centre Cork

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Community Academic Research Links (CARL) is a community engagement initiative provided by University College Cork to support the research needs of community and voluntary groups/ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These groups can be grassroots groups, single-issue temporary groups, but also structured community and voluntary organisations. Research for the CSO is carried out free of financial cost by student researchers.

CARL seeks to:

- provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education;
- provide their services on an affordable basis;
- promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology;
- create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations;
- enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
- enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researchers (Living Knowledge Network).

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How do I reference this report?

Author (year) *Dissertation/Project Title*, [online], Community-Academic Research Links/University College Cork, Ireland, Available from: https://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/rr/ [Accessed: date].

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Declaration of Originality

This is to declare that this dissertation titled "*Great Sexpectations*: An Examination Of Female Adolescents' Perspectives About Pornography and Sexual Health Education", submitted to the School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork, as part of the Master in Social Work, is my own work.

Any work that is not my own has been acknowledged and referenced appropriately. I have reviewed the Turnitin report prior to submission and made appropriate edits in line with the UCC Plagiarism Policy.

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Abstract:

This research was a community-based participatory project involving University College Cork, Community Active Research Links Project (CARL) and The Sexual Health Centre Cork. The research looks at the impact of pornography from the perspective of adolescent females and how it affects young people. Furthermore, it examines the ways in which young people receive information about sex, especially education relating to pornography. Primary research was carried out by means of individual interviews. The epistemological positioning applied to this research is critical feminist theory with social constructivism to determine the lived experiences of women in society in relation to pornography. Participants for the research were recruited by the Sexual Health Centre with the criteria being female, aged between 17 and 19. Four participants took part in the interviews to ascertain theirs views on the impact of pornography was for young people, in particular females, and what their experiences of sex education is like. The participants were presented with a draft edition of an educational resource that included information about pornography- the risks, impacts and supports available and were asked to give feedback on it. The qualitative data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. The themes that emerged are: The Stigma of Female Sexuality, The Expectations, Consent and Education The study concluded that females' adolescents are impacted by pornography and that there is a lack of education on the subject available to young people. The participants were very complimentary of the educational tool presented to them and recommended that this be rolled out for educational purposes. In the final chapter, concluding remarks and recommendations are provided for future endeavours.

Glossary

Abbreviations:

CARL- Community Academic Research Links

RCNI- Rape Centre Network Ireland

SHCC- Sexual Health Centre Cork

UCC- University College Cork

WHO- World Health Organisation

Definitions:

Consent: A person consents to a sexual act if he or she freely and voluntarily agrees to engage in that act (Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017).

Pornography (porn): sexually explicit materials intended to stimulate sexual excitement. Using porn means to intentionally look at, read or listen to: A) pictures, videos, or films that depict nude individuals or people having sex and B) written or audio material that describes nude individuals or people having sex (McKee, et al. 2020).

[Pornography and porn are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation]

Sexual Citizenship: The rights and responsibilities of citizens in sexual and intimate life; acknowledgement of one's own right to sexual self-determination and recognizes the equivalent right in others (Richardson, 2018).

Sexual Health: "a state of physical, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence" (WHO, 2006).

Table of Contents

CARL Research Project i

Declaration of Originality iv

Acknowledgements: v

Abstract: vi

Glossary vii

Abbreviations: vii

Definitions: vii

Chapter 1- Introduction 1

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Research Title 1

1.3 Background to Research 1

1.4 Rationale 2

1.5 Introduction to the Sexual Health Centre Cork (SHCC) and Doing a CARL Project: 2

1.6 Research Aims and Objectives 2

1.6.1 Aims 2

1.6.2 Objectives 3

1.7 Research Questions 3

Chapter 1- Introduction 4

Chapter 2- Literature review 4

Chapter 3- Methodology 4

Chapter 4- Findings and Discussion 4

Chapter 6-Conclusion and Recommendations: 4

Chapter 2-Literature Review 5

2.1 Introduction 5

2.2 Feminist Theory and the Impact of Pornography on Women: 5

2.3 Sexual Violence 6

2.4 Pornography and Relationships 8

2.5 Where do young people access knowledge about sex? 9

2.6 Sexual Health Education- Nationally and Internationally 10

2.7 Conclusion 12

Chapter 3- Methodology: 14

3.1 Introduction 14

3.2 Theoretical Perspective & Epistemology: 15

3.3 Research Methods 15

3.3.1 Research Methodology 15

3.3.2 Research Methods 16

3.4 Data collection and Analysis 17

3.4.1 Participants 17

3.4.2 Data collection 17

3.4.3 Data Analysis 18

3.5 Ethical Considerations 18

3.6 Challenges and Limitations 19

3.7 Creating an Educational Toolkit 19

3.8 Conclusion: 20

Chapter 4- Findings and Discussion 22

4.1 Introduction 22

4.2 Theme 1- Female Sexuality: The Stigma 22

4.3 Theme 2 – The Expectations 24

4.3.1 Body Image 24

4.3.2 Expectations about Sex 25

4.4 Theme 3- Consent 26

4.5 Theme 4- Education 27

4.5.1: The Education Tool 28

4.6 Conclusion 30

Chapter 5- Conclusion and Recommendations 32

5.1 Introduction 32

5.2 Concluding Comments 32

5.3 Recommendations 34

Research Reflection 37

Bibliography 39

Appendices 44

Appendix A- Ethical Approval 44

Appendix B- Parent/Guardian Information Sheet and Consent Form (for those under 18) 45

Parent / Guardian Consent Form 48

Appendix C- Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participants under 18 49

Information Sheet 49

Child Assent Form 51

Appendix D- Information Sheet and Consent for Participants Over 18 52

Sample Research Consent Form 54

Appendix E- Interview Schedule 55

Chapter 1- Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the CARL research project. It outlines the background and rationale of the research by describing the reasons why this topic was chosen and offers the reader an insight in to why it is worth researching. It also provides the aims, objectives and research questions and offers the reader an insight in to why this topic is worth researching. There is also an outline of each chapter to follow.

1.2 Research Title

Great Sexpectations: An Examination of Female Adolescents' Perspectives About Pornography and Sexual Health Education.

1.3 Background to Research

"The prevalence of pornography has been on the rise for several decades and the effects are becoming more prominent everyday due to the accessibility, affordability, and lack of accountability associated with pornography use" (Nufer, 2017, pg. 6). Many of the conversations that exist regarding pornography, happen among young people, without any input from their adult counterparts which include parents, educators, youth workers and social workers. Teenagers are naturally curious about sexuality and may seek out pornography to satisfy that curiosity. However, this can also be problematic. The impact of pornography can be cause for an increase in sexual and physical violence, particularly among young people (Awan et al. 2021). Research of this nature is relevant in child protection settings and may relate to child sexual abuse or sexual exploitation, child trafficking, and illegal sharing of child abuse images/recordings and non-consensual distribution of intimate behaviours. Not only is this research relevant in social work but also in terms of public health, youth work, community development and education. Seeking female's participation, in particular the perceptions, experiences, offers the potential to inform the practice of sexual health promotion in a safe and efficient manner. It is important to understand how female adolescents and youth navigate and understand intimate relationships to promote better sexual health and development. The perceptions, experiences and voices of female youth will help to inform the practice of sexual health promotion in a safe and efficient manner.

1.4 Rationale

While on my first social work placement in Tusla (Child and Family Agency) during my time on the Master of Social Work, I saw first-hand the harmful impact that exists within the relationship between pornography and young people. I experienced young people being sexually inappropriate and in need of intervention. It was striking to me to see the perceptions that the teenagers had about pornography and what they thought was sexually acceptable. One young male that I worked with choked a girl to the extent that she ended up in hospital with multiple bruises and passing out. His justification for this was that he thought it was acceptable because he "saw it in a video". This experience was frightening for me as both a practitioner in training and as a female in society. Therefore, I felt it to be of service to embark on research for this topic.

This study is about researching the opinions that young females themselves have of the impact that pornography has on young people in an Irish context and their education around this. It is about discovering the ways in which pornography is influencing their sexual health, which includes intimate relationships, consent, sexuality, and violence, and how these areas may be impacted by pornography in society. This is important research for social work and for society as it is important to understand the problems that can arise regarding pornography, the impact it has on young females and propose some solutions that may help social workers, parents, young females, and any other members of society with this problem.

1.5 Introduction to the Sexual Health Centre Cork (SHCC) and Doing a CARL Project:

This research was conducted in collaboration with SHCC through the University College Cork (UCC) Community- Academic Research Links (CARL) initiative. The SHCC is a service which provides "information, support and education in the areas of sexual health, wellbeing, sexuality and healthy relationships" Upon learning about the opportunity to complete a CARL project, I was immediately interested in working with the SHCC. I felt that the work and values of the SHCC coincided with my rationale for this research and therefore believed it would be a worthwhile opportunity to produce a piece of research that would support the SCHCC.

1.6 Research Aims and Objectives

1.6.1 Aims

The aim of this research project is to utilise a critical feminist perspective to gather young female's perceptions about the impact of pornography and gain insight into the education that

young people receive regarding pornography in order to understand what impact this has on young females and what the practical solutions could be.

1.6.2 Objectives

The objectives of this dissertation are to:

- Carry out comprehensive interviews with young females to determine their opinions of pornography in relation to their experiences of sexual education, sexual health, expectations, relationships, female sexuality and consent and how young people are impacted by pornography.
- Review relevant literature to provide a clear understanding of what information exists regarding the impact of pornography in terms of sexual violence, relationships, where people information about sex and to examine the historical and current sex education curriculum in Ireland and internationally.
- Create an educational resource for use that may help to deepen this understanding of the relationship between sexual experiences and pornography, in the hope of generating educational progress in the field. The anticipation is that going forward, a creation of a sexual health education toolkit for young females will progress sexual education in the field of pornography and sexual experiences.
- Develop reasonable recommendations for actionable undertakings and possible future research based on conclusions from the literature examined and the findings of the interviews carried out.

1.7 Research Questions

The research questions that are addressed are:

1. What is the impact of pornography on adolescent females, and does it affect their sexual health, intimate relationships, sexual experiences, and consent among adolescence influenced by pornography?

2. Where do young people get their sex education and if this is in schools, does the education system in Ireland address the topic of pornography. If so, how does it do so?

3. Would a toolkit for practice containing information on the impact of pornography be beneficial for both young people and practitioners engaging young females in sexual health education?

1.7 Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1- Introduction

Introduces the background and rationale for undertaking this study. The chapter will discuss the aims, objectives and research questions guiding the study.

Chapter 2- Literature review

This chapter will examine and critically analyse the relevant literature that readily exists on the topic of pornography in terms of young people and education in the Irish context and internationally.

Chapter 3- Methodology

The methodology chapter aims to draw attention to the data collection methods. It will explain what I did to collect data, how I did it and the reasons behind the choices. I will identify the limitations, challenges, and ethical considerations here. This chapter will also introduce the creation and development of an educational resource that was presented at interviews.

Chapter 4- Findings and Discussion

The results of the data collection, the findings and analysis can be seen in this chapter. Here, connections are made to the information gathered in chapter 2.

Chapter 6-Conclusion and Recommendations:

The concluding chapter of the study will bring the research to an end. Recommendations are put forward for further studies and actionable undertakings for professionals.

Chapter 2-Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To explore the impact of pornography on young people, specifically young females, and to answer the research questions that were posed. It is firstly important to examine the existing literature that surrounds the topic. From initial assessment of all the literature on the issue, a body of evidence shows that pornography can have a negative impact on young people. Research has identified both behavioural and emotional effects for young people who view pornography (Bleakley, et al. 2011, pg. 303). The most dominant, popular, and accessible pornography contains messages and behaviours about sex, gender, power, and pleasure, which are deeply problematic (Armstrong, et al., 2017).

This chapter will discuss the literature that exists regarding the impact pornography has on young people and women, sexual violence, relationships, consent. It will also focus on where people receive their sex education and how the Irish education system, and international systems have and do address sex and pornography.

2.2 Feminist Theory and the Impact of Pornography on Women:

The impact that pornography has on women has been well documented throughout the existing literature for over thirty years including Collins, (1990), Seto, Maric, & Barbaree, (2001), Vega & Malamuth, (2007), Mattebo et al., (2012), Armstrong, (2017) and Massey, (2020). Armstrong et al. (2017) argue that "pornography exists within a broader sociocultural context in which stereotypes about gender, sexism, sexual objectification and violence-supportive attitudes are also at play" (pg.44). Overall, the literature shows a link between viewing pornography and sexually explicit material and young people's negative attitudes and behaviour regarding sexual experiences (Massey, et al., 2020).

By examining this issue using a feminist theory approach, a greater insight can be provided into how pornography can affect young women. Feminism has been defined as

> "The concern with gender equality and the promotion of equal rights for men and woman, the expression of these concerns through theory or action, and the valuing of individuals for their contributions to society rather than their biological or sexual characteristics or roles" (Allan, 1993, pg. 1548).

Many feminist activists, working with female victims of sexual violence, began to associate pornography with sexual danger for women, and such imagery as representative of a continuum

of sexually violent behaviour against women (Collins, 1990). This is relevant throughout the literature that exists on this issue and the accompanying problems that are identified.

Within this, there is additionally, an influence on female sexuality. For women, their sexuality (including that of their pleasure), is one which is not explored (Hansen, 2020). This is not a new concept in Ireland, one which has been relevant throughout history. As recognized by Fischer (2016), "women's sexuality and social behaviour were subjected to intense scrutiny, as visible transgressions of purity, especially, were met with opprobrium and punishment" (pg. 823). Many laws were put in place to degrade any potential of female sexuality like Poor Law Reform Commission and the Workhouses in 1925, which proposed methods for reforming 'fallen women' and punishing those who could not or would not be reformed. The stigma of female sexuality was stigmatised also by the 1929 Censorship of Publications Act Section 16 & 17, which banned the advertising of contraception or abortion and prohibited the sale and distribution of 'indecent or obscene' books (Crowley, & Kitchin, 2008). Women were reprimanded in detainment in places such as Magdalene Asylums and Mother and Baby Homes to "police the sexual practices of its citizens and create a sanitised moral landscape" (Crowley, & Kitchin, 2008, pg. 355). Male counterparts were not scrutinised for their sexual exploitations.

This is still a problem today. Female sexuality is still under explored and still carries the same stigma as it did in the past. Sexism and inequality are still a feature of women experiencing their sexuality. This can be seen in pornography for example, where porn is seen to be created for male consumption, not females (Taormino, Penley, Shimizu & Miller-Young, 2013). There is also a failure to explore pleasure of females in pornography videos, where 98% of porn videos display males climaxing or "finishing" and only 10% of these show the same for female pleasure (Awan et. al, 2021).

2.3 Sexual Violence

A major issue associated with pornography that is significant for child protection is that of sexual violence. Armstrong et al. (2017), emphasised that "adolescents who consumed violent pornography were six times more likely to be sexually aggressive compared to those who viewed non-violent pornography or no pornography" (pg. 59).

It is particularly relevant in terms of sexual abuse of children, and children sexually abusing other children. A significant piece of information provided by the RCNI (2020) is that "37% of perpetrators of incidents of sexual violence against children were other children under the age of 18" (pg.24). As well as this, female children are at much greater risk (89%) of

experiencing sexual violence perpetrated by another child, 98% of these being between 13 and 17 (RCNI, 2020). Sexual harassment is also problematic, and it is apparent that most adolescent sexual harassment was perpetrated by adolescent boys towards girls (MacNeela, Conway, Kavanagh, Kennedy & McAffery, 2014 pg. 14). This correlates with the negative impact that pornography is having on young females and is a key concern for child protection. However, what is additionally challenging is the lack of policy and guidance that is available on this topic. In 1999, the initial 'Children First' document was published by the Department of Health and Children. Within this, "Sexual Abuse by Children and Young People" was provided with its own chapter and was well documented, and recognized 'Normal Sexual Exploration,' 'Sexually Obsessive Behaviour' and 'Abusive Behaviour by Adolescents and Young People.' There were also indications on how this impacts children and families. Similarly, in the amended 2011 version of Children First, a special consideration was provided to Peer Abuse, including sexual abuse by children and young people. Unfortunately, in the most up to date and utilised version of Children First, 2017, no consideration has been given to such peer abuse. Therefore, it is difficult for professionals to understand this or know how to manage it.

In a recurring US study, it was discovered that frequent consumption of pornography, particularly violent pornography, increases sexual aggression and the likelihood of committing sexual offences by men (Seto, Maric, and Barbaree 2001; Vega and Malamuth 2007; Ferguson and Hartley 2009; Baker, 2016). In a comparable way, a UK based research found links between pornography use and sexual coercion, with young men engaging in violent practices such as coercive and dominant behaviours that included slapping and hair pulling of females to the point of pain (Marston and Lewis, 2014). In addition to this, in-depth interviews with young people (16–23 years old) in Sweden showed that for the participants, pornography encouraged views that, in sexual situations, males should be dominant and females submissive (Häggström-Nordin et al. 2006).

These statistics can be viewed in relation to the content that exists in the most popular pornography videos. In terms of the content of pornography videos, a recent study showed that out of 4,009 scenes available on two major free pornography websites, "35% and 45% depicted violence, and that women were the target of that violence 97% of the time" (Fritz et al. 2020, pg., 3043). Violence towards women in the videos analysed, typically involved spanking (27%) or gagging (19%). The responses by female performers to these acts were mostly neutral "as if not affected in any manner" (Klaassen & Peter, 2015, pg. 728). The physical aggression (slapping, choking, gagging, hair pulling) and verbal aggression such as name calling,

predominantly done by men to their female partners, permeate pornographic content and highlight the problem that exists on this topic for female adolescents (Armstrong, et al., 2017).

2.4 Pornography and Relationships

How people form relationships and how they act within these relationships is important in determining if they are healthy or not. Sexual activities are deemed to be a key factor in romantic relationships. Recent studies have found changes in sexual practices of young people due to the viewing of pornography. These are casual attitudes towards consent, an increase in unsafe sex and lack of care for their sexual partner (Massey, et al., 2020, MacNeel et. Al., 2021).

One important factor in a healthy sexual relationship is consent. In research conducted by MacNeel et. Al (2021), “one in five teenage boys are "neutral" on whether consent is always required for sexual activity” (p.24). This is a worrying statistic due to legislation relating to rape and the age of sexual consent, Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017. It coheres with other research such as Marston & Lewis (2014), who studied 130 sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds and found young men reported a lack of concern for consent stating that they would ask for anal sex and if consent was not given, they would engage in anal sex anyway, telling their partner that they ‘slipped’ while trying to engage in vaginal sex. The reality is that consent in porn videos is minimal (Willis, 2020). In a study carried out by Martellozzo et al., (2016), of those who had seen pornography, only 13% of women and 23% of men reported that pornography demonstrates how to give sexual consent. When asked how this was done, only 2% of both men and women combined could provide an answer. The remaining participants said they just “assumed” both partners wanted to do it (Martellozzo et al., 2016). Based on social learning, young people are copying what they see in these videos and therefore, disregard the importance of consent (Willis, 2020).

Another issue that relates to healthy relationships is sexual risk. Viewing pornography has been linked to sexual risk taking for both young males and young females, such as not using condoms, group sex and use of drugs and alcohol during sex (Mattebo et al. 2012, pg.46). Similarly, Australian researchers found that “young people may try performing common sexual acts seen in dominant hetero pornography such as: anal intercourse, facial ejaculation, sex with multiple partners and deep fellatio sex” (Armstrong, et al., 2017, pg.46). The exposure to pornography was a strong link that shapes these sexual practices and was also associated with unsafe sexual health practices such as not using condoms and unsafe anal and vaginal sex

(Armstrong, et al., 2017). This lack of care regarding safe sex can lead to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies (Mattebo et al. 2012). The research suggests that the repeated use of pornography for young people creates unhealthy sexual environments and unrealistic expectations of healthy sexual relationships.

The use of pornography in sexual relationships has an emotional impact for young people involved. Even the lack of concern regarding consent and practicing safe sex implies a lack of concern for a partner involved. In a study of young Croatians, viewing pornography was correlated to sexual pleasure being viewed as more important than caring about the other person (Sinkovic et al. 2012, pg. 639). This finding is mirrored in a study carried out with British 16–18-year-olds. Marston and Lewis (2014) found a significant gender difference in the attitudes held of partners: young males exhibited a lack of concern regarding certain sex acts being painful for their partners. The emotional impact of these things can have huge effects on body image, expectations and in turn, mental health for both young males and females (Armstrong, et al., 2017, pg.1086).

2.5 Where do young people access knowledge about sex?

It is important to note where young people get their information about sex to understand how their views and attitudes are created. Based on the previous findings of the impact of pornography, it is important to identify if pornography itself is one of the sources of sex education for young people. Many of the problems identified previously which are associated with pornography may be reduced with the correct education.

The internet and schools are the two primary areas where young people get information about sex. In a study carried out by Rothman & Adhia, (2018), it was discovered that "adolescents identified pornography as their primary source of education about sex—more than parents, siblings, peers, schools, or non-sexually-explicit material" (pg. 8). In Ireland, the most comprehensive nationally representative study of the 18–64 adult population, the Irish Study of Sexual Health, and Relationships (ISSHR), was carried out in 2004 (Layte et al., 2006). For all age groups, sex education in school was the most common source. In a more recent study of young people in Ireland, Nolan, and Smyth (2020) made some similar findings about where the Irish youths get information about sex. The cohort took part in a study over three years. "The internet was the second most cited source initially for those of age 17, at nearly 20 per cent, after education in school" (Nolan and Smyth, 2020, pg. 24). "A higher proportion of young males cited the internet as their main source, particularly at age 17, when nearly one

quarter cited this as their main source" (Nolan & Smyth, 2020, pg. 25). However, three years later, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of males from this cohort reported using the internet for pornography (compared to 13 per cent of females) (Nolan & Smyth, 2020). In terms of the impact of pornography on young females, this is a worrying statistic.

With schools and the internet being the two main sources of information for young people, it is important that the information from these places is relevant, informative, and helpful for young people to protect them. Evidently, schools must teach about the dangers of getting information from the internet, as this has an impact on their sexual health. If young people are not given knowledge about pornography, they are unlikely to be aware of the consequences and risks involved with it.

2.6 Sexual Health Education- Nationally and Internationally

As stated in the previous section, in Ireland, schools are the number one source of information for young people. As a result, it is critical to examine the quality of sex education that students get in school. Schools can potentially influence sexual behaviour in two ways: firstly, intentionally, through the provision of information and advice on sex as part of the school curriculum; and secondly, and more indirectly, through the way in which the school climate (that is, the nature of relationships between teachers and students and among students) and the network of peers can shape young people's sense of themselves and the behaviour in which they engage (Nolan & Smyth, 2020, pg.42).

Firstly, I will provide an examination of sex education in Ireland. The history of sex education in Irish school is a long and contested one, "Irish society education in general, and sex education in particular, was traditionally subsumed within a Catholic discourse designed to fulfil Catholic objectives" (Leane & Kiely, 2014, pg. 300). What was, and possibly still is, problematic with this, is the Catholic approach to sex education. It affirms sexual relations when they happen within marriage for the purpose of procreation only. Therefore, in the middle decades of the twentieth century, Catholic authorities thought it best that sexual references be kept oblique, in the interests of promoting chastity, and that consistent segregation of the sexes (Leane & Kiely, 2014). The life skills programme was introduced to schools in the 1970s, followed by the Child Abuse Prevention Programme 'Stay Safe' which slowly allowed for young people to become expressive and educated on issues relating to their sexual citizenship (Leane & Kiely, 2014).

Today in schools, the RSE programme has been a required component of the curriculum at primary and second levels since 1995, and in 2003 was integrated into the broader Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme (Department of Health, 2015, b). This programme has had very minor changes made to it in the last 26 years. The five areas of learning for Senior Cycle in SPHE are:

- Mental health
- Gender studies
- Substance use
- Relationships and sexuality
- Physical activity and nutrition

(Keating, et al., 2018)

Although relationships and sexuality are included in this, in a survey of students in Ireland, it was noted that "young people felt that there was little focus on pornography, sexuality and LGBTQ+ orientations in RSE" (Nolan & Smyth, 2020, pg.13), and young people themselves do not believe they are getting the right education when it comes to sex education with students saying their learning in RSE was too little, too late and not relevant to their needs, while all stakeholders said that RSE needed to be more than information about biological aspects of growing up and sexual activity (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2019). Although attempts have been made to make progress in the area such as the National Sexual Health Strategy for Ireland 2015–2020, with Goal 1 regarding Sexual health promotion, education and prevention, the current system gives no time to discussing pornography. Good sex education outcomes require good quality implementation. Although the potential benefits, and the many challenges, of sexual education are acknowledged; there is a need to explore what works, under what conditions, and with whom (Murphy & Nic Gabhainn, 2018).

In contrast to the Irish education system, The Netherlands has mandatory sex education required for all students beginning in preschool and teachers are required to learn about sex education programs as part of their qualification (European Union, 2013; The SAFE Project, 2006). Gender equity and sexual ethics frameworks underpin dominant models of sex education. Critical skills and personal empowerment are included in the program. Frameworks

support open discussions about love, pornography, sexuality, gender, health, boundaries, and pleasure (The SAFE Project, 2006).

In the US, in 2016, in response to concern about the impact of pornography on adolescents and the lack of education in schools, the Boston Public Health Commission partnered with a university researcher to develop a nine-session media literacy curriculum on pornography for adolescents (Rothman, et al., 2020). Rothman, et al., (2020) stated that

> "The goals of the program are to improve knowledge about sexually explicit media and sexual behaviour, to increase attitudes consistent with valuing sexual consent and nonaggression in dating relationships, and to increase awareness about media's power to promote social norms"
>
> (pg. 155).

Results of the research suggest that, on average, "youths who have participated in the program have experienced changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavioural intentions related to pornography" (Rothman, et al., 2020, pg.157).

These active changes that were made in the US correlate to the success of the sex education system in places like the Netherlands. The need for a similar change in Ireland within the education system to include more about the impact of pornography may be hugely beneficial for young people.

2.7 Conclusion

The feminist theoretical framework used within this literature research identifies issues of gender inequality and sexual violence against women associated with the use of pornography. This theory helps to understand the experience of young girls on a deeper level and emphasise their experiences and viewpoint on the issue. The majority of results in the literature review indicated that pornography is impacting women through sexual subordination, victimization, and degradation of women (Manning, 2007). It was highlighted that it is essential to understand the Irish education system and the lack of education that is given to the effects as well as the safe use of pornography. The importance of addressing the needs of young girls regarding their sexual health was also realised. These were helpful in refining the research and enhancing the exploration progress.

Overall, the key points from the literature reveal that online pornography can have a range of negative effects on knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about sex and gender; sexual practices;

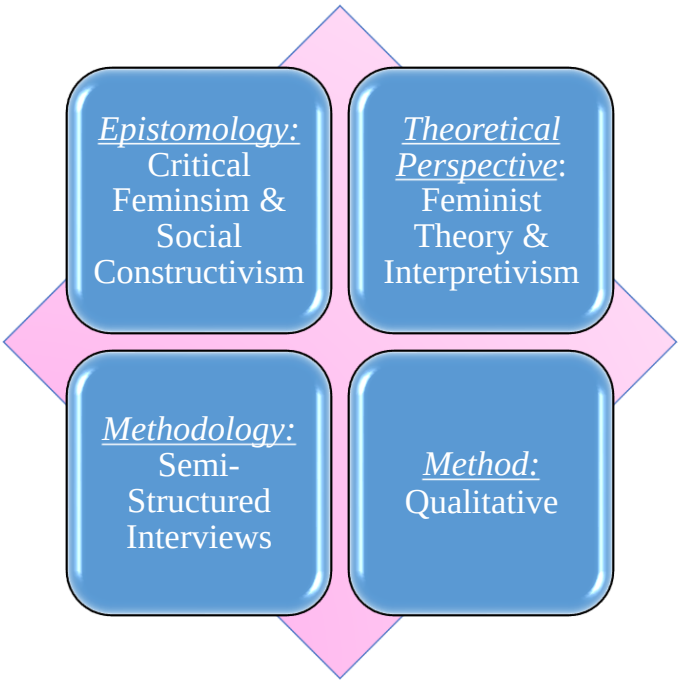
mental wellbeing and contributes to the risk of sexual aggression. The Irish sexual education system does not address these risks.

Chapter 3- Methodology:

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to offer an outline of the research process used for this study. The epistemological and theoretical perspectives that were adopted will be presented along with a discussion of the overall research methods used and the chosen method of data collection and analysis. Furthermore, it will discuss the researcher's involvement in community-based research and being a part of the CARL initiative. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the ethical considerations considered and challenged and limitation which were identified in undertaking this research.

Figure 1: The Elements of Research



3.2 Theoretical Perspective & Epistemology:

According to Bryman (2016) 'theory is important because it provides a backcloth and justification for the research that is being conducted. It also provides a framework within which social phenomena can be understood and the research findings can be interpreted'' (pg. 18). The theoretical perspective that was identified for this research was informed by the collaboration between the researcher and the Sexual Health Centre Cork (SHCC) through University College Cork's Community-Academic Research Link process (CARL). The SHCC called for research to be carried out to determine the impact of pornography on sexual health and healthy relationships for those experiencing it, in particular the effect of women. This dictated the theoretical perspective to be the feminist theory and interpretivism as this "provides a framework within which social phenomena can be understood and the research findings can be interpreted" (Bryman, 2016, p.18). The epistemological framework that I would use was also informed by this. "Epistemology is the theory of knowledge it relates to different forms and types of knowledge about the social world" (Carey, 2013, p.58). It is utilised in research as a way of understanding and learning about the social world. The epistemological perspectives that were applied to this research project were social constructivist as well as a critical feminist lens. Social constructivism, Crotty (2009) asserts, is where different people construct different meaning even in relation to the same phenomenon. Similarly, according to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) ''constructivist approaches to research have the intention of understanding the world of human experience suggesting that reality is socially constructed'' (pg. 1). This method was used to determine the female's various experiences and opinions of pornography in terms of education and to assess what each individual's social construction of the issue was. Feminist research is rooted in a critical lens which seeks out causal explanations but recognises that reality is experienced and interpreted by social actors (Archer, 2016) as well as reality reflecting unequal social, political, cultural, ethnic, gendered, racial, economic structures that evolve over time (Ross & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). The feminist element of this is significant as the research identifies the unequal experience of pornography by women in society.

3.3 Research Methods

3.3.1 Research Methodology

In undertaking this research, I employed primary research as I, the researcher, carried out the research and was responsible is responsible for gathering the data and conducting the analysis. Within this, I carried out qualitative research. The methodological approach

employed in this dissertation was from a qualitative perspective. Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences (Bryman, 2012). This method was used to gather in-depth insights into a problem identified by the Sexual Health Centre. Qualitative research was identified as the most appropriate method as this study aims to explore the impact of pornography on young females and develop an educational toolkit which can benefit young people.

3.3.2 Research Methods

Research methods are the procedures used to obtain data (Carey, 2013). Before beginning my research, a meeting was held between myself, my supervisor, and the community partner. A contract was agreed, timelines were set, supports were identified and the research topic was clarified.

To begin my research, I carried out a literature scope of the relevant and informative pieces that were readily available on my topic. The information gathered here allowed me to create an interview schedule which included possible interview questions. It also allowed me to use the information to generate a sample educational toolkit to bring with me to the interviews to allow for participants to share their opinions. I also had a meeting with my supervisor and my community partner in the Sexual Health Centre to receive their feedback on what should be included in the interviews and the toolkit.

I utilised interviews to retrieve qualitative results. DeJonckheere & Vaughn (2019), state qualitative research interviews are "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (pg. 6). The interviews that were carried out were semi-structured. This method uses a predetermined thematic framework. However, the questions are not set in order or in phrasing (Jamshed 2014). The rationale for carrying out semi-structured interviews is that they gave participants the opportunity to voice their thoughts, opinions and lived experiences on the issue. Using individual interviews enabled me to develop a closer relationship with participants and create a space in which they could discuss their experiences and emotions at a level beyond that of 'everyday' conversation. It allowed me to collect data, which was rich and in-depth, enabling a "complex detailed understanding of the issue." (Creswell 2013, p.48). Furthermore, it encouraged participants to be upfront about their genuine feelings regarding the toolkit

offered to them, implying that the feedback was comprehensive. Permission to conduct this research was granted by the community group and the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) of UCC. The process of gaining ethical approval first began in November, I submitted my first application and I received correspondence stating that in order to gain full ethical approval changes would have to be made to my application. A resubmission was made at the end of January and full ethical approval was granted in February.

3.4 Data collection and Analysis

3.4.1 Participants

The participants in the study are young females from the ages of 17-19 years old. This has been chosen as the age of sexual consent is 17 years, as stated in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, to reduce the risk of disclosure of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse. The participants were recruited through the Sexual Health Centre by advertising to groups they are involved with and through their Instagram page which is aimed mainly at young people. The advertisement included all relevant information about the research and what would be expected of participants. Young people were invited to participate but were informed that participation was voluntary and not obligatory. Informed consent was ascertained from those 18 years and older. For those aged 17, information was provided, and consent was obtained from parent/guardian and ascertained by the individuals in an assent form (seen in Appendix 1,2 and 3). Four participants were interviewed.

3.4.2 Data collection

As mentioned, data was collected by face-to-face interviews. Six interviews were carried out and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The interviews took place on the 31/03/2021. The interviews were recorded using a secure audio device. An example of some of the questions asked can be seen in the interview schedule in appendix 4.

A transcription of the audio from the audio device was carried out by the researcher. Data was transferred securely by carrying this out in a private space on a password encrypted computer. The recording was deleted once transcription was completed. All audio was deleted by the researcher. At the end of the study, the anonymised dataset will be held and set by the UCC's SREC data management policy for 10 years.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was carried out on the data collection. Thematic analysis provides a way in which to identify, analyse and report "patterns within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This involves recognizing and interpreting the common factors that shaped the experiences of participants and organizing this data into themes based on the similarities that arose. In ensuring reflexive practice, an awareness of research bias was identified such as the research being conducted by a female, interviewing young females. Continuous reflection was carried out using a reflective journal to avoid this bias throughout the research.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

In undertaking research that included such a sensitive subject matter and the possibility of participants who are under the age of eighteen years, there were several ethical issues that had to be considered.

One of the anticipated ethical issues considered in this project is that of the sensitive topic of the research. It was clearly outlined to participants that this research projects aims were to get opinions on pornography and is not about their sexual experiences. Participants were not asked specific questions about their sexual behaviours but instead there were broad questions to get a sense of their opinions. At the beginning of the data collection process, participants were informed that due to my professional studies and my obligations, I was to comply with the Children's First Act and The UCC Child Protection Policy so therefore any disclosures made, present or retrospectively were to be reported to TUSLA.

Another ethical issue that was taken into consideration is that of anonymity. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, pseudonyms will not be used. Instead, the participants were identified by numbers. Wider demographic detail was not questioned or mentioned at any stage of the interview process.

Ensuring informed consent and assent is also integral to the ethical conduct of primary research. Participants who are aged 18 or over gave informed consent to take part by signing a consent form. Under 18-year-olds were required to provide the consent of their parent/guardian and provided signature on an assent form. Participants had right to withdraw their consent before beginning the interview, during the interview and up to two weeks following the interview.

As mentioned before, these ethical issues were considered, and ethical approval was sought and granted from SREC.

3.6 Challenges and Limitations

As a primary researcher, I recognise that one of the challenges presented was finding participants to take part in the study. Due to the specific criteria for participation and the sensitive nature of the study, challenges arose in recruitment, meaning the sample size was small-scale. While the sample was smaller than originally anticipated, the discussions during interviews were lengthy and insightful.

The time limit for the completion of the dissertation, and the word limit were also challenging. Ethical approval was required in order to interview the young participants. Unfortunately, this took a long time to process, and adjustments had to be made to my application a number of times before being approved.

It is important to note that people under the age of 17 are engaged in watching pornography and sexual experiences (Rotheman et al, (2018); Awan et al. (2021). The ethical considerations prevented people under the age of consent (17) to take part in the study and therefore I was limited in having this meaningful conversation with people under this age, who may have provided further insight into the topic.

3.7 Creating an Educational Toolkit

One of the things that this research aimed to do was to create an educational tool that would help young people get information about pornography. I designed and developed this tool and brought it to the interviews to receive feedback on what worked well, what could be changed and if they thought it would be of benefit for young people.

1. In creating the draft tool, I began by carrying out a literature review (chapter 2). Within this, I investigated the sexual education programme in Ireland to identify any gaps in education. I then examined sexual education that exists in other parts of the world and if these are effective. The literature showed that Ireland does not mention pornography in any part of their sexual health course. Other countries, for example Australia, have incorporated education on pornography into their schools and the effectiveness has been hugely significant. Based on this literature review, I identified the most important things that needed to be included for the education of young people. I also created a document to support educators who may be working with young people who could utilise the tool.
2. I then looked at examples of similar education tools that have been developed for young people. I looked at education resources on the HSE website such as “Making The ‘Big Talk’ Many Small Talks,” and the current Social, Personal and Health Education

(SPHE) / Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) resources that are available from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) for inspiration on what is already accessible.

3. I used Microsoft word and Canva (graphic design platform) to create the working document which included the information that was identified in the literature review. The idea was to make this as relevant and attractive to young people as possible. I attempted to use short and concise statements under an applicable heading. The headings used were "what is pornography," "how can it affect you," "risks and impacts", "key facts" and "things to remember". The original draft which was presented at interviews can be seen in figure 2.
4. Following the feedback received during the interview process from the young females, possible changes to the resource were suggested. These are discussed in the "recommendation" section of chapter 5.

3.8 Conclusion:

This chapter discussed the methods used to carry out the research and provided an insight into how the educational toolkit was developed. The next chapter will discuss the themes and discuss the findings that arose from the interviews.

Figure 2- The Education Tool on Pornography



Chapter 4- Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the findings of this study. It focuses on the data from the semi structured interviews and their analysis. It presents the emerging themes from the research questions that I set out to explore. Direct quotations from the research participants have been used to give a sense of their lived experiences of pornography and education. This will be followed by a brief discussion, connecting the literature from chapter 2. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the participants information has been completely anonymised and they will be referred to by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4. The qualitative data was thematically analysed and grouped into the following categories:

1. Female sexuality: The stigma

2. Expectations

3. Consent

4. Education & the Toolkit

4.2 Theme 1- Female Sexuality: The Stigma

One dominant theme that came up in the interviews was that of the stigma that exists in relation to female sexuality. This was seen in response to the question of *"Does pornography impact males and females similarly or differently?"*.

All the participants recognised that a taboo exists when it comes to pornography and women.

"I think porn itself even… I feel like a girl would never talk about it… It's a taboo that you want to bring it up and guys wouldn't be afraid to bring it up, but girls would be like no oh my god that couldn't be me" (Participant 1).

"There's like a thing that you can't indulge in it if you're a woman, because it's not right. Even as a feminist, there's small talk in the back of my mind that like, maybe I can't watch. And even If I do, I definitely cannot talk about it with anyone at all. Even if I have questions or whatever. And that's the same for a lot of girls" (Participant 2).

The participants also mentioned how this stigma is prevalent in conversations. The responses were relevant in terms of the question asked, "Are young people comfortable with adults talking to them about pornography and sexual experiences?". There is even a complete lack of

conversation about the topic because adult can be uncomfortable with this topic. This can emphasise the stigma for young people and that topics like this should not be discussed.

> *"If you're doing a sex ed class, you bring it up, immediately, the entire room changes, it's not really tolerated to be discussed or mentioned… I think the fact that they try and keep it so hush and, on the DL (down low), it makes it rubs off on us in return that we don't want to speak about it because we don't even know the reaction we get before we even go into the conversation."* (Participant 2).

> *"Think for adults it's like shunned upon, you can't be talking about that, like how do you even know about that, you shouldn't know these things, they just talk amongst themselves then you're just talking to your friends who also have no idea what's going on" (Participant 1).*

Equally, when the participants were asked "What are young people's attitudes about pornography?" The response reinvokes the idea the taboo that exists for females in particular.

> *"There's a lot to with the taboo around girls having or, experiencing sexual pleasure in general, I think would be probably the main reason… this is never discussed with us so like its unknown" (Participant 3).*

In terms of female sexuality, the participants highlighted the significant problems they find with the lack of recognition given to this topic. There is no discussion, education, or insight into the topic of female sexuality at any stage of their lives. When discussing the reasons for why adolescent females watch pornography, participant 3 mentioned that:

> *"Probably just their own sexual pleasure, I guess. Yeah, I think probably the main reason. They usually have to like to do it in private though and not really supposed to talk about it because that's not really normal, is it?"*

Similarly, in terms of this stigma and when asked about the difference between males and females experience of pornography, the response mentioned that:

> *"People actually think that sex is literally just for males and its only boys who can enjoy sex because that's all we see in porn like. No one has ever told me that girls are actually allowed to enjoy sex too. It's just not talked about in the same way as boys" (participant 1).*

Discussion 1:

Two phrases that were repeated by the participants were "stigma" and "taboo" as well as the associations that come with these words. This was situated in a conversation around female sexuality, which the young people argued is something that is not explored or spoken about among young people. It was evident throughout the interviews that the participants felt as though, in their experiences, female sexuality is something that has been dismissed. The sense that female pleasure and satisfaction is something of a taboo subject is one which was identified by Crowley & Kitchin, (2008) and Fischer (2016) as something which has been an issue in Ireland throughout history. It is evident that this concept is not a new one and has yet to be resolved. Although women are no longer punished for exploring their sexual citizenship, they are still being stigmatised and neglected and this can be seen in the quotes above. What is interesting is the opinions that the participants had on male influence and male sexuality, and how 'normalised' watching porn and sexual experiences are for males individually and in groups, whereas the opposite is true for females.

4.3 Theme 2 – The Expectations

The females were asked *"What influence does pornography have on young people?".* The impact that pornography has on setting expectations for young people was extremely prevalent throughout all the interviews conducted.

4.3.1 Body Image

The impact that pornography can have on body image was a prevalent theme throughout all the interviews conducted. This appeared particularly of note in terms of female body image. Participant 3 mentioned that:

> *"a lot of it would be to do with both genders in view of the female body, shall we say. Like girls will see it and go, 'Oh, this is the body I should have. What boys will then see then is like, 'this is what I should desire".*

What is striking in this is the fact that females are identified as being the target of ideology from both females themselves and from their male counterparts. One of the participants also mentioned that *"For girls, it's always, do you know the ads that come up, it's always perfect, they are perfect. this is so bad for my own self esteem. girls just want to look like the ones in porn"* (Participant 3).

4.3.2 Expectations about Sex

The participants were also asked "*What impact does pornography have on young people's expectations about sexual experiences?".* In terms of the physical act of sex and sexual experiences, there was an overwhelming sense from participants that pornography had a negative impact on this.

> *"I think it impacts what to expect, like young people's expectations about how it should be, it definitely hypes it up. I mean, it's a staged perfect routine of like, what would happen if every single thing went completely right, you know, whereas that's not gonna happen in real life" (*Participant 2).

And similarly, another participant mentioned how there is an unrealistic expectation of how sex is meant to be experienced by saying:

> *"It sets unrealistic expectations for what sex would actually be like; need to Let them know that that's not real, not many people know that they kinda see it and expect something the exact same to happen" (participant 3).*

Discussion 2:

As mentioned throughout the literature that was reviewed by Armstrong et al. (2017) and Mattebo et al. (2012), pornography can have a major impact on young people's ideas of themselves. This was re-emphasised throughout the interviews. As mentioned by Armstrong et al. (2017) and similar to what Willis (2020) references, porn dictates what "perfect" is and what the ideal sexual fantasy in a relationship looks like. This was a comparable discovery within the interviews and was hugely significant in terms of the impact pornography has on intimate relationships and sexual experiences. Following the COVID-19 Pandemic and social isolation, there has been a rising use of pornography as a replacement of the lack of physical intimate relationships (Awan et al. 2021). As the use of pornography increases, so too does the negative effects that are associated with it. What is significant is that young people tend to compare themselves and their experiences to what they see in these videos because "*everybody's perfect, well the ideal perfect"* (participant 4). This creates unrealistic expectations for themselves because "*they just think that other people want it*" (participant 4) and they must "*be this way and look like that, to get any form of attention from a man or another person"* (participant 2). It was also highlighted that young people do not understand that this is not reality as mentioned that *"it's scary because like people don't know that this is not real"* (participant 2) which

is relevant in terms of the education of young people, which will be discussed below. Feelings of embarrassment, cluelessness and insecurity were all identified by participants regarding pornography. This ought to be acknowledged for young people to feel assured in themselves and their sexual experiences. What is realised from these findings is that young people are heavily influenced by the media that they consume and although positive messages can be passed on through what content that is watched, so can negative ones.

4.4 Theme 3- Consent

The issue of consent was highlighted also and the concern that young people think you do not need to ask for consent because it is not seen in pornography, is substantial. However, due to the time limits on the interviews, this topic was not explored in-depth. This was seen when the young people were answering the question of *"what influence does pornography have on young people?"* and was also mentioned in response to *"what role does pornography play in sex education?"*. The participants identified a lack of consent seen in pornography and that there is not a lot of education around this.

> *"Watched that video about tea? It was about being able to say no and that's all I've really been told about consent… I've actually never heard of people saying no in porn really. It's like that doesn't exist*" (participant 4).

When talking about the ideas of consent, it was mentioned that:

> *"Its like if you say yes to one thing, you're saying, yes, everything you get me, that's not honestly the reality of us. So that part is important because we don't see much consent in porn."* (Participant 2).

Discussion 3:

Consent is an ongoing theme that was relevant throughout the interviews and is very topical when talking about the impacts of pornography on young people. What the participants mentioned about the "*lack of consent in porn*" (Participant 1), is echoed in much of the literature that exists Martellozzo, (2016), whose study identified that a minority of young people could identify consent in pornography. Additionally, it is seen in Marsten & Lewis (2014), whose study discovered that young people do not see consent as important because they did not see it in pornography. This relates to what the young people mentioned about

expectations also and can be an indicator of why there is no expectation for consent such as one participant saying, "*I wouldn't really expect to explicitly say yes"* (Participant 3). What is also important is young people mentioning that *"if you say yes to one thing, you say yes to everything*". Young people are under an impression that saying yes once means you must engage in whatever their partner is requesting. This highlights what Fritz et al. (2020) says about the lived experience of women as "obeying objects" (pg.46). This is a worrying outcome for young people as the objectification of females can emphasises the problem of sexual exploitation. It also, again, relates to expectations that young people have about sex. Young people consent to sex and expect in return, that it will be a good experience for them. However, this is not always the case and at times, the sexual act that was being consented to, is not going to be good or pleasurable (MacNeela et al, 2014). This can furthermore be considered in terms of the lack of education that is received about female sexuality for young women, as expressed by Hansen (2020). What is additionally interesting from the interviews, and in terms of consent, is that none of the participants mentioned sexual violence against women. This was a dominant subject throughout the literature and was one of the major impacts of pornography identified. In analysing this however, a lack of consent is a link to sexual violence. Sexual activity without consent is rape (Willis, 2020). Rape is an act of sexual violence and sexual exploitation. In the interviews, consent was referred to in terms of agreeing to sexual experiences and if consent was visible in pornography. However, consent is relevant in watching pornography. Being forced to watch pornography or any explicit material is also a form of sexual assault. It is interesting that when the topic of consent was brought up by young people, that this link was not explored or realised.

4.5 Theme 4- Education

The findings from this research indicate that there is a lack of education around pornography for young people. The interviews showed that young people are not appropriately educated on the topic of pornography. When asked where young people access information about sex, participant 1 stated "*online, Google and videos*", and similarly participant 2 suggested *"... in this day and age, most of it would come from exposure on the internet"*.

School was mentioned as a source of information but many of the participants suggested that this was not valuable, inconsistent, and outdated.

> *"Even in school, it's poorly laid out. Like, they brought someone into us in third year, and it was still really childish... more like sex prevention. It wasn't 'this is*

safe,' but, 'this is why you shouldn't do it.' Which isn't like a safe way to do it." (Participant 3).

"I would like to say school, but they don't get a lot from school, I would say they find out for themselves from friends or online." (Participant 4).

"Mmm online. you're not going to ask your parents, you're not going to ask a teacher, you would ask a friend but that's an opinion only." (Participant 1).

Evidently, there is a negligence to the importance of educating young people on pornography in schools and it is apparent that young people do not feel comfortable in approaching adults to ask them for information about this either.

"*It's not even that we are uncomfortable, it's that adults tend to get uncomfortable by that discussion. And that rubs off on us in return … if you're doing a sex ed class, you bring it up immediately, the entire room changes, it's not really tolerated to be discussed or mentioned." (Participant 2).*

4.5.1: The Education Tool

The participants were asked "What the benefits would be of having an educational tool?". Participants determined that this would be beneficial for young people, agreeing that it would be a good start to "*destigmatise it*" (Participant 1).

"It would have normalised, and it would remove the awkwardness...I mean that becomes the more normal thing." (Participant 2).

"It would probably give wider education about sex in general and engaging in sexual relationships with people... it would be to a conversation, then you know about people understanding that it's not real, like porn is not reality which people think it is and shall we say that people understand what sexual relationship is actually. Because it's hard to know the difference (Participant 3).

When asked about the toolkit presented in the interviews, all participants agreed that this was an effective resource as a starting point for their education.

"Yeah, it's really good, it's pretty clear and has all the information you need really" (Participant 2).

"I really like the colours and stuff that's used, it's quite attractive for people my age. It's not boring at least" (Participant 3).

Some participants gave suggestions on how the resource could be improved. These were helpful in determining how to address the problems identified in previous themes. One recommended that there be more information provided around the risks associated with pornography because these are quite concerning.

> *"It hasn't kinda clicked in their (young people's) heads that they could get pregnant, or something is maybe including more risks, more mental risks around self-esteem and stuff."* This participant also suggested *"to put pictures in back round you walk up and see them" (Participant 1).*

> *"Maybe include something about the joy of watching videos… you can explain that more regularly and comprehensively… And that takes away that fear that you have to be exactly like these people that you watch" (Participant 4).*

Participants also made suggestions as to how this resource could be accessed because, as young people, school is not the only place they get their education. This resource should be accessible online. Furthermore, information should be accessible online from a trustworthy, reliable source. Ensuring that all bases are covered (school, online, home), is important to educate young people.

> *"We (young people) need to be able to ask questions and not feel judged or even somewhere to go to ask these questions in private with the correct information" (Participant 2)*

> *"Yeah, if there were a proper online resource...if you want to ask a question get an actual answer not dancing around the question you can look here or there you know. You have an actual proper resource you can look at, instead of just looking it up either indulging porn for answers so because no one wants to say the words out loud or speakers, you know" (Participant 1)*

Discussion 4:

The answers provided by the participants were similar to the literature about sexual education with agreement that the main source of sex education comes from online and school (Rothman & Adhia, 2018 and Nolan & Smyth, 2020). It is clear from the interviews that pornography is not contextualised within a comprehensive sexual health education programme for young people, in particular young females. Given the lack of pathways to diverse sexual health programmes for young people in formal and informal education and recreation spaces, there is

no reliable source for them to access advice, information or to ask questions about pornography. There is also nothing like the resource that was shown to them in the interviews, which was recognised as being beneficial. This was parallel to the findings of Nolan and Smyth (2020) who identified that young people do not think that they are getting adequate sex education in school. The participants mentioned that young people try to find answers to their questions through watching pornography, "*if people have a question … they look at porn or a site for it" (Participant 2)*. Unfortunately, as emphasised by participants, young people do not feel like they have access to alternative options or choices when it comes to being sexually educated.

Participants were not supportive of the sex education that is taking place in schools, "*someone came in and spoke and put videos on that was about it" (Participant 1).* This was the most that any of the participants recalled from their school experiences. As highlighted by one participant, *"it's kind of the stuff that's always been there, you know, decades ago. It's completely outdated. They basically say don't do it" (Participant 3),* which highlighted the problematic sexual education that young people are getting. This study supports the evidence-based literature of Leane & Kiely (2014) that Catholic teachings are still at play today, with young people still being educated on sexual abstinence rather than sexual safety. Young people are deserving of knowledge that is related to sexual experiences and pornography. As importantly put by one participant, *"It's gonna happen either way. So, it may as well just teach us the correct and safe things and the way to do it" (Participant 2).* This correlates to what Murphy & Nic Gabhainn (2018) identified as a barrier to education in schools, this being that teachers are not educated on how to educate on sex, and what conditions are effective for this.

The tool proved useful in the discussion with participants about education. It is evident that there is a lack of a resource similar that can be easily provided to young people. Young people want to be educated properly when it comes to sex, so creating methods that are relevant and appropriate is important. Considering that the participants were firm in their ascertains that they need to be educated in a proper manner, is significant in terms of providing them with relevant and reliable information.

4.6 Conclusion

The four themes that arose from the interviews make for very interesting discussion. It was found that pornography impacts on female sexuality, expectations of body image and sex and effects consent. What ties these together is the absence of education of pornography in schools.

The final chapter of this study will now contain a number of recommendations based on the findings of the research which were outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 5- Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide concluding comments arising from the research that was carried out and will provide the answers to the research questions posed in the introduction chapter. Several recommendations, as well as potential future topics for research in this area will be presented. The piece will finish with a reflective piece that addresses my experience of carrying out this research.

5.2 Concluding Comments

Research Questions and Answers

1. *What is the impact of pornography on adolescent females, and does it affect their sexual health, intimate relationships, sexual experiences, and consent among adolescence influenced by pornography?*

   The relationship between pornography and young adolescent females is often a negative one. Between the literature that was reviewed and the feedback from the interviews, the impact of pornography means that intimate relationships are becoming casual with a lack of care for one's partner. Sexual experiences often include acts of violence as well as high expectations that are not always reached. Low self-esteem is caused due to comparisons and body image with sexual consent often being ignored, and female sexual health disregarded.

2. *Where do young people get their sex education and if this is in schools, does the education system in Ireland address the topic of pornography. If so, how does it do so?*

   Young people get their sex education predominantly online but also in school. The research identifies that young people will seek out answers to any of the questions they have in relation to sex online or they will watch pornography videos to elicit answers. The Irish education system is lacking in addressing the topic of pornography in the RSE curriculum.

3. *Would a toolkit for practice containing information on the impact of pornography be beneficial for both young people and practitioners engaging young females in sexual health education?*

A toolkit for practice that contains information on pornography (including the impact, the risks, etc) would be beneficial for both young people and practitioners. It is evident that introducing a resource like this to young people is helpful to engage young people and effectively create education on the topic. It also would help to destigmatise and normalise these types of conversations between young people and adults.

This research was hugely insightful. Through gathering young people's perspectives about their opinions of the impact of pornography and the educational input they receive regarding pornography, an understanding of pornography's impact on young females was gained in the research findings. This dissertation will contribute to the development of knowledge about sexual health, female youth, and pornography by deepening an understanding about the association between them and how they impact on each other. It is evident from both the literature reviewed and the interviews carried out that although engaging with pornography is normal at a time of adolescence when used in a healthy manner, pornography can have a negative impact on young people. The messages that female adolescence receive from pornography illicit ideas of poor body image, unrealistic expectations of sexual experiences, a lack of understanding about consent and emphasise a stigma regarding female sexuality. The following will make conclusions based on the research questions posed.

Young people are not being educated enough about the dangers associated with pornography such as unrealistic expectations about body image and sex, sexual violence, and lack of consent. They are not being educated on safe methods on how to include pornography into one's lifestyle or how it effects female sexuality. Furthermore, based on the research, young people themselves wanting to be educated in a safe and reliable manner, that is easily accessible and relevant to them. Instead, they are turning to the internet and pornography itself to answer their questions about sex. Young people deserve an education that makes them feel safe in their own bodies and empowers them to learn and talk about pornography, sexuality, sex, and relationships in a healthy way.

The conclusions that have been drawn from these findings will now inform the following recommendations.

5.3 Recommendations

- ***Sex Education for Young People***

  As mentioned consistently throughout this piece of research, education is a vital component in the hopes of addressing the impacts of pornography. Sex education should respect young people's right to complete and honest information, and therefore sex education should treat sexual development as a normal, natural part of human development. It is recommended that young people be educated on pornography in schools to a greater degree that provides them with information regarding the risks, the impacts and safety advice on pornography use, as well as a more comprehensive and continuous sexual education programme. The participants that I interviewed were articulate, autonomous young women who expressed a willingness to engage. Their representation showed that not only do young people require education but also, they want it. Additionally, sex education programs could benefit from acknowledging how consent communication is modelled in pornography and by teaching about pornography literacy. There is a need for clear and adequate policy in schools that plans, updates, supports, and monitors Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in a meaningful way.

- ***Education for the Educators***

  As well as educating young people, it recommended that teachers and other relevant adults in the lives of young people are provided with the correct information and guidance on how to effectively educate young people on sex. An understanding of what is age appropriate and relevant should be understood by those educating. The educational resource, such as the one provided, with the reminders and assistance of the document in Figure 1 would be helpful for teachers, youth workers, community workers, social workers, and parents. As well as this, supporting parents to set age-appropriate boundaries for their children in the type of social media and mass media content they are able and allowed to access is also recommended. Moreover, information regarding peer abuse, particularly in regard to sexual violence, should be considered in practice guidelines that are being reviewed and updated, such as Children First. Furthermore, it is suggested that educators be made aware of relevant legislation, including Coco's Law, (commenced in 2021), which relates to the distribution of intimate images and incidents of online harassment (Burne, 2020). Those delivering

education should be trained and supported in this process, in order to successfully help young people.

- ***A Source for Information***

  Based on the feedback received from young people in the interviews, it is recommended that an information source would become available that could be accessed online. The participants from the interviews identified that young people get information online and that a place that they could go to that is reliable and anonymous would be helpful for them instead of using Google and having lots of different conflicting answers for them. Utilising platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to guide young people to this reliable information is recommended for those providing information on sexual health.

- ***The Pornography Education Tool***

  Based on the messages received from the participants, it is clear that a resource providing information about the impacts of pornography would be of benefit to young people's educational development. Including young people in the creation of this tool was helpful in engaging in a conversation about pornography and education, and also highlighted the benefits of the resource. Centring adolescents in the response empowers them and supports them to take responsibility and aid their progress. It is recommended that the tool that was created and shown in interviews seen in figure 2 (Chapter 3), continue to be developed and finalised with the input of graphic designers, professionals, and young people. This tool should then be accessible to young people and utilised by educators.

- ***Future Research***

  This has been a hugely insightful piece of research. However, there is room for further research to be carried out. It is recommended that future research could incorporate the perspective of males of a similar age group to the female counterparts in this piece. Furthermore, it would be interesting to determine the ideas of members of the LGBTQ+ on how pornography is affecting their experiences of sexuality. There is also scope to discover what the perspectives are of professionals such as teachers, youth workers, social workers, community workers etc and what they think would be beneficial in terms of educating young people.

Research Reflection

As a social work student, throughout my time in classes and on placement, a countless array of issues have been presented to me- all of which I would have loved to do research on. However, after being introduced to the idea of a CARL project and looking through the available projects, the one with the Sexual Health Centre really resonated with me after an experience I had on my placement in TUSLA of the young boy choking the young girl. Social work is primarily about working with people and after my first year on the MSW being online, what better way to end a master's in social work and begin my working life in social work than engaging in primary research with a community group and having some bit of social interaction.

The idea of doing a project based around pornography is not something that I originally thought about, but reflecting on this at the end of my dissertation, I wonder why I needed to question it, when it is so topical, so relevant, and so normal in society now. This reinforced the idea of stigma that came through in the interviews. It has been quite a liberating experience in terms of this. I found it interesting when people would ask me what I was doing my dissertation on to see their reactions. A lot of people found it fascinating, and were intrigued, some had a look of disgust at the topic, and others referred to avoidance and moved on. Reflecting on these interactions alone were interesting for me but have added to the confidence I have on the subject and in my work.

The research journey was nothing short of challenging. After meeting with Martin (SHCC) and Fiachra, and deciding on the topic, I applied for my ethical approval in October. Although important, truthfully, I became slightly frustrated with the process not realising the amount of information and detail that was needed. This caused me so much anxiety because I did not hear back from the committee until January and my research was not approved. After adjusting and re-submitting the application, I finally got my approval in February, in the middle of trying to complete all my other assignments. It was fair to say, the dissertation went on the back burner at this stage.

I felt a lot of pressure throughout this time, especially when I heard my peers were making so much progress. At many times, I felt so far behind. The experience left me doubting myself academically and I was overwhelmed at the thought of completing a master's dissertation. I found it hard to recover from these feelings and would go through a lot of panic phases before I would actually get through the work. However, I came to accept that not every day was going to be really productive and on certain days I had to accept it wasn't a day for my dissertation

and I would try again the next day. I battled many feelings of resentment towards myself for procrastinating but with support from my housemates, friends, family, and peers, I recognised we are all in a very unusual situation and we are doing the best we can. I learned that it is okay to take breaks and do things that bring me joy and satisfaction. It really is all about balance.

These challenges thought me to adapt my way of working. I stopped comparing myself and my work to my peers because we do not all work in the same way. I learned the skills of effective time keeping and planning/organising to a way that suits me. I developed my research skills and proactive use of my time with my supervisor and my link with the SHCC. I aim to carry these skills with me into future practice.

As I look back after completing this process, I realise that I have grown personally and professionally. I am now more confident in where I am going and even more self-assured in the values, skills, and knowledge that I will be bringing on this exciting journey into social work practice. Professionally, I have grown stronger and wiser, and I feel more confident in knowing the resilience I have demonstrated from the beginning of this process will scaffold me in my future career as a social worker professionally. Going forward, I hope my findings will spark interest for additional research to be carried out on the topic to ensure effective sexual education for young people and to reduce the risks associate with pornography use. It would be an honour if I could even be a part of this.

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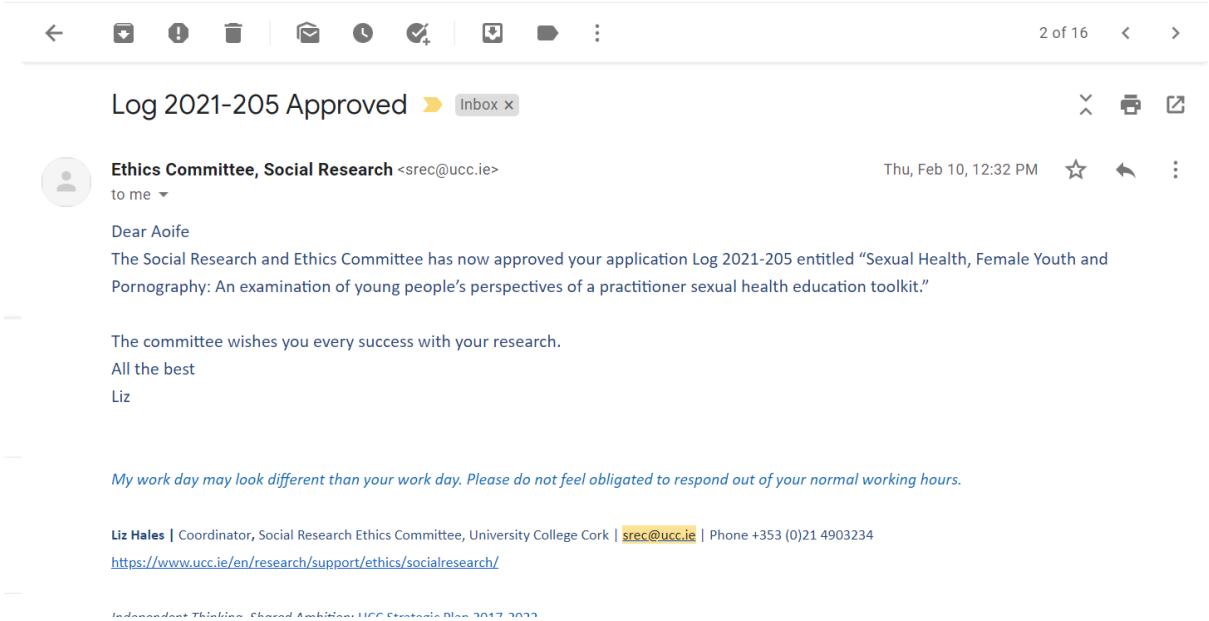
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Appendices

Appendix A- Ethical Approval



2 of 16

Log 2021-205 Approved Inbox ×

Ethics Committee, Social Research <srec@ucc.ie> Thu, Feb 10, 12:32 PM

to me

Dear Aoife

The Social Research and Ethics Committee has now approved your application Log 2021-205 entitled "Sexual Health, Female Youth and Pornography: An examination of young people's perspectives of a practitioner sexual health education toolkit."

The committee wishes you every success with your research.

All the best

Liz

My work day may look different than your work day. Please do not feel obligated to respond out of your normal working hours.

Liz Hales | Coordinator, Social Research Ethics Committee, University College Cork | srec@ucc.ie | Phone +353 (0)21 4903234

https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/ethics/socialresearch/

Appendix B- Parent/Guardian Information Sheet and Consent Form (for those under 18)

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Information Sheet

for Parents/Guardians of Children & Young People Participating in the UCC CARL Project with the Sexual Health Centre Cork.

This study is a Community Academic Research Links (CARL) project which in collaboration with the Sexual Health Centre Cork. The Sexual Health Centre provides up-to-date information, support, and education in the areas of sexual health, wellbeing, sexuality, and healthy relationships.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of pornography on young females and their sexual health and research the possible benefits that an educational toolkit could have for them.

What will the study involve? The study involves collecting data from children aged 17-19 years, on a number of questions about pornography, sexual health and consent. The research aims to gather young people's perspectives about educational input around pornography as I want to increase participation of young people in matters that concern them. The interviewer **will not** ask participants to talk about their sexual experiences. Participants will be invited to give their opinions on the topic of pornography, sexual health and education and consent. Participants will also be asked for feedback on an educational document on the topic that will be shown during the interview. We invite your child's participation in an interview on 31/03/2022 at the CDYS Fermoy. The interviews will be co-facilitated by myself, the researcher, and my supervisor. The interview will be conducted with children/young people which will take approximately 40 minutes.

Why has your child been asked to take part? Your child has been asked to take part in the research because they attend youth group, which is involved with the Sexual Health Centre, which was invited and has agreed to participate in the project. Your child is invited to take part in this research so that they have an opportunity to share their ideas and opinions on the

topic in order to contribute to development of an educational toolkit that will benefit young females.

Do I or my child have to take part? No, participation is voluntary. You will be asked to sign a consent form for yourself and on behalf of your child. Your child will also be asked to sign an assent form. If you do not give permission, your child cannot participate. Both you and your child have to agree to proceed with participating in the study. You and your child have the option of withdrawing from the study, even if you have agreed to participate. Once your child has completed their involvement, they can still withdraw up until 2 weeks after the completion of the project (anticipated project completion date is April/2022).

Will you and your child's participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes, absolutely! We are collecting data for research purposes only, so we gather only a minimum of personal data (name and email address or telephone number) to record consent, and it will be stored securely and separately from the interview data collected. You and your child's personal data will be processed and handled in accordance with European legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679. Access to personal data will be highly restricted (project researchers only), and no attempt will be made to link personal data to interview responses. Ten years after the completion of the project, your personal data and the research data will be erased. Your and your child's answers to the questions on the survey will be tagged with an anonymous identifier made up of letters and numbers.

What will happen to the information you and your child give? The responses from your child will become part of a securely stored database, along with data from other children. Because the answers that your child gives will be anonymised, there will be no way to tell who provided the information. The research team will use this data for a Master of Social Work Dissertation. Furthermore, the results will be presented to students in the Master of Social Work (MSW) year 1 and 2 and also additional professionals who will be attending a research conference. The research will also be published on the UCC CARL Website and presented to the Sexual Health Centre Cork.

What will happen to the results? It is expected that results of this study will be published in a project report for UCC as well as on the project website. After the project has finished, the anonymised data may be made available to other researchers, but only once we have ensured that it is not possible to identify any individual person from it.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? We don't envisage any negative consequences for you or your child in taking part.

What if there is a problem? We do not anticipate any upset or distress. However, at the end of their participation, we will discuss with the children how they found the experience and how they are feeling. If they feel distressed, we will talk to their teacher. If you have any issues, you should contact the UCC research team (details below). We can provide contact

information for support services. If any child discloses any information about sexual abuse, presently or retrospectively, in accordance with the Children First Act 2015, the national guidance for the protection and welfare of children, and the UCC Child Protection Policy, I will be obliged to repost the concern to Tusla.
If at any time during the study I feel that your child or any other young person's safety or wellbeing is being negatively affected, I will suspend the research with that young person until the issue is addressed. If this issue arises, the young person's parent/guardian will be informed, and the young person and family will both be offered support.
If you decide that you wish to withdraw consent for participation in this research, please notify the researcher or any other member of the research team as soon as possible.

Who has reviewed this study? Approval has been given by the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee, and all members of the research team visiting schools have been Garda vetted.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact:

Aoife O'Carroll (Social Work Student): 117360233@umail.ucc.ie
Fiachra O'Suilleabhain (Academic Supervisor UCC): fiachra.osuilleabhain@ucc.ie

If you agree to allow your child(ren) to take part in the study, please fill out the attached consent form. If you have more than one child participating, you will be able to add their names at the bottom of the consent form

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Parent / Guardian Consent Form

I…… give permission for my child(ren) to participate in Sexual Health, Female Youth and Pornography: An examination of young people's perspectives of a practitioner sexual health education toolkit.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I understand that my child will be participating voluntarily.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured, because personal data is collected only to record consent and is stored separately to data collected from children, with no attempt made to link them. My child's data will have an anonymous identifier made up of letters and numbers.

I understand that my child can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, whether before it starts or while they are participating, and we do not have to give any reasons for this.

I understand that the data and any personal details collected are for research and teaching purposes only within the scope of the project My personal details will be processed and handled in accordance with European legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679. I have the right to access these data, rectify them, limit, or oppose their processing and to request deletion of my personal data.

I understand that my child can withdraw permission to use the data at any time up until 2 weeks after the completion of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted. If my child changes their mind and wishes to withdraw after a report has been published, their material cannot be removed from the reports, but the research team will refrain from using it in any future work or analysis. I understand that after an anonymous survey that it will not be possible for my child to withdraw and that it may be practically impossible to remove their data from a focus group with others. I understand that after ten years all data associated with the study will be destroyed.

I understand that disguised extracts (e.g., name / location won't be used) and data from my child's interview may be quoted in presentations and subsequent publications (journal article, book chapter, student thesis, newspaper article, social media publicity about the study's findings, etc.), if I give permission below (please tick):

I confirm that I am a legal decision-maker[4] for the child(ren) listed below) ☐

I consent to my child(ren) participating in this study[4] ☐

I do not consent to my child(ren) participating in this study ☐

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (CAPS): _____

Child 1's name (CAPS): _____

Appendix C- Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participants under 18

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Information Sheet

for Children & Young People's Participating in UCC CARL Project with the Sexual Health Centre Cork

This study is a Community Academic Research Links (CARL) project which in collaboration with the Sexual Health Centre Cork. The Sexual Health Centre provides up-to-date information, support, and education in the areas of sexual health, wellbeing, sexuality, and healthy relationships.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of pornography on young females and their sexual health and research the possible benefits that an educational toolkit could have for them.

What will the study involve? A researcher from our team at UCC will conduct an interview on 31/03/2022 with children/young people which will take approximately 40 minutes. The interviewer **will not** ask you to talk about your sexual experiences. Participants will be invited to give their opinions on the topic of pornography, sexual health and education and consent. Participants will also be asked for feedback on an educational document on the topic that will be shown during the interview.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because you are a member of the youth group which the Sexual Health Centre facilitates. You are invited to take part to share your ideas and opinions on the topic and to help develop an educational toolkit that will benefit young females. The research aims to gather young people's perspectives about educational input around pornography and I want to increase participation of young people in matters that concern them.

Do you have to take part? No, participation is voluntary. You will be asked to sign a form which explains what the study is about and what will happen to the information you provide.

You can also stop participating in the study, even if you have already agreed, and you do not have to give a reason. After you have finished, you can still change your mind up until 2 weeks after your interview.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes, absolutely! Your answers will be anonymised, which means that no one will know that they are yours. Your name and any other identifying information about you **will not** be used.

What will happen to the information you give? Your information will become part of a securely stored database with the data from your group and other children and young people! The research team will use this data to determine the effects of pornography on young people and use the information to develop an educational toolkit to help young people understand these effects.

What will happen to the results? The results will be presented in a Research Project for a masters in UCC. We also hope to talk about the study's findings at conferences / teaching and to publish the findings on the CARL Website.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? We don't expect any negative consequences for you in taking part. However, if any concerns do arise from my perspective or from my supervisor, we are obliged to contact TUSLA-The Child and Family Agency to express our concerns as we are Mandated Reporters in line with the Children First Act.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the process, we will talk with you to see how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you feel upset, you should talk to your teacher or contact the researcher below.

Who has reviewed this study? Approval has been given by the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee, and all members of the research team visiting schools have been Garda vetted.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact:

Aoife O'Carroll (Social Work Student): 117360233@umail.ucc.ie
Fiachra O'Suilleabhain (Academic Supervisor UCC): fiachra.osuilleabhain@ucc.ie

If you would like to take part in the study, please fill in the form on the next page!

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Child Assent Form

I…… [name in CAPS] agree to take part in the research study.

I understand what the study is about, and it has been clearly explained to me.

I am participating voluntarily.

I undertake to maintain the confidentiality of the interview.

It's fine if I drop out of the study, and I do not have to give any reasons for this.

I understand that the information collected are for research and teaching purposes only for the project. I have the right to see these data, change them, or ask that they be deleted and not used.

- I can withdraw permission to use the data from the study at any time up until 2 weeks after the interview is completed, in which case the material will be deleted.
- For a focus group, I understand that no guarantees can be offered to withdraw my information as it may be hard to pick out my voice on the audio.
- I understand that with anonymised survey's it will not be possible to delete my data if I change my mind.
- If I change my mind and want to withdraw after a report has been published, my material cannot be removed from the reports, but the research team will not use it in any future work or analysis.

I understand that nobody will know it's me in the results or report because my name or any other identifying information will not be linked to my survey answers. I understand that my parent(s) / legal guardian(s) must also consent before I can take part in the study.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

☐ **Yes, I consent** to take part in this study.

☐ **No, I do not** consent to take part in this study.

Appendix D- Information Sheet and Consent for Participants Over 18



Information Sheet (interviews, over 18)

Thank you for considering participating in this research project. The purpose of this document is to explain to you what the work is about and what your participation would involve, to enable you to make an informed choice.

This study is a Community Academic Research Links (CARL) project which in collaboration with the Sexual Health Centre Cork. The Sexual Health Centre provides up-to-date information, support, and education in the areas of sexual health, wellbeing, sexuality, and healthy relationships. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of pornography on young females and aims to research and develop an educational toolkit for young people and explore the possible benefits of this. The interviewer **will** **not** ask participants to talk about their sexual experiences. The research aims to gather young people's perspectives about educational input around pornography as I want to increase participation of young people in matters that concern them. Participants will be invited to give their opinions on the topic of pornography, sexual health, sex education and consent. Participants will also be asked for feedback on an educational document on the topic that will be shown during the interview. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview with myself, the researcher, and a member of the Sexual Health Centre. This interview will be audio recorded and is expected to take 30-40 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no obligation to participate, and should you choose to do so, you can refuse to answer specific questions, or decide to withdraw from the interview. Once the interview has been concluded, you can choose to withdraw at any time in the subsequent two weeks.

All of the information you provide will be kept confidential and anonymous, and will be available only to myself the researcher, my supervisor and my research partner.

The only exception is where information is disclosed which indicates that there is a serious risk to you or to others. If at any time during the study I feel that you or any other young person's safety or wellbeing is being negatively affected, I will suspend the research with that young person until the issue is addressed. If this issue arises, the young person's will be offered appropriate support.

Once the interview is completed, the recording will immediately be transferred to a safe UCC data storage platform and wiped from the recording device. The interview will then be transcribed by the researcher, and all identifying information will be removed. Once this is done, the recording will also be deleted and only the anonymized transcript will remain. This will be stored on a University College Cork supported cloud storage platform Microsoft OneDrive. The data will be stored for minimum of ten years.

The information you provide will contribute to a Master Dissertation, research publications and a research conference presentation.

We do not anticipate any negative outcomes from participating in this study and we do not intend to cause any distress to participants. Some of the topics broached in the interview, however, are of a sensitive and personal nature. should you wish to do so, you can choose not to answer questions or to bring the interview to an end at any time. At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. Should you experience distress arising from the interview, the contact details for support services provided below may be of assistance.

Cork Sexual Health Centre; Telephone 021 427 6676.

It is also advised to contact your GP.

This study has obtained ethical approval from the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any queries about this research, you can contact me at 117360233@umail.ucc.ie or my supervisor at fiachra.osuilleabhain@ucc.ie.

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Sample Research Consent Form

I……agree to participate in "Sexual Health, Female Youth and Pornography: An examination of young people's perspectives of a practitioner sexual health education toolkit" research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Aoife to be audio-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview (e.g., my name / location won't be used) may be quoted in presentations and publications (e.g. article, book chapter, student thesis, social media publicity of the study's findings, etc.), if I give permission below (please tick one box):

I agree to participate in this study ☐

I do not agree to participate in this study ☐

Signed: ……. Date

PRINT NAME: …….

Appendix E- Interview Schedule

1. Introduction: Introduce myself and my co-chair. I will then explain to the participants what the topic on this study involves. (The influence that pornography has on young females and the investigation of education on the topic)

I will advise on what I expect from participants and what they can expect of me. I will then confirm that participation is voluntary and confirm that the participant gave consent.

2. Discussion: The interview will then begin. I will include the following questions in the interview:

- Where and how do young people/females access information about sex?
- What role does pornography play in sex education?
- What influence does pornography have on young people?
- Does pornography impact males and females similarly or differently?
- What impact does pornography have on young people's expectations about sexual experiences?
- What are young people's attitudes about pornography?
- Are young people comfortable with adults talking to them about pornography and sexual experiences?
- What would help young people to talk to adults about pornography and sexual experiences?
- What should adults consider when talking to young people about pornography? What needs to be considered?
- What key things would you expect/want to see in an educational toolkit?
- What would young people be worried about having in an educational toolkit?
- What would be the benefits of having this educational tool?

3. Conclusion: Debrief- ask how they are feeling and if any problems arose. Provide support if necessary. Thank participant for taking part. Conclude interview.