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The Initial Psychometric Assessment of a Measure of Problematic Pornography Use

Ethan Marshall, MA
Holly Miller, PhD
Sam Houston State University

A large body of literature exists indicating that pornography use is associated with sexually coercive behaviors for both the general population and sexual offenders (Kingston, Fedoroff, Curry, & Bradford, 2008; DeKeseredy & Corsianos, 2016), however, this research has done little beyond providing evidence of correlation. Additionally, researchers have typically been limited in their operationalization of pornography use. A recent systematic review by Marshall and Miller (2019) highlighted this finding; the majority of research on pornography use does not include a definition of pornography and focuses on the frequency and/or type of pornography use only. This is problematic for several reasons.

The first issue with the limited measurement of pornography use is the consistent finding that other aspects of pornography use, such as the investment the user has in their porn habit, are more strongly related to sexually coercive behaviors than frequency of use (Marshall, Miller, & Bouffard, 2017, 2018). This research also indicated that pornography use may be best represented as a latent trait comprised of multiple constructs, such as type, investment, and frequency (Marshall et al., 2018). As for type of pornography, it is usually operationalized by asking respondents if they view violent or rape pornography (Foubert, Brosi, & Bannon, 2011; Kingston et al., 2008). Content analyses of pornography suggest, however, that the majority of pornography labeled as “mainstream” contains acts of physical and verbal coercion (Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, Sun, & Liberman, 2010). This means that dichotomous items assessing whether an individual uses “violent” or “rape” pornography may exclude those respondents who use mainstream pornography containing aggression. Finally, some evidence indicates sexual scripts adopted from pornography use may influence sexually coercive behaviors (Marshall et al., 2018; Tomaszewska & Krahe, 2018). According to researchers, sexual scripts are ideas and attitudes about what sexual behavior is pleasurable, desirable, and acceptable.

Though a number of instruments assessing various aspects of pornography use have been designed, these tools are outdated, poorly supported by sound psychometric properties, and typically are focused on one specific aspect of pornography use, such as addiction. Researchers have yet to design a comprehensive and psychometrically sound assessment of pornography use. The purpose of the current study is to present results from the initial psychometric assessment of 267 items that were written for possible inclusion in a comprehensive pornography use assessment measure. A sample of 943 college students was recruited for participation in the study, and along with completion of the pornography use items, additional measures of sexual behavior, pornography use, rape myth acceptance, and sexually coercive behavior were gathered. Exploratory factor analysis, reliability, and bivariate correlations were conducted in order to assess the psychometric quality of the items.

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Initial results of the exploratory factor analysis support a five-factor solution consisting of 211 of the 267 items. These five factors comprise illegal/problematic pornography use (50 items; factor loadings = 0.34-0.79), use of aggressive or violent pornography (51 items; factor loadings 0.39-0.76), compulsive pornography use (50 items; factor loadings = 0.32-0.72), sexual scripts (44 items; factor analysis = 0.33-0.80), and negative emotions associated with use (16 items; factor loadings = 0.42-0.81). As for reliability, all five factors demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.94 - 0.97$). Finally, correlations among the five scales developed from the factor analysis and the additional measures included in the study were calculated. Results indicated that the scales of the instrument were correlated with each other ($p < .01$). Additionally, the scales were significantly correlated with measures of rape myth acceptance ($p < .01$), pornography use ($p < .01$), and sexually coercive behaviors ($p < .01$). Overall, the findings of this study indicate that 211 of the developed items represented five distinct constructs that, with further assessment and validation, could comprise a comprehensive assessment of pornography use.

Ethan A. Marshall, M.A., is a doctoral student at Sam Houston State University who is currently pursuing his PhD in Criminal Justice and Criminology. His research interests include scale development and sexual deviance, specifically pertaining to female sexual offenders and the relationship between pornography and sexual coercion. During his graduate career, he has presented at the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers conference, the American Society of Criminology conference, and the American Criminal Justice Society conference, as well as published research in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *The Journal of Sexual Aggression*, and *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*.

Dr. Holly A. Miller is a Professor and Associate Dean of Academic Programs in the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University. She received her B.A. from Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota and her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology - with Forensic emphasis - from Florida State University in 1999. Dr. Miller conducts research, teaches, and practices in the areas of malingered mental illness, risk and treatment need, and sexual offenders. As a specialist in forensic assessment and offender evaluation, Dr. Miller has developed two published measures. The Miller Forensic Assessment of Symptoms Test (M-FAST) is a brief structured interview that provides a screening assessment of malingered mental illness. The Inventory of Offender Risk, Needs, and Strengths (IORNS) is a measure developed to assess variables that are related to recidivism for offender treatment and management purposes.