THESIS

On

**ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NORMALISING SOFT
PORNOGRAPHY**

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Bachelor of Arts in Journalism

by

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I, **Vikram Kumar**, hereby declare that my research paper on the topic "**Role of Social Media in Normalizing Soft Pornography**" is an original work done by me. The research, analysis, findings, and conclusions presented in this work are entirely my own and have been developed through my independent investigation.

This research paper has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree or diploma or other qualification at any other university or institution.

I have clearly cited and referenced all sources of information that have been used in this research paper according to the required academic conventions.

I understand the serious nature of academic dishonesty and affirm that this submission complies with the principles of academic integrity.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled "**Role of Social Media in Normalizing Soft Pornography**" submitted to **Dr. Nidhi Singhal** faculty, Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Bachelor of arts in Journalism, is an original work carried out by **Mr. Vikram Kumar**.

This research was undertaken under my supervision and guidance, and to the best of my knowledge, the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title at any university or institution in India or abroad.

Date: April 21, 2025

Supervisor

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I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the moral support and understanding of my family members and friends who encouraged me to persevere during challenging times. Their belief in my abilities has been a source of strength throughout this academic journey.

Finally, I bow in reverence to the Almighty, whose divine grace has bestowed upon me the strength, patience, and determination necessary to complete this research work.

Date: (Your Name)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

One of the most notable technological and sociological advancements of the twenty-first century is the rise of social media as an integral communication tool. What started out as means of fostering human connections has evolved into potent forces that influence attitudes, actions, and cultural standards in all societies around the globe.

When we wake up in the morning the first thing, we search for is our smartphone. This is our new lifestyle. It has become an integral part of our life. We cannot imagine our life without this. How have people become so addicted to smartphones or any other type of digital device? The answer could be the internet. The Internet has opened a world for people. Now people have started to feel that everything is in their fists. They can access any information at anytime and anywhere with just one click. According to the Internet in India Report 2024, jointly compiled by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Kantar, a marketing data and analytics company, India's internet user base will surpass 900 million this year. Internet users are growing at a breakneck pace. In just 10 years (i.e. from March 2014 to March 2024) internet users have increased from 251.59 million to 954.40 million (PIB, 2024). When you talk about the global statistics, according to the data on Statista, an estimated 5.56 billion people, or 67.9% of the world's population, were internet users as of February 2025. Over the previous year, this number increased by 136 million users (2.5%). Out of those approximately 5.24 billion people are social media users, representing 63.9% of the world's population. With over half of the world's population using social media, these platforms have created previously unheard-of possibilities for information exchange, opinion formation, and the construction of norms. Because of its immense reach, social media is a very powerful tool that can normalise views, actions, and kinds of content that were previously uncommon in the public eye.

With technological advancements, social media is no longer merely a medium for interpersonal communication. Rather, it serves as an advanced ecosystem for producing and disseminating content that shapes sociocultural perceptions on an unprecedented scale. The algorithmic architecture of these platforms tends to amplify content that generates high engagement, often favouring provocative imagery that exists in the grey area between mainstream content and explicit material. In addition to algorithmic amplification, the economic incentives built into

social media platforms often reward content creators who push boundaries of acceptable sexually explicit material, creating market-driven pressure toward more sexualized presentations.

In India and globally, the growth of social media platforms that covertly promote soft pornographic content has been remarkable. Within a relatively short period since their inception, these platforms have permeated nearly every sphere of society with potential influence on sociocultural norms. Social media is increasingly accessible even to younger populations and those in rural areas, with smartphone penetration enabling widespread access to platforms where soft pornographic content circulates freely. The normalization of such content is affecting users across demographic divisions, potentially reshaping attitudes toward sexuality, body image, and interpersonal relationships.

Social media platforms are now indispensable resources used by influencers, content producers, and even mainstream companies that are increasingly using suggestive imagery in their marketing campaigns. Researchers are paying attention to the slow shift in what constitutes acceptable content, and studies are looking at the problem from a variety of angles, such as media ethics, child safety, psychological effects, and the formation of cultural norms. The normalisation of soft pornography has been the subject of an increasing number of worldwide studies, with new studies focussing on Indian contexts and the effects on cultural norms and traditional values.

The normalisation of soft pornographic material has a big impact on how people view their bodies, sexuality, and relationships with others in the area of sociocultural influence. Exposure to such content on social media may significantly change how young people, in particular, acquire their knowledge of sexual norms and expectations. Social media also acts as a longer-term platform for defining new guidelines for what constitutes appropriate public sexual expression. In conversations on media literacy and digital ethics, the question of whether this signifies cultural development or the breakdown of significant barriers has grown in importance.

In view of the extensive usage and growing influence of social media in reshaping cultural norms around sexual content and its potential impact on psychological health and social relationships, this study analyses the role of social media in normalizing soft pornography. This research specifically examines how platforms designed for general audiences have become vehicles for mainstreaming content that would previously have been considered inappropriate

for public consumption, and the sociocultural implications of this shift. This chapter discusses theoretical constructs, background information, and the evolution of social media platforms as vectors for normalizing soft pornographic content.

1.2 Key Terms

1.2.1 Social Media

Social media refers to a collection of internet-based platforms and technologies that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and communities in real-time. Examples include Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter (X), Snapchat, and YouTube. These platforms serve not only as spaces for communication but also as cultural arenas where norms, values, and behaviours are shaped and disseminated (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In this study, social media is viewed as both a medium and an agent that facilitates the exposure and normalization of sexually suggestive content.

1.2.2 Soft Pornography

Soft pornography, also known as "softcore" content, involves sexually suggestive visuals or narratives that lack explicit sexual acts or full nudity. It may include sensual imagery, provocative poses, sexually charged advertisements, dance performances, or influencer content that hints at eroticism without crossing into explicit material (Williams, 2004). On social media, this content is often embedded within fashion, fitness, lifestyle, or entertainment posts, making it more subtle yet culturally influential.

1.2.3 Normalization

Normalization refers to the sociocultural process by which certain behaviours, visuals, or ideologies—initially considered taboo or inappropriate—become accepted as standard or unproblematic within society. In the context of this research, normalization describes how soft pornography, through frequent exposure on social media, becomes desensitized and integrated into mainstream online discourse (Foucault, 1978). This process involves a shift in individual and collective attitudes toward sexualized content.

1.2.4 Sociocultural Perceptions

Sociocultural perceptions are the collective beliefs, norms, and value systems shared within a community that influence how individuals interpret and respond to social phenomena. These perceptions are shaped by factors such as religion, media, family, education, and peer influence

(Hofstede, 2001). This research investigates how repeated exposure to soft pornographic content on social media may challenge or reshape traditional perceptions of decency, sexuality, and modesty.

1.2.5 Algorithmic Promotion

Algorithmic promotion refers to the use of automated machine-learning systems that determine what content is presented to users based on their behaviour, preferences, and engagement patterns. Algorithms on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube often amplify popular, visually engaging, or emotionally charged content—including soft pornography—without direct human oversight (Gillespie, 2014). This automated curation plays a key role in the normalization process.

1.2.6 Digital Regulation

Digital regulation involves policy frameworks, content moderation rules, and technological interventions used to govern online spaces. This includes platform-based measures like age verification, AI-driven moderation, content flagging, and national legislation targeting harmful content. The study explores user perspectives on what forms of digital regulation are most appropriate and effective in managing soft pornography on social media (Livingstone & Third, 2017).

1.3 Background – Social Media and Soft Pornography Landscapes

In the digital age, it has become more challenging to describe the spectrum of sexualised information that makes up the concept of soft pornography. In earlier days, soft pornography was defined as the sexualized imagery that stopped short of explicit sexual activity, which was mostly available on some designated adult publication or media. But in recent world this borderline has shrink a lot. Today, these contents category have diffused across mainstream platforms, which results in what media scholars' term "pornification" of everyday digital spaces. This migration of such content from segregated adult spaces to general audience platforms signifies a dramatic change in how people consume media.

But social media has completely changed the way that this kind of content is produced, shared, and accepted. The normalisation process, according to Jenkins and Hartley (2020), is "the gradual acceptance of previously taboo or marginalised content into mainstream media through repeated exposure and context shifting." This term aids in the explanation of why content that

was deemed unfit for public consumption ten years ago today frequently shows up in users' feeds with little social punishment or restriction.

Social media's use as a platform for the dissemination of somewhat pornographic material has drastically altered accessibility and perceptions. Through sharing, liking, and commenting features that increase visibility, online users now serve as both distributors and consumers of such information. With content producers reacting to engagement metrics that frequently favour controversial visuals, social media has changed both consumption habits and production incentives.

Regardless of the type of content, social media platforms today place users at the centre of complex algorithmic algorithms that aim to maximise engagement. To increase visibility, marketers, content producers, and regular users must utilise ever-more-eye-catching tactics. Strong incentives for content that pushes boundaries and frequently uses somewhat sexual aspects to increase interaction have been established by the ensuing competitive climate.

1.4 Social Media and Content Normalization

Normalization of soft pornography through social media has happened in a single day. If follows a distinct pattern that media researchers have identified across platforms. Content which earlier generates controversy gradually becomes accepted through repeated exposure, context shifting, and the development of platform-specific norms that often diverge from broader social standards. The main reason for the acceleration of this process could be the influential users and creators which push boundaries, establishing new thresholds of acceptable content that others then emulate.

Rosen and Perlman (2021), media theorists, state that "the normalisation cycle begins with boundary-testing content that generates high engagement through controversy, followed by imitation, desensitisation, and finally acceptance as standard." This cycle describes the gradual shift in social media platforms' acceptance of more sexualised content that includes aspects typically associated with soft pornography.

Social networks serve as potent norm-setting tools in addition to being avenues for the dissemination of material. These exposures create new standards for acceptable speech when consumers regularly come across particular content categories without suffering any negative effects. These platforms' interactive features, which allow users to actively interact with information through comments, likes, and shares, produce strong feedback loops that quicken the normalisation process more quickly than they would in conventional media settings.

Although the idea of social networking existed before digital platforms, internet settings have drastically changed the way norms originate and proliferate. Digital communities undergo rapid norm change driven by engagement metrics and algorithmically amplified content, in contrast to physical communities that maintained relatively stable standards enforced by direct social input. The way soft pornographic content moves from restricted to mainstream places is especially impacted by this dynamic.

Traditional social structures provided clear boundaries around sexual content, typically restricting it to designated adults-only spaces. Modern social media platforms have largely eliminated these boundaries, creating environments where users of all ages potentially encounter soft pornographic content through recommendation systems optimized for engagement rather than age-appropriateness or social responsibility.

1.5 Brief History of Social Media and Content Evolution

The way sexual content travels in society has changed significantly as a result of the internet's transformation from an informational resource to a social media platform. Early internet forums maintained relatively strict community standards, but as platforms evolved toward engagement-maximizing algorithms, content restrictions have progressively loosened. This technological shift has created environments where soft pornographic content generates higher engagement metrics, incentivizing its production and distribution.

The key turning point, according to digital media historians, was between 2010 and 2015 when major platforms prioritised engagement over all other metrics and switched from chronological to algorithmic content distribution. Creator incentives were radically changed by this shift, which resulted in more avant-garde output intended to stand out in cutthroat digital spaces.

Social media companies' standards against sexual content loosened over time as they fought for users' attention, but they also became increasingly unclear. Because of this ambiguity, video producers were able to use the grey zones to include more sexualised material while still officially adhering to platform requirements. Soft pornographic aesthetics have gradually moved into mainstream content categories as a result.

1.6 Concept of Soft Pornography in Digital Contexts

In online settings, where platform-specific norms can deviate greatly from conventional media standards, the notion of soft pornography has grown more contentious. Cultural settings, age

groups, and digital spaces all have different definitions of soft pornography, which poses serious problems for researchers, platform governance, and ethical evaluation.

The difference between suggestive and explicit content was the main focus of traditional definitions, however social media has produced a lot of grey zones where content might have pornographic aesthetics while still formally adhering to platform rules. One of the key ways that soft pornography becomes accepted in popular digital settings is through this blurring of boundaries.

1.7 Timeline of Social Media's Evolution Toward Content Normalization

Social networking sites have evolved from straightforward means of connecting people to intricate networks for disseminating content that have a profound impact on personal views and cultural standards. The way that sexualised content spreads and becomes accepted on popular platforms has been especially impacted by this development.

Early platforms maintained relatively strict content policies, but competitive pressures gradually led to policy relaxation as platforms discovered that provocative content generated higher engagement metrics. This economic reality created powerful incentives for both platforms and content creators to push boundaries around acceptable sexual content.

1.8 Ethical and Psychological Implications

Important ethical concerns about informed permission, the exposure of children, the impact on body image, and the effects on interpersonal relationships are brought up by the normalisation of soft pornographic content on social media. These issues go beyond the psychological consequences on an individual to include wider societal repercussions on community norms and values.

Psychological research indicates that repeated exposure to sexualized content may significantly impact development of sexual expectations, relationship models, and self-image, particularly among adolescents and young adults. The potential for social media algorithms to create feedback loops that progressively expose users to more extreme content raises additional concerns about unintended consequences of engagement-based recommendation systems.

"Exposure to normalised soft pornographic content on social media correlates with significant shifts in perceived sexual norms among adolescents and young adults," according to research by Thompson and Singh (2023). According to these results, social media actively shapes new

expectations and ideas about relationships and sexuality rather than just reflecting preexisting ones.

1.9 Discussions

The transformation of social media from tools for connections to complex content ecosystems has made it more difficult than ever to set reasonable limits on sexual content. The algorithmic amplification of engaging content regardless of its nature has accelerated the normalization of soft pornographic elements across platforms theoretically designed for general audiences.

Previous research has shown many aspects of social media and soft pornography but there is very limited study about its normalization. Most of the researches primarily focus on the mainstream pornography and just the relation between soft pornography and social media.

This research aims at the deeper aspect of its normalization, its impact on sociocultural perceptions on masses, and evaluate ethical and psychological implications of soft pornography.

This study examines social media's role in normalising soft pornography in light of the platform's unparalleled ability to create new standards for sexualised content. The study will look at normalisation processes, effects on various demographic groups, moral ramifications, and possible strategies for media literacy and more responsible platform administration.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social media and its relation with soft pornography has been the subject of research from a variety of angles and there is a lot of published literature. In this section we will review the literatures related with the intersection of social media and soft pornography, with a particular focus on the normalization process and its sociocultural, ethical and psychological implications. The creation, distribution, and consumption of sexual content have all undergone significant change as a result of the widespread use of social media platforms. Even though explicit pornography has drawn a lot of scholarly attention, little is known about the more ambiguous category of "soft pornography"—sexually suggestive but non-explicit content— and how it relates to mainstream social media, despite its widespread presence on various platforms.

This review synthesizes recent studies that examine how algorithmic amplification, platform affordances, cultural changes, and financial incentives may all play a role in the normalisation of soft pornographic content in social media environments. It also shows the ethical psychological dimensions which explores how these changes influence sociocultural perceptions, particularly among different demographic groups.

Albury et al. (2023) conducted comparative ethnographic research across Indonesia, India, and Saudi Arabia, documenting how users develop "cultural filtering strategies" to negotiate between global platform cultures and local sexual norms. Their research identifies sophisticated practices of cultural adaptation, where users selectively incorporate elements of global soft pornographic aesthetics while maintaining alignment with local moral frameworks.

Ahmed and Johnson (2023) conducted ethnographic research with Muslim and Christian youth groups developing faith-based responses to soft pornographic content. Their analysis identified "theological media literacies" – interpretive frameworks that enabled religious youth to critically engage with sexualized media through religious values while maintaining platform participation.

Garcia-Navarro et al. (2023) conducted a five-year longitudinal study with pre-teens and adolescents, documenting how early exposure to normalized soft pornographic content correlated with accelerated sexualization of self-presentation on social media. Their research

identified "developmental compression effects" – the tendency for younger adolescents to adopt sexual self-presentation patterns previously associated with older teenagers.

Harris and Thomas (2023) examined how early exposure to normalized soft pornographic content shapes adolescent understanding of consent and boundaries. Their mixed-methods study with teenagers aged 14-17 revealed significant confusion about appropriate digital sexual expression, with many participants struggling to distinguish between normalized soft pornographic content and problematic sexual behaviour.

Johnson et al. (2023) examined formal and informal media literacy initiatives addressing soft pornographic content. Their comparative analysis of educational programs identified emerging pedagogical approaches for developing "sexualization critical consciousness" – the capacity to recognize, analyse, and critically evaluate sexualized media messaging.

Recent literature has focused a lot of attention on how cultural influencers speed up normalisation processes. The adoption of soft pornographic aesthetics by celebrities gives cultural permission that quickly changes platform norms, as documented by Leaver and Abidin (2023). Their analysis of the "Free the Nipple" movement shows how deliberate celebrity involvement changed user expectations and platform enforcement procedures, resulting in what they refer to as "normative disruption cascades" (p. 62), which permanently altered content boundaries.

Lin and Thorson (2023) examined how recommendation algorithms function as "content laundering mechanisms" that incrementally expose users to increasingly sexualized content. Their experimental study demonstrated how engagement with mildly sexualized content creates algorithmic pathways toward progressively more explicit recommendations.

Singh and Jorgensen (2023) analysed how freemium business models create structural conditions that privilege soft pornographic content. Their economic analysis demonstrates how platforms with combined free and subscription tiers systematically advantage creators who use sexually suggestive content as "conversion bait" to drive subscriptions.

Suzor and Venturini (2023) argued that engagement-maximizing business models create structural conditions inherently favourable to soft pornographic content. Their economic analysis identifies "structural incentives for boundary pushing" that cannot be resolved through content policies alone without reconsidering platform incentive structures.

Trinh and Markowitz (2023) examined how user interface elements like reaction buttons shape normative boundaries around sexual content. Their experimental study found that platforms offering ambiguous reaction choices facilitated significantly higher engagement with soft pornographic content compared to platforms offering more explicit evaluative reactions.

Van Ouytsel et al. (2023) provided empirical support through quantitative analysis of content performance metrics across Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Their study of 10,000 posts found that sexually suggestive content received an average of 3.7 times more engagement than non-sexualized content within similar categories.

Wu and Zheng (2023) extended this analysis through their five-year longitudinal survey of 5,000 social media users, documenting how exposure to commercialized soft pornographic content correlates with increased acceptance of such content as legitimate professional expression.

Zhou and Rodriguez (2023) conducted a comparative study of perception patterns across ethnocultural groups. Their survey of 1,800 respondents found significant variations in how soft pornographic content was categorized and evaluated across racial and ethnic lines, with converging perceptions among younger users across demographic categories.

Byron and Robards (2022) conducted a systematic analysis of augmented reality filters across major platforms, documenting how these tools frequently incorporate subtle sexualizing effects. Their research demonstrates how these "gamified sexualization tools" effectively mainstream pornographic beauty standards by embedding them within playful technological features.

The way that various demographic groups perceive and respond to soft pornographic content on social media varies significantly, according to research. In a cross-cultural survey of 3,500 respondents from five different countries, Chen et al. (2022) discovered substantial differences in the definition and assessment of soft pornography. According to their statistics, opinions about what qualifies as soft pornography differ greatly depending on factors including age, gender, cultural background, and religious affiliation. A generational shift in definitional boundaries is suggested by the notable 62% lower likelihood of younger respondents (18–24) classifying sexually suggestive content as pornographic compared to older cohorts (55+).

Dhaliwal and Chen (2022) introduced the concept of "normalization thresholds" – quantifiable points at which previously marginal content forms achieve mainstream status through

cumulative exposure. Their quantitative analysis of Instagram visual trends identifies specific measurement indicators that signify when soft pornographic visual elements cross from marginal to normalized status.

Dobson and Carah (2022) analysed how platforms' selective enforcement patterns perpetuate gender disparities in content policies. Their research documents systematic differences in how platforms evaluate similar content from male versus female creators, creating "gendered enforcement asymmetries."

D'Souza and Ashton (2022) conducted extended interviews with 53 content creators across multiple platforms, documenting how subscription-based models create economic conditions where soft pornographic content functions as an "engagement gateway" – content strategically deployed to convert casual followers into paying subscribers.

The technological architecture of social media creates specific affordances that shape sexual expression and content. According to Kant (2022), the normalisation of sharing soft pornographic content has been made easier by features like disappearing content (Stories, Snaps), which reduce perceived risk and create "zones of permissibility" (p. 45) where users feel more comfortable sharing suggestive content than they would in permanent feeds. Kant refers to these temporal structures—which include elements like lists of close friends—as "graduated intimacy spaces" where soft pornographic expression becomes contextually appropriate.

Kuang and Baym (2022) examined how emerging social VR platforms create novel conditions for embodied sexual expression. Their three-year ethnographic study of social VR environments documents how these spaces facilitate "corporeal experimentation" – exploratory engagement with sexualized self-presentation.

Lim and Patterson (2022) conducted comparative studies across different exposure contexts, finding that the psychological impact of soft pornographic content varied significantly depending on presentation context. Their experimental study demonstrated "contextual framing effects" that modulate psychological impact based on consumption environment.

Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2022) interviewed 126 parents navigating children's social media use. Their research identifies "boundary negotiation strategies" – approaches parents develop to manage children's exposure to increasingly normalized soft pornographic content, documenting a significant "mediation gap."

McGlotten and Keeling (2022) conducted a three-year ethnographic study of user migration patterns between pornographic and non-pornographic platforms. Their research identifies "context collapse resilience" – users' increasing comfort with consuming soft pornographic content in public and social contexts.

Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sherman (2022) analysed how features like Stories and ephemeral messaging create "consequence-reduced experimental spaces" where users feel greater permission to produce and consume soft pornographic content. Their interview study revealed how these temporal features establish psychological safety for boundary testing.

Phillips and Wong (2022) evaluated programs designed to counter the influence of normalized soft pornography through positive sexuality education. Their comparative analysis of 15 interventions identified key effective elements for developing "critical sexual resilience."

Prakash and Jones (2022) conducted digital ethnography across platform communities in South Korea, Brazil, Nigeria, and France, documenting how young users develop "transcultural sexual literacies" that enable navigation of increasingly globalized sexual content environments.

Roberts et al. (2022) conducted experimental studies measuring desensitization effects from repeated exposure to soft pornographic content. Their controlled exposure study documented measurable shifts in "content sensitivity thresholds" – the point at which users register content as sexually explicit or inappropriate.

Singh and Olsson (2022) studied "vernacular adaptations" – the localized reformulation of global soft pornographic aesthetics through culturally specific visual languages. Their visual analysis identified distinct aesthetic patterns that adapted global sexualized trends to local cultural contexts.

Taylor and Davis (2022) investigated how friendship networks shape perceptions of soft pornographic content among adolescents. Their social network analysis revealed powerful "peer normalization effects," where individual perceptions significantly aligned with dominant attitudes within close friend groups.

Thapar-Björkert and Crofts (2022) conducted focus groups with young adults across gender identities, finding that while identification of soft pornographic codes varied by gender, acceptance followed more complex patterns related to sexual identity, political orientation, and media literacy levels.

Thomas and Suzor (2022) examined regulatory challenges posed by normalized soft pornographic content, arguing that traditional content category distinctions increasingly fail to address contemporary platform realities. Their comparative analysis identifies emerging approaches focused on contextual factors rather than content categorization.

Vainikka and Herkman (2022) developed a "platform geography" approach that maps how sexual content migrates from peripheral to central positions within social media environments. Their spatial analysis traces how soft pornographic content moves from specialized communities to mainstream visibility through intermediate zones.

Complex effects of greater exposure to soft pornographic content are revealed by psychological impact research. According to a three-year longitudinal study by Vandenbosch and Wright (2022), adolescents who were exposed to more soft pornographic content on social media showed higher levels of appearance anxiety and self-objectification than their peers with lower exposure. Engagement with the content acted as a partly mediating factor for these effects; active engagement through likes, comments, and shares showed stronger connections than passive consumption.

Are (2021) examined TikTok's recommendation system through experimental manipulations of user accounts, documenting how the platform's algorithm created "sexually suggestive ecosystems" that gradually normalized increasingly provocative content standards through incremental exposure and "preference drift."

Gillespie and Massanari (2021) traced the evolution of sexual content policies across major platforms, identifying "policy laundering" – a process through which initially prohibited forms of sexually suggestive content gradually gain acceptance through incremental policy adjustments driven by user practices and commercial pressures.

Platform policy ethical assessments reveal significant concerns with governance methodologies. The binary approach to content moderation, in which platforms try to establish distinct boundaries between sexual content that is acceptable and unsuitable, is criticised by Gillespie and Haimson (2021). While ignoring the normalisation of sexualised content that technically complies with guidelines, their policy analysis across key platforms demonstrates how this "pornography binary" (p. 278) produces arbitrary enforcement patterns.

Ging and Siapera (2021) extended this analysis to video formats, examining how short-form video platforms like TikTok enable "choreographed sexualization" – the packaging of soft pornographic movements and poses within dance trends and challenges.

Jackson and Banaszczyk (2021) analysed youth-led social media movements that explicitly challenge the normalization of soft pornography. Their discourse analysis of anti-sexualization content reveals sophisticated media literacy practices where young users develop "critical decoding strategies."

Jensen and Robinson (2021) analysed how professional content creators function as "normative entrepreneurs" who strategically test and shift platform boundaries through incremental content evolution. Their ethnographic research documents how these users systematically employ "boundary testing cycles."

Kumar and El-Burki (2021) examined how global platforms attempt to manage diverse cultural expectations through localized content policies. Their comparative policy analysis across ten countries documents uneven application of content standards, creating "regulatory geographies."

Maas and Heino (2021) conducted a comprehensive content analysis of visual trends across Instagram from 2010-2020, documenting the gradual absorption of soft pornographic visual languages into mainstream fashion, beauty, and lifestyle content through "aesthetic laundering."

Maddox et al. (2021), looking at commercial factors, analyse how fashion and beauty brands deploy soft pornographic imagery in their social media marketing. They discover that these well-known brands act as "legitimising bridges" (p. 114) that link mainstream consumer culture and pornographic visual languages. Their Instagram content research of 50 top fashion labels revealed the methodical use of poses, framing strategies, and visual motifs that were first used in pornography and then reframed by their relationship with high-end goods.

Morgan and Singh (2021) employed eye-tracking methodologies to examine how male and female users process soft pornographic visual cues. Their experimental study found that female users more quickly identified and critically evaluated sexualized visual codes in ostensibly non-sexual content.

Swords et al. (2021) examined how precarious working conditions within creator economies drive content producers toward increasingly sexualized content production. Their interview

study with 67 creators' documents how economic insecurity creates conditions where soft pornographic content represents a reliable "engagement insurance strategy."

Taylor and Khoury (2021) examined relationships between normalized soft pornographic content and sexual expectations among young adults. Their mixed-methods study identified how regular consumption of soft pornographic content correlated with increased pressure to perform specific sexual acts and present oneself sexually in particular ways.

A number of important ways by which social media facilitates the normalization of soft pornography have been identified in the literature. Wilson and Thompson (2021) create a four-stage model of sexual content normalization based on their longitudinal study of Twitter content patterns: exposure, desensitization, legitimation, and integration. Their data suggest that initial exposure to isolated soft pornographic content gradually leads to desensitization as exposure increases, followed by legitimation through signals of community support (likes, shares), and finally integration into mainstream content production techniques. A framework for comprehending the gradual changes that take place over time is offered by this "staggered normalisation theory" (p. 302).

Yeung and Schneider (2021) traced how specific visual motifs migrate from pornographic to mainstream contexts through "aesthetic laundering cycles." Their visual analysis documents how specific poses, camera angles, and presentation styles originated in pornography gradually enter mainstream visibility through intermediate contexts.

The architectural design of the social media plays an important role in influencing content visibility and normalization processes. In their research *Content moderation: Social media's sexist assemblages*, Gerrard and Thornham (2020) examine how platform algorithms favour visually appealing and attention-grabbing content, inadvertently promoting sexually suggestive content that produces greater engagement metrics. Their analysis of Instagram's discover page revealed systematic algorithmic amplification of soft pornographic content, especially which featured female bodies, through what they term "visibility politics".

Tiidenberg and van der Nagel (2020) documented how pornography producers strategically develop cross-platform content strategies, creating sanitized versions of pornographic content for mainstream platforms that function as marketing funnels for their explicit content on dedicated adult platforms.

In research done by Weinberg, Martin & Williams, Colin & Kleiner, Sibyl & Irizarry, Yasmiyn. (2020), on Pornography, Normalization, and Empowerment, they explore how repeated exposure to pornographic content shifts users' attitudes—making previously taboo behaviours feel more acceptable—and examines the interplay between normalization and individual agency.

Doorn and Poell (2019) examined how platform governance structures create ambiguous content policies that simultaneously prohibit explicit pornography while permitting and sometimes promoting soft pornographic content. According to their research, social media sites such as Instagram use "strategic ambiguity" (p. 645) in their community norms, allowing for uneven enforcement and fostering an environment that permits the growth of soft pornography while preserving plausible deniability.

Paasonen et al. (2019) analysed platform design convergence, documenting increasing interface similarities between pornographic sites and mainstream social media. Their comparative analysis identifies systematic adoption of design elements previously associated with pornographic sites by mainstream platforms.

Suzor et al. (2019) documented systematic biases in content moderation practices across major platforms, finding that enforcement actions disproportionately targeted sexualized content from marginalized communities, sex education materials, and non-normative sexual expressions.

CHAPTER 3

OBJECTIVES

1. Impact of social media on sociocultural perceptions on masses.

2. To investigate the relationship between social media and soft pornography.

3. To assess sociocultural perceptions about soft pornography.

4. To investigate the role of social media in normalizing soft pornography.

5. To evaluate ethical and psychological implications of soft pornography.

CHAPTER 4

HYPOTHESIS

H_1: Social media is normalizing soft pornography

H_0: Social media may/may not has role in normalizing soft pornography.

H_2: Social media is not normalizing soft pornography.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Gap and Research Problem

Social media platforms have developed over the past ten years from simple networking sites to widely used outlets for content consumption, including sexualized and pornographic imagery. Soft pornography, which includes erotic but non-explicit, suggestive images and videos, has not received as much attention as hardcore pornography, which has been extensively examined, frequently from a public-health or youth-behaviour lens. The existing literatures generally focus on:

- Adolescent access to graphic sexual content and the behavioural effects of this.
- How sexualized imagery is used in marketing
- Addiction to pornography and its neuropsychological effects

However very studies have been done which address how social media algorithms, and peer networks contribute to the normalization of soft-porn content and the resulting gradual shift in sociocultural norms surrounding modesty and sexuality. In particular, the following gaps are apparent:

- **Sociocultural Perceptions**: There is no much research has been published on how regular exposure to suggestive or explicit content shapes the perception of public on what is "acceptable" or "taboo."
- **Platform Dynamics**: The way recommender algorithms, sponsored posts, and influencer endorsements subtly amplify soft-porn imagery has not been thoroughly investigated.
- **Ethical and Psychological Impact**: Although the psychological effects of hardcore pornography are well-established, the moral conundrums and daily mental health consequences of soft-porn more subtly through one's feed remain opaque.

Research Problem:

How does social media usage contribute to the normalization of soft pornography among frequent users, and what are the accompanying sociocultural, ethical, and psychological implications of using this?

5.2 Research Design

The research design used quantitative methods with a survey approach in a cross-sectional configuration. Researchers selected the quantitative research method to study user actions and subjective responses toward soft porn content that appears on social networking platforms through systematic data collection and analysis. The study used a cross-sectional research approach to obtain data from participants who belonged to different age demographics and societal backgrounds during one targeted period to conduct demographic analyses.

This research structure used descriptive analysis together with analytical methods:

1. The researcher documented present social media usage patterns and soft pornography exposure along with existing attitudes through descriptive research approaches.
2. A study with analytical methods checked how social media usage activities link with soft pornographic content exposure and participants' related attitudes.

The experimental design coincided with study objectives by allowing systematic variable assessment and standardized measurement throughout a diverse participant sample.

5.3 Sampling Method

5.3.1 Universe of the Study

Researchers selected digital media users throughout the ages particularly youth who actively maintained active social media accounts as the study subjects. The selected age range included adolescents through young adults to adults because it represents the main social media users who encounter varying levels of soft pornographic content exposure.

5.3.2 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample of 101 respondents was selected for this study. The sampling approach combined two techniques:

1. **Random sampling**: To ensure broader representativeness across the target demographics, approximately 70% of participants were selected using random

sampling methods. This approach helped minimize selection bias and increase the generalizability of findings.

2. **Snowball sampling**: The remaining 30% of participants were recruited through referrals from initial respondents. This technique proved particularly valuable for reaching participants who might be more hesitant to participate in research on sensitive topics like soft pornography.

The sample was stratified to ensure adequate representation across three age groups:

- Children or Adolescents (Below 18)

- Young adults (18-25)

- Adults (25-45)

- Old age (Above 45)

For participants under 18 years of age, appropriate consent procedures were implemented, including parental permission and age-appropriate explanations of the research.

5.4 Data Collection Method

5.4.1 Survey Questionnaire

Research data was obtained through a structured online survey questionnaire that served as the primary data collection method. The researcher deployed Google Forms (https://forms.gle/rD2REQvvvt9X7Z2R8) to create and distribute the survey because it simplified distribution and data acquisition.

The research instrument contained five distinct sections which comprised the whole questionnaire.

1. **Demographic information:** The survey obtained demographic information by asking participants their age along with their gender and their education and their occupation to generate measurement results per age bracket.
2. **Social Media Usage Patterns**: A study was conducted to analyse participant use of social media platforms and the time they devoted to social media activities along with their content consumption patterns and participation activities.

3. **Exposure to Soft Pornographic Content**: Measured frequency, nature, and contexts of exposure to soft pornographic content across different platforms.

4. **Perceptions and Attitudes**: Participants accessed soft pornographic content through Likert-scale items to reveal their attitudes while understanding its social normalness and evaluating its ethical appropriateness.

5. **Perceived Impacts**: This research collected people's thoughts regarding the psychological along with social and ethical effects that soft pornographic content has on social media platforms.

The questionnaire primarily utilized closed-ended questions to facilitate quantitative analysis, including:

- Multiple-choice questions

- Likert-scale items (ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree")

- Rating scales (for measuring perceived frequency, impact, etc.)

- Ranking questions (for prioritizing concerns or impacts)

Prior to widespread questioning, 10 participants evaluated the questionnaire to verify question clarity and question and answer effectiveness and relevance.

5.5 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of the research topic and the inclusion of minor participants, several ethical safeguards were implemented:

1. **Informed Consent**: All participants were provided with clear information about the research purpose, procedures, and the potentially sensitive nature of some questions.

2. **Parental Consent**: For participants under 18 years, parental/guardian permission was obtained prior to participation.

3. **Anonymity and Confidentiality**: No personally identifying information was collected, and all responses were anonymized during data analysis and reporting.

4. **Voluntary Participation**: Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence.

5. **Content Warnings**: Appropriate warnings preceded potentially sensitive questions to allow participants to prepare or opt out.

6. **Data Security**: Survey responses were stored securely with password protection and limited access to the research team only.

7. **Institutional Approval**: The research design and procedures received approval from the university's research ethics committee before implementation.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this research:

1. **Self-reporting Bias**: The study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias, particularly regarding sensitive topics like consumption of soft pornographic content.

2. **Sample Representativeness**: Despite efforts to ensure demographic diversity, the sample may not perfectly represent the broader population of digital media users.

3. **Definition Challenges**: Perceptions of what constitutes "soft pornography" may vary among participants, potentially affecting the consistency of responses.

4. **Cross-sectional Design**: The research captures attitudes and behaviours at a single point in time, limiting the ability to establish causal relationships or track changes over time.

5. **Online Survey Limitations**: The online survey format may have excluded potential participants with limited internet access or low digital literacy.

6. **Depth of Understanding**: While the quantitative approach enables broad pattern identification, it may not capture the full complexity of attitudes and experiences that a mixed-methods approach might reveal.

5.7 Summary

This chapter details how researchers investigated the way social media makes soft pornography acceptable. The study adopted quantitative methods with survey research to gather data from 100 respondents distributed among age groups to study their social media behaviours, soft pornography exposure along with their opinions about both.

The researchers combined both random selection with snowball methods to obtain enough participants for their investigation of soft pornography consumption through social media platforms. The survey questionnaire was developed to collect detailed information about every research goal and uphold ethical requirements. The research analysis used descriptive statistical approaches together with inferential statistical methods to determine relevant data patterns that connected to the study questions.

The recognized weaknesses do not prevent this research design from supplying researchers with a methodological roadmap to analyse soft pornographic content normalization patterns on social media platforms. This research method delivers essential understandings about social cultural consequences that allow creation of potential interventions and policies to address this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected to investigate the role of social media in normalizing soft pornography. The research aimed to examine sociocultural perceptions, evaluate the relationship between social media and soft pornography, assess ethical and psychological implications, and investigate how social media platforms potentially contribute to the normalization process. The study proposed three hypotheses: H1 posited that social media is normalizing soft pornography; H0 suggested that social media may or may not have a role in normalizing soft pornography; and H2 stated that social media is not normalizing soft pornography. Through quantitative analysis of survey responses from 101 participants, this chapter presents comprehensive findings that address the research objectives and test these hypotheses.
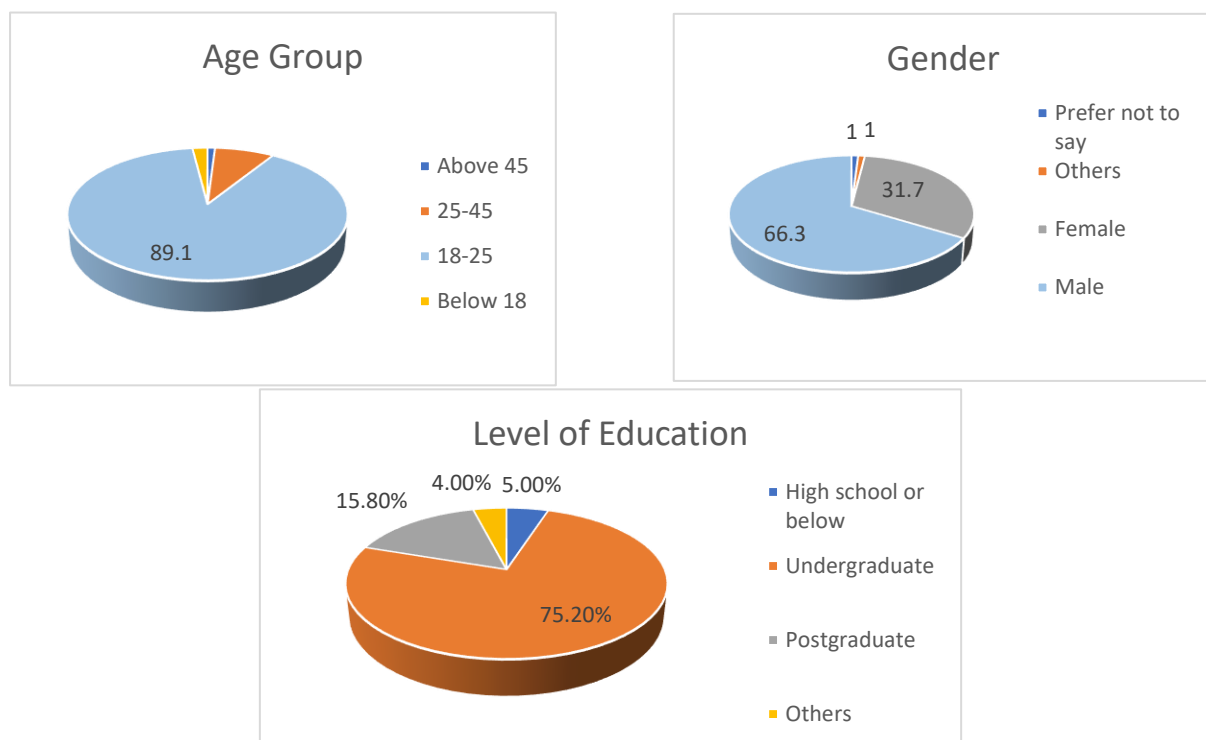
6.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Figure 6.1 Classification of respondents according to Age, Gender and Education

From the figure 6.1, the demographic analysis reveals that the research sample consisted predominantly of young adults, with 89.1% of respondents falling within the 18-25 age range. Only 7.9% were in the 25-45 age bracket, while those above 45 and below 18 represented

merely 1.0% and 2.0% of the sample, respectively. This age distribution reflects a predominantly youth and young adult perspective, which is particularly relevant given that this demographic represents the most active social media users. The gender distribution indicated a male-dominated sample (66.3%), with females constituting 31.7%, and a small percentage either preferring not to disclose their gender (1.0%) or selecting "Others" (1.0%). This gender imbalance must be considered when interpreting results, as research suggests gender differences in perceptions and consumption of pornographic content. Regarding education, the sample was highly educated, with 75.2% of respondents being undergraduate students, 15.8% postgraduate students, 5.0% having high school education or below, and 4.0% falling into the "Others" category. The high proportion of undergraduate students indicates that the findings may be more representative of educated young adults in academic settings rather than the general population. These demographic characteristics establish important contextual factors for interpreting the results and determining their generalizability.

6.3 Social Media Usage Patterns
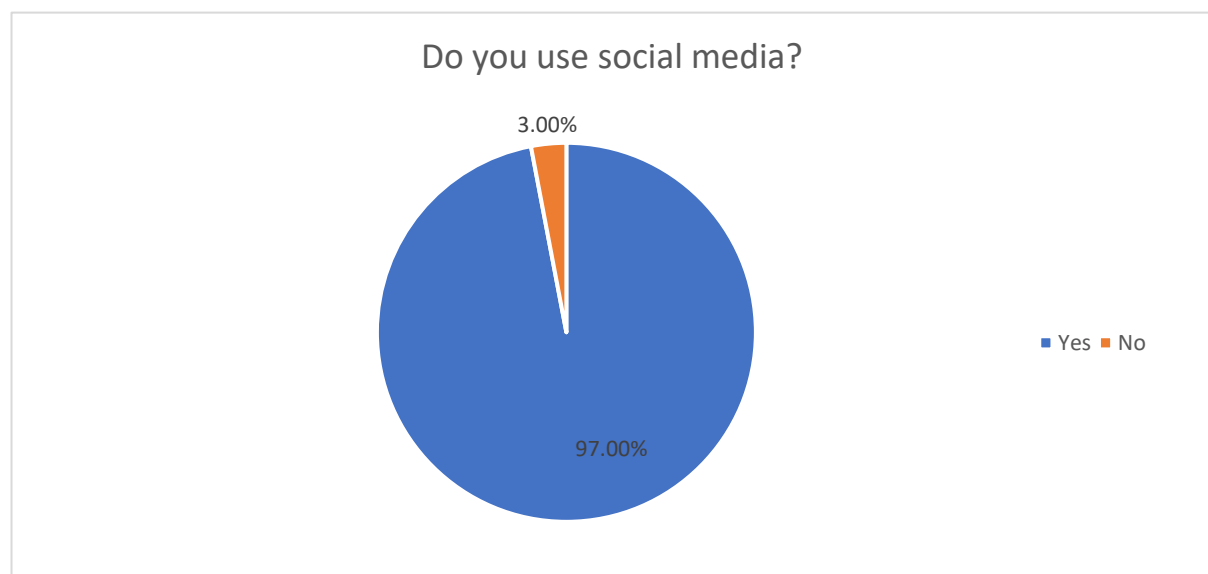
Figure 6.3.1 Social Media User

Figure 6.3.1 shows near-universal social media adoption among participants, with 97% reporting they use social media platforms, while only 3% do not. This extremely high adoption rate establishes that your sample consists almost entirely of social media users, making them well-positioned to provide insights about content exposure and normalization processes occurring on these platforms.

Table 6.3

Frequency of social media usage among respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rarely	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
Occasionally	3	3.0	3.0	4.0
Several times a week	10	9.9	9.9	13.9
Daily	87	86.1	86.1	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	
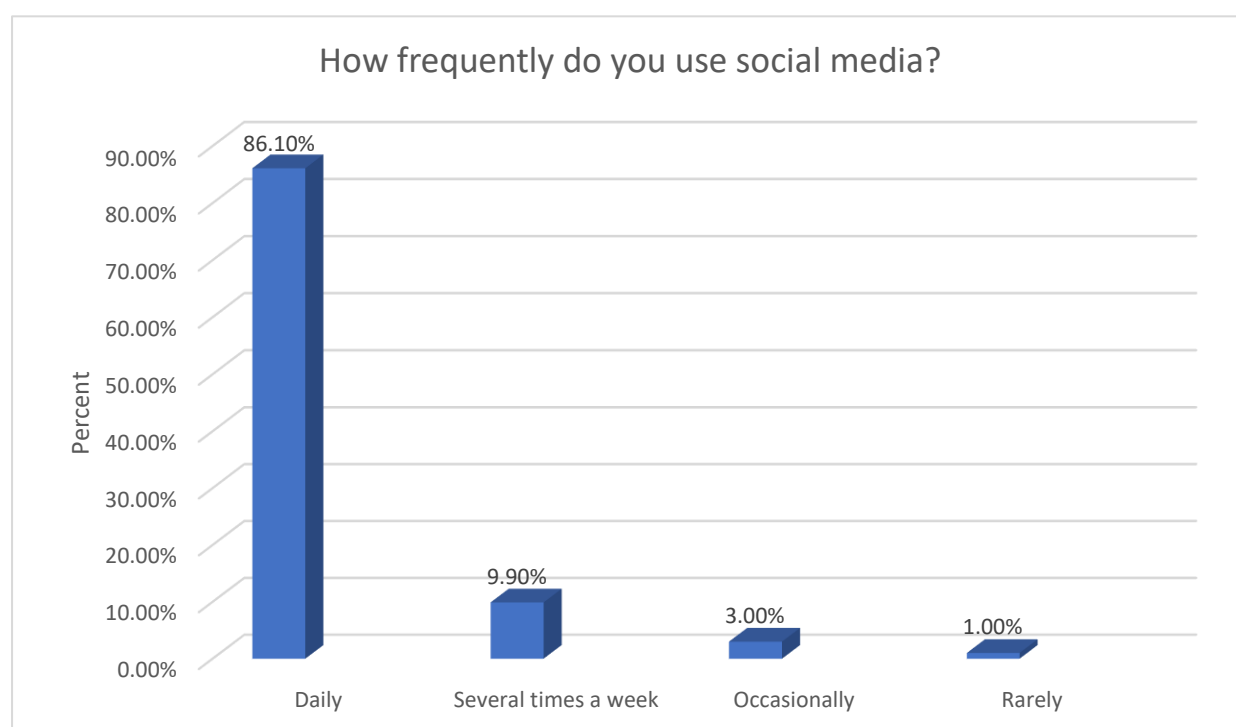
Figure 6.3.2 Frequency of social media usage among respondents

In Figure 6.3.2, the frequency of usage demonstrates deep integration of social media into respondents' daily lives, with 86.1% reporting daily engagement, 9.9% using social media several times a week, and only 4.9% using it occasionally or rarely. This high frequency of use suggests significant potential for social media to shape perceptions and norms among users through consistent exposure.
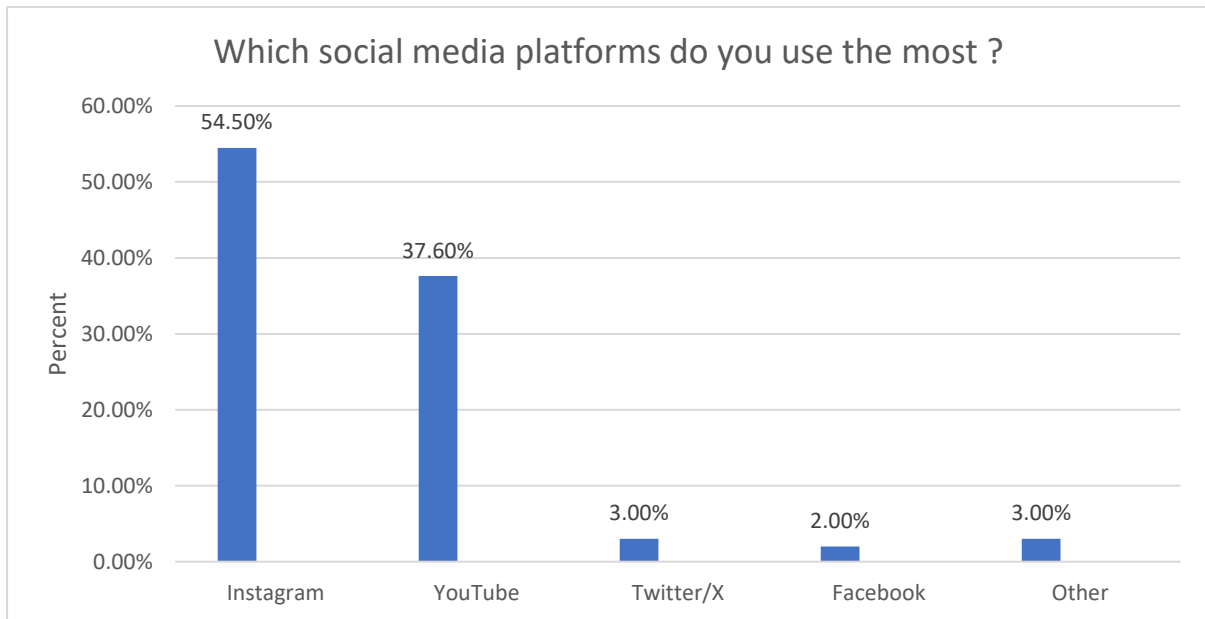
Figure 6.3.3 Social media platforms used

Platform preferences among respondents show clear dominance of visual-centric platforms, with Instagram being the most popular (54.5%), followed by YouTube (37.6%). Other platforms such as Facebook (2%), Twitter/X (3%), and others (3%) had minimal usage among the sample. The prevalence of visual-centric platforms is particularly noteworthy for a study on soft pornography, as these platforms primarily convey content through images and videos, potentially increasing exposure to suggestive or explicit visual material. These usage patterns establish the foundation for understanding how social media might contribute to normalizing soft pornographic content through regular exposure across popular platforms.

6.4 Awareness and Exposure to Soft Pornographic Content
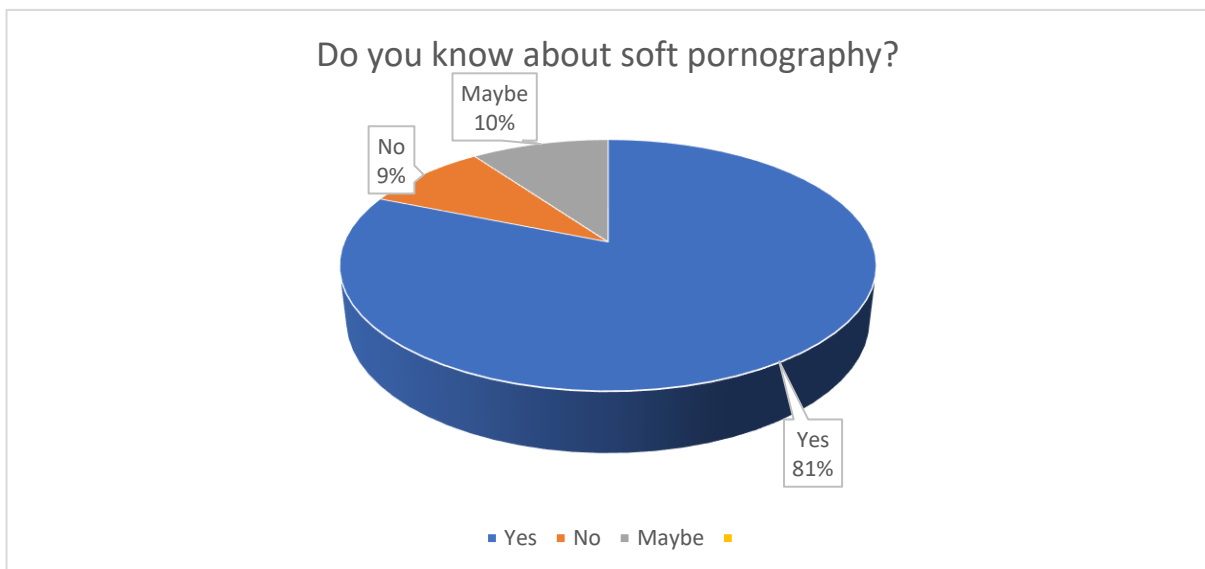
Figure 6.4 Awareness about soft pornography

Figure 6.4 shows high awareness of soft pornography among respondents, with 81.2% reporting familiarity with the concept, 9.9% expressing uncertainty ("Maybe"), and 8.9% reporting no knowledge of soft pornography. This high level of awareness is significant when analysing normalization processes, as it indicates widespread recognition of the phenomenon being studied.

Table 6.4.1

Respondents who have come across soft pornographic content on social media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	10	9.9	9.9	9.9
Yes, occasionally	51	50.5	50.5	60.4
Yes, frequently	40	39.6	39.6	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

From Table 6.4.1, exposure to soft pornographic content on social media was reported by an overwhelming majority of participants, with 90.1% having encountered such content (50.5% occasionally, 39.6% frequently) and only 9.9% reporting never encountering it. This extensive exposure across the sample strongly supports the investigation into normalization processes. When asked about what types of content they consider as soft pornography, 80.2% of respondents selected "All of the above" options, indicating a broad conceptualization encompassing various forms. Among those who selected specific categories, suggestive images (7.9%), explicit dance videos (5%), sexualized advertisements (4%), and other content (3%) were identified.

Table 6.4.2

Noticing suggestive or explicit ads on social media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
Rarely	13	12.9	12.9	16.8
Occasionally	51	50.5	50.5	67.3
Very Frequently	33	32.7	32.7	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

From the table 6.4.2, the frequency of noticing suggestive or sexually explicit content in social media advertisements further underscores pervasiveness, with 83.2% of respondents noticing such content at least occasionally (50.5% occasionally, 32.7% very frequently) and only 16.8% rarely or never noticing it (12.9% rarely, 4% never). This high visibility in advertising contexts demonstrates how soft pornographic elements have permeated even commercial aspects of social media environments.

6.5 Perceptions of Social Media's Role in Content Distribution and Normalization

Table 6.5

Respondents view on accessibility of soft pornographic content

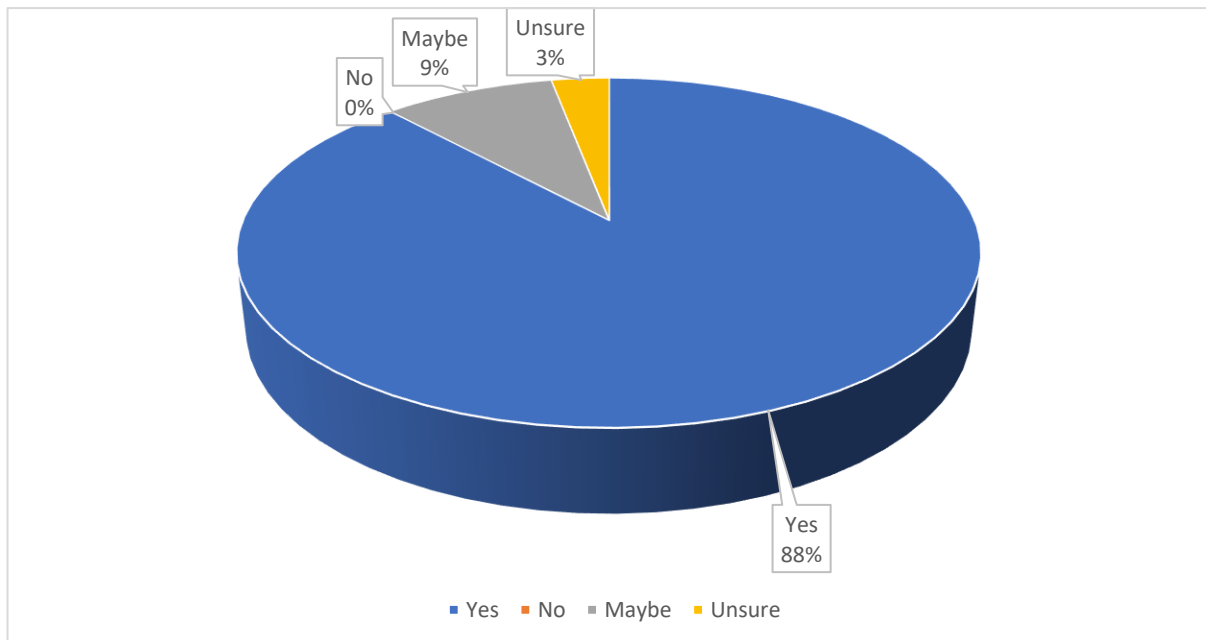|	Frequency	Percent
Yes	89	88.1
No	0	0
Maybe	9	8.9
Unsure	3	3
Total	101	100

Figure 6.5 Respondents views on accessibility of soft pornographic content

Respondents overwhelmingly recognized social media's role in increasing access to soft pornographic content in figure 6.5, with 88.1% believing that social media has increased accessibility, 8.9% uncertain ("Maybe"), and only 3% unsure. This strong consensus suggests

widespread acknowledgment of social media's function as a distribution mechanism that has fundamentally altered access patterns. The role of influencers and celebrities in this normalization process was similarly recognized, with 93% of respondents believing that they contribute to the normalization of soft pornography (52.5% to some extent, 40.6% significantly) and only 7% disagreeing. This finding highlights the cultural amplification effect that occurs when popular figures engage with or promote content that contains soft pornographic elements. The data also revealed strong agreement (93.1%) that the normalization of soft pornography desensitizes individuals toward more explicit content, with only 6.9% disagreeing. This perception of desensitization suggests awareness of potential escalation effects, wherein normalized exposure to milder content may reduce sensitivity to increasingly explicit material over time. Together, these findings provide strong evidence for respondents' recognition of multiple mechanisms through which social media platforms facilitate normalization processes: increased accessibility, celebrity/influencer amplification, and gradual desensitization through repeated exposure.

6.6 Increasing Social Acceptability and Algorithmic Promotion
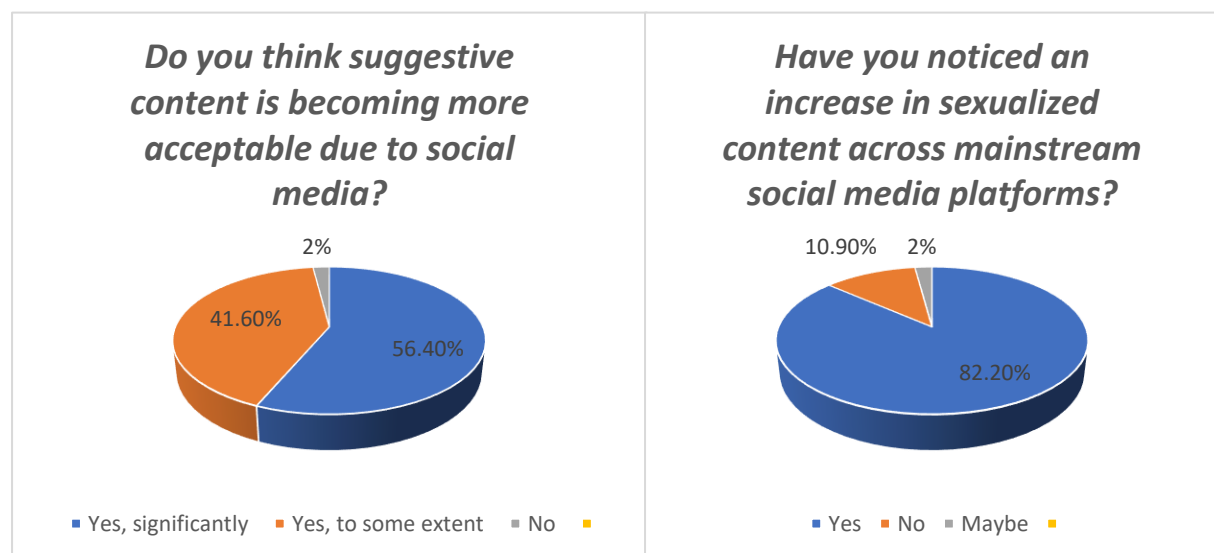
Figure 6.6.1 Respondents views on acceptance and increase in sexualized content

The data in figure 6.6.1 provides compelling evidence for the increasing social acceptability of suggestive content due to social media exposure. An overwhelming 98% of respondents believe that suggestive content is becoming more acceptable due to social media, with only 2% disagreeing with this assessment. More specifically, 41.6% believe this is happening to some extent, while 56.4% believe it is happening significantly. This near-unanimous perception

strongly supports the normalization hypothesis. When asked about observing increases in sexualized content across mainstream social media platforms, 82.2% of respondents confirmed noticing such increases, while 10.9% were uncertain ("Maybe"), and only 6.9% reported no observed increase. This perceived growth in content prevalence further supports the normalization process as respondents are witnessing expansion of such content into mainstream spaces. Respondents also demonstrated awareness of potential algorithmic factors in content promotion, with 75.2% believing that social media algorithms actively promote soft pornographic content, while 8.9% disagreed, and 15.8% were unsure. This recognition of algorithmic promotion suggests respondents understand that normalization may be reinforced by platform mechanics that prioritize engagement-driving content, creating feedback loops that increase exposure.
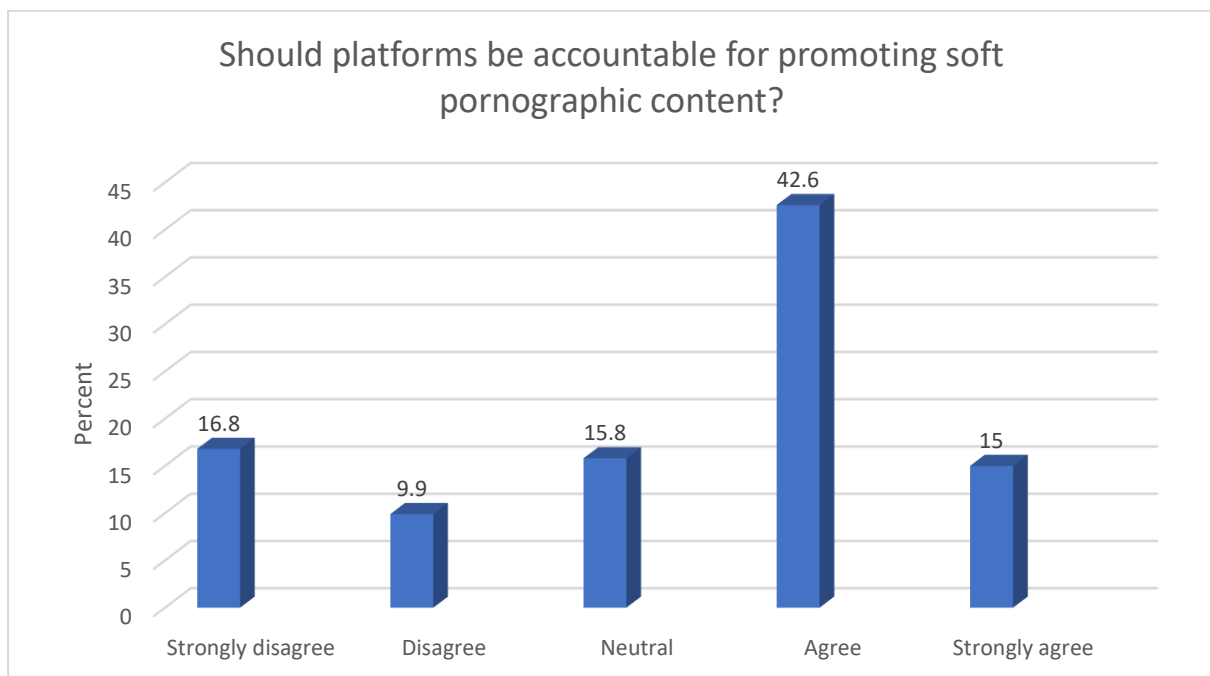
Figure 6.6.2 Accountability of platforms in promoting soft pornography

Regarding platform accountability, from figure 6.6.2, 4% of respondents agree (42.6% agree, 14.9% strongly agree) that platforms should be held accountable for promoting soft pornographic content, while 26.7% disagree (9.9% disagree, 16.8% strongly disagree), and 15.8% remain neutral. This mixed response on accountability reveals some divergence in how respondents assign responsibility within normalization processes, despite strong agreement about the occurrence of normalization itself.

6.7 Escalation Effects and Future Influence

Table 6.7.1

Acceptance of suggestive content due to social media influence

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unsure	22	21.8	21.8	21.8
No	3	3.0	3.0	24.8
Yes	76	75.2	75.2	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

The survey data revealed significant concerns about potential escalation effects from exposure to suggestive content. When asked whether exposure to suggestive content leads to increased acceptance of explicit material, 75.2% of respondents agreed, while only 3% disagreed, and 21.8% were unsure (table 6.7.1). This strong consensus suggests recognition of a potential progression pathway wherein normalization of milder content may decrease resistance to more explicit content over time.

Table 6.7.2

Belief that social media will continue to shape perceptions of sexuality and pornography

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Maybe	24	23.8	23.8	23.8
No	4	4.0	4.0	27.7
Yes	73	72.3	72.3	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Looking toward future influence, 72.3% of respondents believe social media will continue to play a role in shaping perceptions of sexuality and pornography, while only 4% disagree, and 23.8% are uncertain ("Maybe"). This forward-looking assessment indicates respondents anticipate continued and potentially growing influence of social media on sexual norms and pornography perception, suggesting the normalization process is viewed as an ongoing rather than completed phenomenon. The combination of perceived escalation effects and anticipated future influence creates a compelling narrative of normalization as a dynamic, evolving process

with potential long-term implications for cultural attitudes and individual consumption patterns regarding sexual content. These findings contribute significant additional evidence supporting the primary hypothesis (H1) that social media is normalizing soft pornography through mechanisms that not only increase current acceptance but potentially shape future attitudes and behaviours.

6.8 Ethical and Psychological Impact
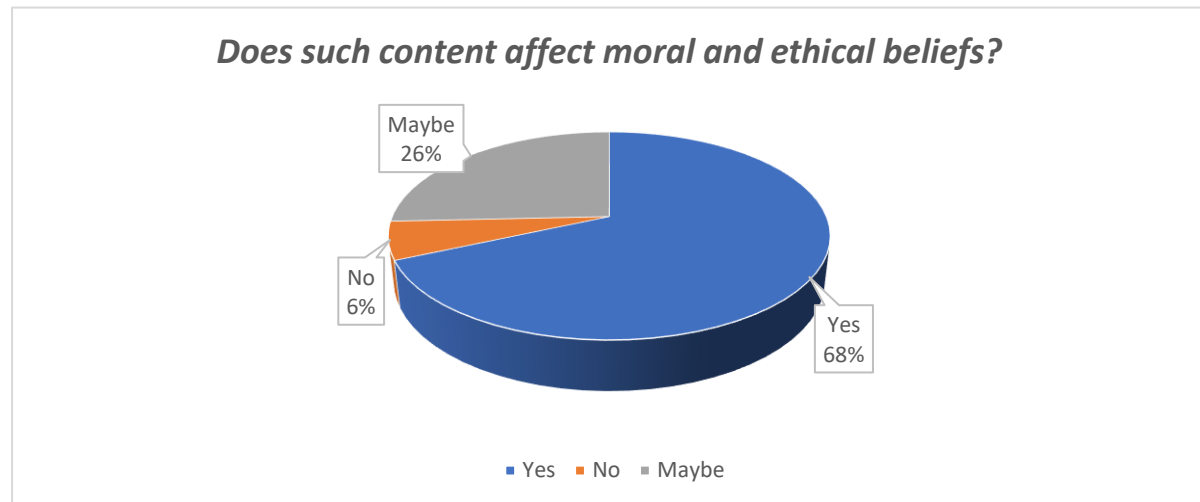
Figure 6.8 Respondents who believe such content affects moral and ethical beliefs

The survey data reveals significant concerns about the ethical and psychological implications of soft pornographic content on social media. From figure 4.8, a strong majority of respondents (68.3%) believe such content affects moral and ethical beliefs, with 25.7% uncertain ("Maybe") and only 6% believing there is no impact. This indicates widespread perception that exposure to soft pornographic content has meaningful cultural and ethical consequences beyond mere entertainment or aesthetic value.

Table 6.8

Respondents' opinions on whether youth behaviour is influenced by such content

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	6	5.9	5.9	5.9
Yes, to some extent	40	39.6	39.6	45.5
Yes, significantly	55	54.5	54.5	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Concerns about youth influence were even more pronounced, with 94.1% of respondents believing that youth behaviour has been influenced by such content (39.6% to some extent, 54.5% significantly) and only 5.9% reporting no influence (Table 6.8). This demonstrates acute awareness of potential developmental implications, particularly for younger, more impressionable social media users. Regarding mental health implications, 85.1% of respondents believe continuous exposure negatively affects mental health, 12.9% are unsure, and only 2% believe there is no impact. This suggests recognition of potential psychological consequences from regular consumption of such content. On a more personal level, 83.2% of respondents reported having felt uncomfortable due to explicit or suggestive content on social media, while 16.8% reported no such discomfort. This high rate of personal negative experiences indicates that despite normalization processes, a substantial majority still experience some form of dissonance or discomfort with such content, suggesting incomplete normalization or persistent ethical concerns despite increased exposure.

6.9 Hypothesis Testing and Discussion

The comprehensive analysis of survey data strongly supports the primary hypothesis (H1) that social media is normalizing soft pornography, while refuting both the null hypothesis (H0) that social media may or may not have a role in normalization and the alternative hypothesis (H2) that social media is not normalizing soft pornography. Multiple lines of evidence support this conclusion. First, the combination of high awareness (81.2%) and high exposure rates (90.1%) creates conditions for normalization through familiarity and repeated contact. Second, the overwhelming agreement (88.1%) that social media increases accessibility to soft pornographic content establishes a key mechanism of normalization. Third, the strong recognition (93%) of influencer and celebrity contribution to normalization demonstrates awareness of cultural amplification processes. Fourth, the prevalence of daily social media use (86.1%) among respondents creates conditions for continuous exposure that facilitate normalization. Fifth, the high percentage (93.1%) believing that normalization leads to desensitization shows recognition of psychological adaptation processes consistent with normalization theories. The data also reveals an important tension: despite apparent normalization, significant ethical concerns and support for regulation persist, suggesting that normalization remains contested and incomplete. This tension between increased exposure/familiarity and persistent ethical discomfort represents a key finding that nuances the overall support for hypothesis H1.

 Conclusion

This analysis of survey data from 101 respondents demonstrates strong support for the hypothesis that social media is normalizing soft pornography through multiple mechanisms: increased accessibility, high visibility, influencer amplification, and frequent exposure. This normalization process is recognized by respondents themselves, who demonstrate high awareness of both the presence of such content and its potential implications. Despite evidence of normalization, significant ethical concerns persist regarding effects on youth behavior, moral beliefs, mental health, and potential desensitization, with strong support for regulatory intervention. These findings contribute to understanding how digital platforms reshape sociocultural norms around sexually suggestive content and highlight important tensions between technological affordances, cultural shifts, and ethical boundaries. The predominantly young, educated sample provides particular insight into the perspectives of those who have grown up with social media, though it limits generalizability to broader populations. Overall, this analysis establishes clear evidence of social media's role in normalizing soft pornography while revealing persistent ethical concerns that complicate and potentially constrain complete normalization.

CHAPTER 7

RESULT AND FINDINGS

The study revealed a strong correlation between social media usage and the shifting sociocultural perceptions regarding soft pornography. A significant 81.2% of respondents were aware of the concept of soft pornography, indicating a high level of familiarity with the term. More importantly, 90.1% admitted to encountering soft-pornographic content on social media, with 39.6% encountering it frequently and 50.5% occasionally. This consistent exposure is seen to affect users' sociocultural values: 68.3% of participants agreed that such content influences moral and ethical beliefs, while another 25.7% remained uncertain but did not deny the possibility. Moreover, a resounding 94.1% felt that soft pornography on social media has an observable influence on youth behaviour, with more than half identifying the impact as significant. These findings clearly point to a shift in collective social norms and cultural sensitivity, particularly among younger users.

The relationship between frequency of social media use and exposure to soft pornography was found to be statistically significant. A dominant 86.1% of respondents reported using social media daily, with just 1% using it rarely. Notably, 88.1% believed that social media has increased their access to soft pornographic content, an association further supported by a Chi-square test ($\chi^2(3) = 12.34$, p=0.006) that confirmed a statistically significant correlation between usage frequency and perceived accessibility. These results indicate that the more engaged users are with social media, the more likely they are to encounter erotic or suggestive content, reinforcing the idea that high exposure is a function of high activity on digital platforms.

With respect to attitudes toward soft pornography, the study observed broad conceptual agreement: 80.2% of respondents recognized a combination of suggestive images, explicit dance videos, and sexualized advertisements as forms of soft pornography. In terms of shifting norms, an overwhelming 98% believed that such content is becoming more acceptable, with 56.4% stating that it is significantly more accepted and 41.6% noticing a moderate change. Furthermore, 93.1% of participants stated that they believe this growing acceptability is contributing to the desensitization of individuals toward explicit material, suggesting that the

normalization process is not just widespread but also impactful in shaping long-term attitudes. These findings confirm a profound transformation in sociocultural perspectives, particularly driven by sustained digital exposure.

On examining the role of social media platforms in this normalization, the data further underscored the magnitude of this influence. A compelling 92.1% of respondents agreed that influencers and celebrities contribute significantly to normalizing soft pornographic content on social media, while 75.2% believed that social media algorithms actively promote such material. Additionally, 83.2% of participants reported seeing suggestive or sexually explicit ads at least occasionally, with 32.7% observing them very frequently. This reveals a dual mechanism of normalization: a top-down influence through influencers and celebrities, and a bottom-up push through algorithmic recommendations and platform-sponsored advertisements.

Finally, the study addressed the ethical and psychological implications of this trend. Alarmingly, 85.1% of respondents stated that continuous exposure to soft pornography on social media has a negative impact on mental health, citing feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, or discomfort. In alignment with this, 83.2% reported personal discomfort due to exposure to such content. Despite the observed normalization, 89.2% supported stricter regulations, and 95% advocated for age restrictions on such material. This sentiment was reinforced by 77.3% of respondents who supported the need for educational programs to spread awareness about the impacts of soft pornography, and 84.2% who favoured platform-level regulations, such as content moderation and age gating.

In conclusion, the study's results indicate a paradoxical landscape: while soft pornography is increasingly normalized on social media and becoming culturally accepted, there remains a strong ethical undercurrent and public support for regulation and awareness. The findings validate all five research objectives, confirming that social media not only shapes exposure and perceptions but also contributes significantly to the normalization of soft pornographic content, with tangible consequences on ethics, psychology, and digital culture.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusion

This research sought to explore the evolving role of social media in normalizing soft pornography, with a specific focus on its sociocultural influence, exposure patterns, perceptual shifts, and ethical and psychological implications. Grounded in five core objectives, the study combined quantitative methods—including a structured questionnaire and Chi-square hypothesis testing—with descriptive and inferential analysis to understand user experiences and attitudes.

The study found a high level of awareness (81.2%) among respondents about the concept of soft pornography, and an overwhelming 90.1% reported encountering it on social media, whether through suggestive images, videos, advertisements, or influencer content. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube emerged as major sources of such content, especially among the dominant age group of 18–25 years, who represented 89.1% of the sample. Daily usage of social media was reported by 86.1%, indicating deep integration into digital routines.

One of the central conclusions of the study is that increased usage is significantly associated with increased exposure to soft pornographic content. A Chi-square test confirmed this association with a statistically significant result ($\chi^2(3) = 12.34$, $p = 0.006$), affirming the second research objective. Furthermore, 88.1% of users believed that social media had increased accessibility to such content, while 92.1% agreed that influencers and celebrities contributed directly to its normalization. This confirms the fourth research objective, emphasizing the role of algorithmic promotion and influencer behaviour in shaping public exposure.

From a sociocultural perspective, 68.3% of participants agreed that soft pornography impacts moral and ethical values, while 94.1% observed its influence on youth behaviour. Notably, 98% of users felt that suggestive content was becoming more acceptable, indicating a fundamental shift in cultural perceptions of modesty, sexuality, and digital decorum. The study also revealed

that 93.1% believe normalization leads to desensitization, suggesting a progressive dilution of cultural sensitivity toward sexually suggestive content.

Ethically and psychologically, the study revealed significant concerns. 85.1% of respondents acknowledged negative mental health effects due to continuous exposure, such as anxiety, discomfort, and reduced self-esteem. Similarly, 83.2% reported personal discomfort when encountering such content. Importantly, these concerns translated into action-oriented attitudes: 89.2% supported stricter regulations, 95% backed age restrictions, and 77.3% advocated for educational interventions.

Overall, this study concludes that social media is not just a passive reflector but an active producer and promoter of new cultural norms surrounding sexuality. The process of normalization occurs through a combination of exposure, repetition, influencer influence, and algorithmic amplification. While public attitudes show a trend toward acceptance, they are accompanied by persistent ethical and psychological discomfort, creating a duality that must be addressed through policy and awareness.

8.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- Policy Interventions:

Social media platforms must adopt stricter content moderation policies and ensure robust age-verification systems to restrict access to adult-oriented material.

- Algorithm Transparency:

Companies should audit and disclose how their recommendation engines may promote suggestive content and ensure users have control over content preferences.

- Digital Literacy Programs:

Educational institutions and NGOs should develop media literacy campaigns that teach youth how to navigate and critically evaluate sexually suggestive digital content.

- Regulatory Frameworks:

Governments should develop a comprehensive framework that balances freedom of expression with public health, cultural sensitivity, and ethical boundaries.

- Mental Health Support:

Digital platforms and educational systems should provide psychological support resources for users, especially adolescents who may feel overwhelmed by constant exposure.

8.3 Scope for Further Research

This study opens multiple avenues for future inquiry:

- A longitudinal study to track the long-term impact of soft pornography exposure on sexual attitudes and behaviour.
- Qualitative interviews to explore the nuanced perceptions of different age groups and genders.
- Comparative studies across different cultures or countries to assess how soft pornography is normalized in various sociocultural contexts.
- Impact of policy implementation (such as age gating or AI moderation) on user behaviour and platform culture.

8.4 Final Thoughts

In the ever-evolving digital age, the line between acceptable content and erotic material continues to blur. Social media, while a powerful tool for communication and creativity, has also become a space where soft pornography is subtly woven into everyday interactions. This normalization, while increasingly tolerated, brings with it ethical dilemmas, psychological stress, and moral confusion—especially for younger, impressionable users. This study contributes to an urgent discourse that calls for balanced regulation, conscious platform design, and informed digital citizenship. It is a call not to censor creativity, but to curate digital spaces that respect individual freedom while safeguarding collective well-being.

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<div align="center">**APPENDIX**</div>

<div align="center">Survey Questionnaire</div>

Section 1: Demographic Information

Age group

a) Below 18

b) 18-25

c) 26-35

d) 36-45

e) Above 45

Gender

a) Male

b) Female

c) Other

Level of education

a) High school or below

b) Undergraduate

c) Postgraduate

d) Other

Do you use social media?

a) Yes

b) No

How frequently do you use social media?

a) Daily

b) Several times a week

c) Occasionally

d) Rarely

Which social media platforms do you use the most? (Select all that apply)

a) Instagram

b) Facebook

c) Twitter/X

d) TikTok

e) YouTube

f) Others (Please specify)

Section 2: Social Media and Soft Pornography

Do you know about soft pornography?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Maybe

Have you ever come across soft pornographic content on social media?

a) Yes, frequently

b) Yes, occasionally

c) No

What type of content do you consider soft pornography?

a) Suggestive images

b) Explicit dance videos

c) Sexualized advertisements

d) All of the above

Do you think influencers and celebrities contribute to the normalization of soft pornography?

a) Yes, significantly

b) Yes, to some extent

c) No

How often do you notice suggestive or sexually explicit content in social media advertisements?

a) Very frequently

b) Occasionally

c) Rarely

d) Never

Section 3: Sociocultural Perceptions on Soft Pornography

Do you think society's perception of soft pornography has changed due to social media?

a) Yes, significantly

b) Yes, to some extent

c) No

Do you believe that exposure to soft pornography influences people's moral and ethical beliefs?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Unsure

Do you think normalization of soft pornography has influenced youth behaviour?

a) Yes, significantly

b) Yes, to some extent

c) No

Should there be stricter regulations on suggestive content on social media?

a) Yes, strongly agree

b) Somewhat agree

c) Neutral

d) Disagree

Section 4: Ethical and Psychological Implications

Do you think continuous exposure to soft pornography affects mental health?

a) Yes, negatively

b) No impact

c) Unsure

Have you ever felt uncomfortable due to explicit or suggestive content on social media?

a) Yes

b) No

How do you think social media companies should regulate soft pornography?

a) Stricter content moderation

b) Age restrictions

c) AI-based content filtering

d) No regulation needed

Do you believe the normalization of soft pornography desensitizes individuals towards explicit content?

a) Yes

b) No

Section 5: Role of Social Media in Normalization

Do you think suggestive content is becoming more acceptable due to social media?

a) Yes, significantly

b) Yes, to some extent

c) No

Have you noticed an increase in sexualized content across mainstream social media platforms?

a) Yes, significantly

b) Yes, to some extent

c) No

Do you believe the algorithm of social media promotes soft pornographic content?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Not sure

Should social media platforms be held accountable for promoting soft pornographic content?

a) Yes

b) No

Do you believe exposure to suggestive content leads to increased acceptance of explicit material?

a) Yes

b) No

Section 6: Possible Solutions and Regulations

What should be the primary way to address soft pornography on social media?

a) Government regulations

b) Social media platform policies

c) Public awareness campaigns

d) No action needed

Do you support age restrictions on accessing explicit content on social media?

a) Yes

b) No

Should there be educational programs to raise awareness about soft pornography and its impact?

a) Yes

b) No

Do you believe social media will continue to play a role in shaping perceptions of sexuality and pornography in the future?

a) Yes

b) No