

**Title: Teen perspectives of pornography and technologies such as age assurance and age verification designed to protect them**

**Authors:**

Woodley G<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edith Cowan University

**Background:**

The Australian government, in response to concerns around gender-based violence, committed to funding an age assurance pilot to protect young people from the pornography. An Australian Research Council funded project, *Perceptions of harm from adolescents accessing online sexual content*, seeks to explore young people's perspectives of pornography, and in doing so has captured teens perspectives of technologies designed to protect them. In addition, data collected offered teens perspectives of their Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) at home and at school, often intersecting with their reasons for accessing Sexually Explicit Materials (SEM) online. This research offers an inter-disciplinary perspective on issues around health advocacy, research and relevant policy concerning young people.

**Methods:**

Data was collected from 49 interviews and 4 focus groups (n=20) of teenagers aged 11-17 years old. Qualitative interviews with 24 families, including (n=30) teenagers within Australia are used to extrapolate findings, with (n=19) teens engaging in follow-up interviews a year later, provided semi-longitudinal data. Social Constructionism, while considering a healthy sexual development framework, and reflexive thematic analysis were used to interpret data and identify key themes.

**Results:**

While teens perspectives varied, the impact of this paper offers an insight into how teenagers navigate online spaces, carefully balancing their quest for sexual knowledge, and their protection, while maintaining their developing need for independence and autonomy.

**Conclusions:**

This research compliments existing quantitative data, offering nuanced and rich evidence which identifies ways in which adolescent voices should be included in discussions regarding policy implementation, curriculum and public debate about SEM and proposed protections. This research suggests that adolescent voices should be included in this discussion since young people are searching for alternative ways to learn about sex and suggests that SEM and pornography may serve as a source of information that schools and homes do not, or rather, cannot fill.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

This submission is an outcome of the Australian Research Council funded project, *Perceptions of harm from adolescents accessing online sexual content, whose views are not expressed here.*