

A Survey Of Parents' Reactions To Children's Pornography Use

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Background:

From a median age of 13 years, most Australian children view pornography. Parents can play a key role in educating young people about sex and pornography. This study aimed to explore parents' attitudes to children's pornography use and their actions and reactions to their own children's pornography use.

Methods:

Parents (n=1029) in Australia with children aged 8 to 20 years were invited to complete an online survey via a market research panel.

Results:

Most parents thought that young people view pornography "rarely". Parents were more likely to agree that it is best to accept that young people are going to access pornography and educate them about it (65% agreed), rather than agree that it is best to ensure young people do not have access to pornography by policing their devices (39% agreed).

45% of parents had ever discussed pornography with their child. This was associated ($p < 0.001$) with being aware of previous exposure to pornography for their child and having children older than 13 years.

27% of parents were aware that their child had viewed pornography. They had most commonly been told by their child (50%), followed by finding porn on their devices (34%), or seeing them watch it (22%). Of these, 62% felt confident responding to their child's pornography use. The most common action taken was to communicate with the child (56%), only 6% took steps to restrict access to pornography.

Conclusion:

Australian parents generally underestimate the level of pornography use by Australian children, and a minority are aware of their own child's pornography use. Overall, the results indicate parents' preference for education and communication approaches over restrictive approaches to address pornography. Parents may require support and education to understand children's pornography use and how to talk to their children about it.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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