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A qualitative study on Pacific male perspectives on addressing porn use and addiction in Aotearoa New Zealand

Simon Erickson¹ , Bale Kito² , Gareth Treharne² , Simone Rodda³ , Rebekah Kennedy^{1,4} and Edmond Fehoko^{1*}

*Correspondence:

Edmond Fehoko

edmond.fehoko@otago.ac.nz

¹Department of Human Nutrition, University of Otago, Dunedin, Aotearoa, New Zealand

²Department of Psychology, University of Otago, Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand

³Department of Psychology, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

⁴Otago Medical School, University of Otago, Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand

Abstract

Pacific experiences, in particular, male perspectives of pornography use remain significantly under-examined in contemporary behavioural health scholarship, despite growing evidence of its complex intersections with cultural identity, spirituality, masculinity, and community expectations in Aotearoa New Zealand and the wider Pacific region. This study critically investigates how Pacific males understand, navigate, and respond to pornography within the interconnected domains of church, culture, and community, three influential spaces that shape moral reasoning, gendered expectations, and collective wellbeing. Findings reveal that pornography use is framed not only as an individual behavioural issue but as a culturally embedded concern that disrupts relationships, challenges masculine identities, and amplifies shame and silence within faith-based and communal settings. Participants emphasised the need for culturally grounded, church-engaged, and community-led strategies that move beyond punitive moral narratives to foster compassionate dialogue, relational accountability, and culturally resonant education on sexuality and digital wellbeing. This paper argues that addressing pornography among Pacific males requires a holistic, strengths-based approach centred on cultural safety and collective responsibility. By foregrounding Pacific voices, the study contributes critical insights for culturally responsive intervention design, pastoral care, and public health policy, positioning Pacific worldviews as essential to understanding and addressing pornography-related harms in culturally meaningful and socially just ways.

Keywords Pacific, Pornography prevention, Talanoa, Cultural, Kava, Digital, Sexual

1 Introduction

Male perspectives on addressing porn use and addiction in Aotearoa New Zealand reveal nuanced understandings shaped by social and gendered contexts. Young men in New Zealand perceive porn addiction primarily through the lens of frequency of use rather than broader psychosocial issues [1]. They tend to believe that men are more susceptible to porn addiction compared to women, who are seen as less likely to engage with or become addicted to porn [1]. Among these young men, a minority express concern



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about their own potential addiction, reflecting a masculine viewpoint that emphasises control over usage patterns rather than other related consequences [1].

This perspective aligns with broader masculine concerns about self-regulation and the social acceptability of porn consumption [2–3]. The focus on frequency suggests that interventions or discussions around porn use among young men might benefit from addressing patterns of use explicitly, rather than solely focusing on moral or relational impacts [1, 4]. The gendered dimension also indicates that male experiences and perceptions of porn addiction are distinct and may require tailored approaches in both research and clinical practice [5].¹

While the context does not provide detailed information on specific strategies employed by men in Aotearoa New Zealand to address porn use or addiction, it highlights the importance of understanding male viewpoints as part of the broader discourse on sexual behavior and addiction. The findings suggest that young men's concerns about addiction are often linked to their own self-assessment of control and frequency, which could inform future research and intervention frameworks in this setting [1–3].¹

No additional detailed data on male strategies or treatment approaches specific to Aotearoa New Zealand were found in the provided context. Therefore, further research may be necessary to explore how men actively address or seek help for porn use and addiction in this region.

One study involving sexual health experts from Australia and New Zealand highlights that parents often experience challenges engaging with sexually explicit media (SEM) literacy education, partly due to a desire to protect children's innocence and a lack of awareness about SEM availability and support resources [6]. Experts suggest that parental engagement benefits from neutral, inclusive approaches and that harm reduction strategies can help parents support their children in critically analyzing SEM, which may indirectly influence male attitudes towards pornography in these cultural contexts.³

In addition, a multi-country survey including New Zealand found that certain demographic and attitudinal factors correlate with behaviors related to image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), a form of technology-facilitated sexual harm [7]. Males in New Zealand were among those more likely to report perpetration of IBSA, with attitudes minimizing harm and excusing perpetrators being significant correlates. This suggests that cultural or societal attitudes in New Zealand may influence some males' perceptions and behaviors related to sexual content and consent, which could extend to attitudes towards pornography.⁴

Despite this, no direct data on male cultural attitudes towards pornography in New Zealand were found in the context, nor were there specific discussions of cultural practices shaping these attitudes. For example, the study on the cultural practice of chinamwali/khomba in Zimbabwe addresses male perceptions of female initiation rituals but is not transferable to pornography use or the New Zealand context [8].

While direct evidence examining cultural influences on male attitudes toward pornography in New Zealand remains limited, existing research highlights the role of attitudinal, social, and contextual factors in shaping pornography use and related sexual beliefs among men. Studies conducted in Australasia and other Western contexts commonly examine pornography use in relation to gender, sexual orientation, religiosity, age, and individual consumption patterns, but rarely include analyses of cultural, Indigenous, or ethnic identity [9–12].

For example, research examining associations between pornography use and body image among heterosexual and sexual minority men reported significant attitudinal and wellbeing correlates but did not consider cultural or ethnic distinctions beyond sexual orientation [13]. Similarly, population-based studies exploring perceived norms and frequency of pornography use have focused on demographic and psychosocial factors such as age, religiosity, and personal use, without stratifying findings by ethnicity or Indigenous status [3, 14]. Other studies investigating pornography characteristics and their associations with sexual attitudes, behaviours, and health beliefs have largely relied on samples of young adults or university students, with no reported cultural subgroup analyses [15–16]. Latent profile analyses of pornography users have further identified distinct patterns of use and associated sexual attitudes; however, these profiles have not incorporated cultural or ethnic comparisons [17].

Therefore, the existing literature demonstrates a consistent absence of culturally specific or Indigenous-focused analyses of male attitudes toward pornography. As a result, there is currently no direct empirical evidence addressing how cultural context shapes pornography attitudes among Indigenous or ethnic minority men in New Zealand or comparable settings. Further research explicitly engaging these populations is required to address this gap and to support culturally grounded approaches to sexual health and pornography literacy.

2 Position and key terms

This study takes a digital wellbeing and harm-reduction perspective. Rather than treating pornography use as pathological or morally deviant, we focus on pornography-related harm as it is understood and experienced by Pacific men themselves within the relational and moral ecologies of church, culture, and community. In this paper, pornography-related harms refer to perceived negative impacts on relationships, wellbeing, and identity, including shame, secrecy, conflict with spiritual commitments, and difficulties discussing sexuality within families and faith settings. We use “problematic pornography use” to refer to pornography use experienced as difficult to control or misaligned with personal, relational, or spiritual values, rather than a clinically diagnosed “addiction” [18]. We also use “pornography literacy” to mean the skills and supports that help people understand, critically interpret, and talk about pornography (including consent, respect, and healthy relationships) in culturally meaningful ways [19].

This focus is important because Pacific men’s experiences are shaped by collectivist values and faith-based norms, yet their perspectives are rarely centred in pornography research. By examining how Pacific men make meaning of pornography and identify culturally legitimate avenues for prevention and support, this study aims to inform culturally grounded, community- and church-engaged strategies that reduce silence and shame and enable earlier, safer conversations about sexuality and digital wellbeing.

2.1 Methods

2.1.1 Research design

This study adopted a qualitative research design grounded in Pacific Indigenous methodologies, specifically talanoa and faikava approaches. These methods foreground relationality, reciprocity, and collective meaning-making, and are widely recognised as culturally appropriate for engaging Pacific communities on sensitive and stigmatised

Table 1 Sample demographic and pornography patterns of use (n, %)

Variable	Categories	n = 50 (%)
Age group	18–19 years	8 (16%)
	20–22 years	38 (76%)
	23+ years	4 (8%)
Location	Auckland	14 (28%)
	New Plymouth	16 (32%)
	Dunedin	20 (40%)
Ethnicity	Tongan	13 (26%)
	Samoaan	4 (8%)
	Fijian	32 (64%)
	(Niuean/Māori/Tokelauan/Other)	1 (2%)
Religious affiliation	Christian (all denominations)	50 (100%)
	None/Agnostic	0 (0%)
First porn use (Age)	≤ 12 years	3 (6%)
	13–15 years	34 (68%)
	≥ 16 years	13 (26%)
Perception of pornography	Good	18 (36%)
	Bad	22 (44%)
	Mixed/Unsure	10 (20%)
Frequency of porn use	Daily	15 (30%)
	Weekly	20 (40%)
	Occasionally	13 (26%)
	Never	2 (4%)
Preferred device	Mobile Phone	35 (70%)
	Laptop/Desktop	10 (20%)
	Tablet/Smart TV	5 (10%)

topics [20–21]. Talanoa (a ‘personal encounter’ where people share/‘story’ their issues, realities, and aspirations through open-ended conversation) privileges dialogic exchange and storytelling, enabling participants to articulate lived experiences in ways that are culturally authentic and relational rather than extractive [21]. Faikava (literally, to prepare and drink kava together ‘with due form or ceremony’ in Tongan) is a structured communal kava circle that supports extended collective reflection [22]; in this study, the shared setting and protocols helped participants build comfort and rapport over time, which in turn enabled layered narratives (e.g., shame, relational accountability, church expectations) that informed the themes developed in analysis.

The study formed part of a larger Health Research Council (HRC)–funded programme investigating the strengths, risks, and harms associated with digital wellbeing among Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand, in particular with online gaming and gambling, social media use and addiction and porn use and addiction. As part of the pornography stream, this paper specifically explored Pacific male youths’ experiences of addressing pornography use and addiction within cultural, relational, and spiritual contexts.

3 Participants and recruitment

Fifty Pacific male youth aged between 18 and 30 years participated in the study. Participants were recruited from three urban locations, Auckland, New Plymouth, and Dunedin (see Table 1), to capture a range of social and geographical contexts. Recruitment occurred through established Pacific youth networks, churches, cultural organisations, and social media platforms. Recruitment materials invited Pacific men aged 18 years and

over to participate in confidential, culturally grounded talanoa conversations exploring experiences and perspectives related to relationships, culture, and pornography.

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure diversity across Pacific ethnic identities, including Sāmoan, Tongan, Cook Islands Māori, Niuean, Fijian, and Tokelauan participants. This approach enabled the inclusion of varied cultural perspectives while remaining attentive to shared Pacific values and experiences. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation and received a \$50 gift card in recognition of their time and contribution, consistent with culturally respectful research practice.

4 Data collection

Data were collected between June 2023 and February 2024 using two complementary qualitative methods: individual talanoa sessions and group faikava circles. Individual talanoa sessions lasted between 45 min and 1.5 h and were conducted in locations chosen by participants to support comfort, privacy, and cultural safety. These sessions facilitated open-ended, empathetic dialogue, allowing participants to narrate personal experiences and reflections related to pornography use without a predetermined agenda [21]. Consistent with talanoa principles, conversations unfolded organically through relational engagement and mutual trust. Relational engagement and trust were cultivated through several deliberate practices: researchers introduced themselves and shared their own cultural backgrounds and connections to Pacific communities prior to beginning conversations; sessions were preceded by informal conversation and shared kail and participants selected locations familiar to them, supporting comfort, privacy, and cultural safety.

Faikava circles were conducted as an alternative to conventional focus groups and were held in familiar community settings, including churches and community halls. These gatherings typically lasted between three and five hours and incorporated the cultural practice of kava consumption (i.e., the preparation and sharing of kava, a traditional Pacific beverage, within a structured communal circle), creating a relaxed and relational environment conducive to collective storytelling and critical dialogue [22–23]. Faikava supported the co-construction of knowledge through shared narratives and communal reflection, with the facilitator posing questions to the group as a whole rather than to individuals, enabling participants to build upon, challenge, and affirm one another's accounts as meanings emerged collectively through dialogue.

Although talanoa conversations were guided by relational engagement rather than a fixed interview schedule, participants were invited to reflect on their experiences of pornography within cultural, relational, and spiritual contexts. Key issues traversed included: early exposure and awareness of pornography; the role of church and family in shaping responses to pornography use; cultural values and the tension between tapu (sacred or forbidden in relation to people, places, and topics [24] and open discussion of sexuality; preferred sources of support (e.g., peers, older siblings, church leaders, partners); shame, silence, and masculine identity; and ideas for community-led prevention and education. These areas were not imposed as predetermined topics but emerged organically through relational dialogue, consistent with talanoa principles. Faikava circles similarly traversed these issues through collective reflection, with the communal kava setting enabling participants to engage with shared community norms, church expectations, and group accountability, thereby directly addressing the study's focus on

church, culture, and community as key shaping contexts for Pacific males' experiences of pornography.

All talanoa sessions and faikava discussions were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim.

4.1 Data analysis

Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke [25]. This method was selected for its flexibility and suitability for interpreting meaning across culturally grounded qualitative data while allowing themes to be generated inductively from participants' accounts. Analysis proceeded iteratively, beginning with familiarisation of the data, followed by initial coding, theme development, and refinement.

Initial coding was conducted independently by SK, BK, and RK, with subsequent analytic discussions held collaboratively with EF, SR, and GT to refine codes and construct a coherent thematic framework. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to support systematic data management, coding, and retrieval across all transcripts, contributing to analytic rigour and transparency.

Themes were treated as interpretive constructs generated through iterative team analysis rather than as summaries of frequency or participant consensus, consistent with Braun and Clarke's reflexive approach [25]. To illustrate the analytic process: initial codes capturing participants' accounts of shame, silence, and discomfort discussing pornography within family settings were grouped with codes relating to church expectations, moral taboo, and calls for leadership modelling, constructing the theme of church, family, and structural responsibility. Codes relating to kava circles, culturally familiar messengers, collective dialogue, and peer support coalesced into the theme of culturally grounded and collective approaches. Codes around early exposure, trusted relational figures such as older brothers and peers, and the framing of prevention as preparation rather than prohibition were grouped to construct the theme of early, open, and relational conversations. Across all three themes, analytic decisions were guided by convergence across participants and data collection sites, cultural relevance to the interconnected domains of church, culture, and community, and attention to both shared patterns and points of tension or variation within the data. In presenting the findings, a small number of participant excerpts are intentionally drawn across multiple subthemes. This analytic choice reflects the interconnected nature of participants' experiences and highlights the multidimensional ways digital sexual content intersects with identity, relationships, cultural expectations, and wellbeing among Pacific male youth.

Excerpts presented in the Results were purposively selected during later-stage analysis to be clearly illustrative of the analytic themes, and to reflect a spread across participants and data collection modes and sites (Auckland, New Plymouth, Dunedin). Where possible, we included excerpts that (i) captured shared patterns evident across the dataset, (ii) demonstrated variation or tension within a theme, and (iii) were sufficiently self-contained to be understood without extensive contextualisation. Excerpts and their thematic placement were reviewed in team analytic discussions to ensure narrative segments were typical of the broader pattern (and not outliers) and retained sufficient context.

4.2 Ethical considerations and reflexivity

This study was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki in all stages, and the study was conducted after approval was obtained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (Reference Number: 22/295). Given that data were collected through face-to-face talanoa sessions and faikava circles, full anonymity was not possible, as participants were known to the research team. Confidentiality was therefore prioritised and maintained through several measures. Participants were assigned pseudonyms or participant codes, which were used in place of real names across all transcripts, notes, and reported findings. Identifying details, such as specific locations, names of churches or community organisations, or references that could identify individuals within small communities, were removed or generalised in transcripts and in the presentation of findings. Audio recordings were stored on password-protected, encrypted devices accessible only to the research team. All transcripts and associated data files were stored on a secure, university-managed server with access restricted to named members of the research team. Participants were reminded of these protections at the outset of each session and were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence, including the right to request that their data not be used.

Reflexivity was integral to the research process and was undertaken by the entire research team. EF, a Pacific male researcher with shared cultural background and lived experience, engaged critically with his positionality and the ways in which cultural affiliation, relational proximity, and personal values could influence interpretation. All team members also maintained ongoing reflexive practice by examining how their own positionalities (including ethnicity, professional role, and relative power/status within the research relationship) influenced data collection, analytic attention, and meaning-making. This was supported through regular analytic discussions, reflexive memoing, and peer debriefing, with deliberate attention to cultural humility, power dynamics, and prioritising participants' voices throughout analysis.

Cultural humility was upheld through deliberate analytic practices. During theme construction, the team routinely paused to interrogate whether emerging interpretations reflected researcher assumptions or participants' own meanings, drawing on the cultural knowledge held within the Pacific team members to contextualise accounts. Where interpretations were uncertain or potentially shaped by clinical or academic framings, these were flagged in analytic discussions and revisited against the raw data. Themes were grounded as far as possible in participants' own language and cultural concepts. This included tapu, collective accountability, and the relational significance of spaces such as kava circles and church, rather than being imposed from external theoretical frameworks.

5 Results

Three key themes arose from Pacific male perceptions of addressing pornography within Aotearoa: (1) early, open, and relational conversations led by trusted figures within Pacific communities; (2) culturally grounded and collective approaches; and (3) the role of church leaders in supporting and modelling open discussion that families can carry into the home.

6 Theme 1: community; early, open, and relational conversations led by trusted people

Participants emphasised the need for pornography to be discussed earlier in life through open, ongoing conversations that reduce awkwardness and shame. This was grounded in accounts of early exposure, with a mean reported age of first exposure of around 14 years across the Auckland talanoa and Dunedin focus group, and some reporting exposure as young as seven years old. In this context, prevention was framed less as prohibition and more as preparation, focused on equipping young people with an understanding of risks before harmful patterns develop. Participants highlighted the importance of creating safe, normalised spaces where these discussions can occur without judgment.

Workshops, remove the awkwardness that comes with it... because it's affecting habits at younger ages, so they can start talking about it earlier and are aware of the risks.

Participants stressed that these conversations were most effective when led by trusted relational figures, such as older brothers, cousins, peers, parents, partners, or respected community members. Advice delivered within existing relationships was viewed as more credible and influential than messages from distant authority figures.

"If you get someone they looked up to, then they would listen, not just some random minister telling them, someone with actual influence on that person's life in the community bring up like the older brother figures."

How these conversations were approached was also seen as critical. Although pornography was acknowledged as uncomfortable, participants believed it could be raised in ways that minimise shame and defensiveness. Some described speaking with younger relatives about how pornography may shape perceptions of relationships and women, framing these discussions as guidance rather than judgment.

You don't do it in a way that makes it awkward... just making sure they know what they're getting into and how it can change the way you see relationships... I've already sort of done it with my cousins... you're going to get pleasure from it, but then you will learn, but it's going to change the way you see the woman and not really, in a good way.

Despite recognising the need for early and open dialogue, participants noted that shame, discomfort, and the belief that "everyone goes through it" often silence these conversations. Preferences for who to speak with varied, with some indicating they "rather talk about it with a partner than talk about it with parents," reinforcing the importance of relational closeness and perceived safety. Overall, community-led, relational conversations were central to meaningful prevention efforts.

6.1 Theme 2: culturally grounded and collective approaches

Participants emphasised the importance of culturally grounded, collective spaces for addressing pornography-related harm. Pacific cultural settings such as kava groups, talanoa, churches, and wider community gatherings were described as appropriate and meaningful contexts for engaging with sensitive topics. Culture itself was not positioned as a barrier to open discussion; rather, participants suggested that disconnection from

culturally affirming spaces increased vulnerability to harm. Working through existing community and cultural structures was viewed as a way to address pornography in ways that felt less awkward and more relevant to Pacific lived realities.

We need to work through communities, especially churches and different types of cultural community, to address the harm... and address it in a way that's not awkward.

Participants highlighted the value of collective learning, where shared dialogue validated individual experiences. Talanoa was described as a relational, non-judgmental approach that enabled open discussion not only about pornography, but also about mental health and wellbeing. Culturally informed dialogue helped participants feel understood in ways that culturally disconnected approaches did not.

Even if he is educated... he doesn't understand my culture, so having the boys come and talk to me about my problems and tell me how which ways to resolve... helped me.

This contrast illustrates how cultural disconnection was experienced as alienating, while culturally familiar support (“the boys”) was enabling. Kava groups were described as safe cultural spaces where open and honest conversation could occur naturally. These spaces were likened to “yarns with the boys,” where multiple perspectives were valued and nothing was considered wrong to say. Such environments reduced isolation, normalised shared struggles, and reinforced collective support.

Doesn't feel like research anymore, feels like it's just another yarn with the boys but more meaningful... you don't go through the struggle yourself; we all go through it, and you can have different perspectives.

Participants also described a tension between addressing pornography and preserving cultural values, particularly tapu (taboo; sacred or forbidden). In the context of sexuality and pornography, tapu operates to protect collective values around sexual modesty, intergenerational respect, and family honour, topics considered inappropriate to raise openly, particularly across generational or gender lines. To discuss pornography explicitly within these cultural settings therefore risks transgressing tapu by introducing into communal or family space something considered spiritually and socially forbidden. This created a dilemma for participants: acknowledging and addressing pornography-related harm required breaking a culturally sanctioned silence, yet maintaining that silence left young people without guidance or support. For some, this tension contributed to avoidance rather than engagement.

I think we're not hiding behind culture in order to suppress the issue of pornography. But I think culture is just there and pornography is like, there's just two things that are side by side... I think it comes down to our priorities, and if we think that pornography is more concerning than like our tapu... but if we think that our tapu is more valuable to us... I don't think we can take it out from anyone's life.

Despite this tension, participants argued that acknowledgement, rather than avoidance, was necessary for prevention, allowing young people to be guided before harm develops. Pornography-related concerns were also framed in collective terms, particularly in

relation to church and Pacific identity, where individual behaviour was seen as reflecting on the wider community.

It represents us and our culture... because we all have the same upbringing through church.

Overall, participants positioned culturally grounded, collective approaches as essential for effective prevention and support, enabling pornography-related discussions to occur within culturally meaningful conversations about wellbeing and identity.

6.2 Theme 3: church, family, and structural responsibility

Participants consistently positioned both the church and family as central to the prevention of pornography-related harm, describing these domains as deeply interconnected within Pacific communities. Churches were seen as influential spaces that shape values and norms, while families were viewed as the primary setting where early guidance should occur. However, participants emphasised that pornography is often avoided across both settings due to taboo, discomfort, and shame.

The main thing is acknowledging there's such a thing as porn, with the taboos... but we need families to have a conversation about everything... my experience as a church leader is just a friend to another friend acknowledging it, talk about it.

This account illustrates how participants understood prevention as a shared responsibility, where church leaders support and model open dialogue that families can carry into the home. Despite this, many participants reported that pornography was rarely discussed within their own families. When conversations did occur, they were often limited to brief warnings without further explanation or space for discussion.

They were just telling me not to get into that kind of stuff... that it's unhealthy and not the real thing.

Silence around pornography was described as being maintained by discomfort and a belief that pornography use is common but unspoken, resulting in inaction even when harm is recognised.

"You never hear parents say, 'do you want to talk about what porn is'... it just makes everyone uncomfortable."

Participants also described how this silence extended into the wider community, where awareness of others' pornography use did not necessarily lead to intervention.

We know of other people... but do we actually go to them and say something, or do we just let it continue? ... We just let it continue.

While churches and families was described as primary prevention opportunities, participants acknowledged the role of broader structural supports, including school-based sex education, cyber safety education, and policy-level protections, as necessary backstops when church or family conversations do not occur.

Teach them in school cause school is the only place where kids can learn, yeah they can learn at home but like at the same time our parent are still not even learned any of that cyber safety, I learned it in school once.

Overall, participants framed pornography prevention as a collective responsibility, requiring aligned action across church leadership, family dialogue, and wider social structures to ensure young people are supported rather than left to navigate pornography alone.

While participants shared several cross-cutting views, we are mindful of the risk of treating 'Pacific men' as a homogenous group. This study was not designed to produce systematic comparisons by Pacific ethnicity (and subgroup sizes were uneven); however, men's accounts suggested potential within-group variation in how pornography was understood and addressed, for example, differences in the degree of church centrality, comfort discussing sexuality with parents versus peers/partners, and preferred sites of support (e.g., family, church leadership, or 'the boys' in kava circles). These patterns are suggestive rather than definitive and warrant targeted research that is sufficiently resourced to examine diversity within and across Pacific communities.

7 Discussion

This study explored Pacific males' perspectives on preventing and reducing pornography-related harm within Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Using talanoa, the findings affirm previous research identifying pornography as a tapu topic in Pacific families and communities, often associated with shame and awkwardness [26]. Extending this literature, the present study shifts focus from barriers to prevention by identifying culturally grounded practices that participants viewed as realistic and meaningful for Pacific communities in Aotearoa. Three key themes emerged: (1) early, open, and relational conversations led by trusted figures within Pacific communities; (2) culturally grounded and collective approaches; and (3) the role of church leaders in supporting and modelling open discussion that families can carry into the home. Collectively, these themes position pornography prevention as a relational and community-embedded process, rather than an individualised or prohibition-focused intervention.

Previous research demonstrates that knowledge exchange in Pacific contexts is inherently relational, with information carrying meaning and credibility only when shared within trusted and respectful relationships, such as those fostered through faikava and talanoa [21, 27–28]. This was reflected in the present study, where participants consistently advocated for pornography-related discussions to be led by trusted relational figures, viewing these relationships as central to effective engagement. Participants further emphasised the importance of cultural competence, noting that culturally familiar messengers were better able to facilitate meaningful dialogue. Consistent with prior research, such support was described as enabling, allowing young Pacific people to feel understood in ways that culturally disconnected approaches or unfamiliar individuals could not achieve [29–30]. This finding highlights the limitations of individualised or expert-led models of sexual health education, emphasising instead the importance of relational authority and cultural embeddedness.

It is also significant that participants consistently identified other males (older brothers, cousins, peers, and respected community men) as the most appropriate and credible messengers for pornography-related conversations with younger males. This reflects a culturally grounded pattern of gendered knowledge transmission in Pacific contexts, where older males occupy a sanctioned role in guiding younger males on matters of identity, behaviour, and responsibility [31–32]. Cross-gender discussion of sexuality and

pornography may be experienced as culturally transgressive or inappropriate within many Pacific family and community settings, where tapu governs what can be said, by whom, and to whom [26, 33]. The male-to-male relational model identified here is therefore not simply a participant preference but a culturally specific practice that intervention designers and community educators should explicitly account for when developing pornography prevention approaches within Pacific communities.

Avenues for discussion were viewed as most effective when situated within culturally safe and affirming environments, including kava circles, talanoa, churches, and wider community gatherings. Participants described these spaces as reducing shame and awkwardness, enabling engagement with sensitive and taboo topics such as pornography. This reflects broader Pacific scholarship demonstrating that culturally grounded contexts foster relational safety and trust, which are essential for open dialogue on sensitive issues [26, 32]. Previous research has shown that approaches grounded in Pacific relational practices (talanoa, faikava) create environments where difficult conversations can occur without fear of judgment or cultural transgression [21, 34]. Similarly, studies in Pacific sexual and reproductive health highlight that culturally embedded settings support engagement by aligning discussion with Pacific values, protocols, and collective ways of knowing, thereby increasing the likelihood that messages are received, trusted, and acted upon [35]. Together, these findings reinforce the importance of culturally safe spaces as essential to effective pornography prevention within Pacific communities.

While culturally safe environments enabled open discussion, participants highlighted that the presence of and stance of respected leaders within these spaces, particularly church leaders, played a critical role in legitimising conversations about pornography and reducing silence at the family level. Within many Pacific communities, discussion of pornography and sexuality are often considered tapu and shaped by moral frameworks that emphasise sexual restraint and modesty, particularly within church teachings, contributing to shame and avoidance [33, 35]. Findings from this study suggest that discussion may begin when church leaders explicitly acknowledge the prevalence of pornography and the discomfort surrounding the topic, rather than treating it as unspeakable. In doing so, leaders can signal moral permission for conversation, reducing shame and authorising families and communities to engage in dialogue. In this way, church leadership functions not only as moral authority, but as a gatekeeper of legitimacy, shaping whether pornography is treated as a private shame or a collective issue that can be openly addressed. This interpretation aligns within Pacific research demonstrating the influential role of church leadership in shaping social norms and community responses to sensitive issues [27, 32].

Taken together, these findings have important implications for public health approaches to pornography prevention within Pacific communities. Rather than relying on individualised or expert-led models, participants' accounts highlight the importance of interventions that are relationally grounded, culturally embedded, and led by trusted community figures. Public health action may therefore be more effective when it supports existing relational networks (church leadership, faikava groups, peer or family-based discussions) rather than attempting to introduce external programmes in culturally disconnected settings. By resourcing trusted leaders and facilitating culturally safe spaces for dialogue, public health initiatives can align prevention efforts with Pacific

values, enhance legitimacy, and support earlier, more open conversations that families are more likely to carry into the home.

7.1 Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. Participants were primarily recruited through Pacific community networks, including churches and cultural organisations, which may have shaped the perspectives represented. Pacific men who are less connected to community or faith-based settings, or who hold differing views on pornography, may therefore be underrepresented.

The study focused on Pacific males aged 18–30 years, and findings may not be transferable to older Pacific men, adolescents, or Pacific women. While this focus was intentional and appropriate to the study aims, future research could explore how experiences and prevention needs differ across age groups, genders, and family roles.

Data was generated through self-reported accounts within relational and group-based settings. Although *talanoa* and *faikava* are designed to promote openness, social desirability and collective norms may have influenced how participants discussed pornography, particularly in relation to shame, morality, and masculinity. The findings therefore reflect perceived experiences and meanings rather than objective measures of pornography use or addiction severity.

As a qualitative study, the findings are not intended to be generalisable. While the study identifies implications for culturally responsive public health and community-led prevention, it does not evaluate specific interventions or outcomes. Further research is needed to examine how the approaches identified here can be implemented and assessed across diverse Pacific contexts.

We did not design this study to examine how socioeconomic position ('class') or sexuality may shape participants' accounts, and we did not systematically collect measures of sexual orientation or gender identity. Accordingly, we avoid making assumptions about participants' gender identity (e.g., cisgender) or drawing conclusions about how class or sexuality influenced narrative patterns. Future research should adopt an intersectional lens to examine how socioeconomic position, sexuality, gender identity, and diverse masculinities shape pornography-related meanings and help-seeking among Pacific men.

Finally, although our sampling sought ethnic diversity, the distribution across Pacific groups was uneven (with a majority of participants identifying as Fijian), and we did not set out to conduct comparative subgroup analyses. As a result, the findings should not be read as representing a single, uniform 'Pacific male' experience. Future research should deliberately pursue intersectional analyses of pornography-related meanings and support preferences among Pacific men, examining how experiences vary by Pacific ethnicity, migration and generation status, denomination/church involvement, language, socioeconomic position, sexuality, relationship status, and geography (urban/regional). This would help identify whether different community settings (e.g., church, *faikava*, family) function differently across groups, and inform more tailored, culturally safe interventions.

8 Conclusion

This study highlights key relational, cultural, and leadership considerations that have importance implications for the design of public health approaches to preventing and reducing pornography-related harm within Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Findings suggest that effective prevention is less about prohibiting exposure and more about enabling early, open dialogue through trusted relationships and culturally legitimate spaces. Public health efforts that align with Pacific values by supporting community- and church-led conversations may therefore be better positioned to reduce silence, address shame, and foster meaningful engagement for young Pacific people and their families. Future research is needed to examine how trusted community and church leaders can be supported to facilitate early, relational conversations about pornography, and how such approaches influence engagement, acceptability, and wellbeing outcomes for Pacific young people.

Supplementary Information

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Supplementary Material 1

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Author contributions

Simon Erickson: data curation (supporting); formal analysis (lead); writing original draft preparation (lead); writing review & editing (lead). Bale Kito: conceptualization (equal); data curation (lead); investigation (equal); writing review & editing (supporting). Gareth Treharne: conceptualization (equal); investigation (supporting); resources (equal); writing review & editing (supporting). Simone Rodda: conceptualization (equal); funding acquisition (supporting); supervision (equal); writing review & editing (supporting). Rebekah Kennedy: investigation (supporting); writing review & editing (supporting). Edmond Fehoko: conceptualization (equal); investigation (supporting); resources (lead); supervision (lead); writing original draft (supporting).

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Data availability

No datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki in all stages, and the study was conducted after approval was obtained from the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee (Reference Number: 25/1176). All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation.

Consent for publication

All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation for their anonymised information to the published article.

Human and animal rights

No animal or human subjects by the authors were used in this study.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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