

# Consumption of Sexually Explicit Materials, Sexual Risk Behaviors and Protective Factors Among US College Students: A Systematic Review Of The Literature

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## BACKGROUND

- ❑ The sexually explicit material (SEM) industry in the US, as a whole, is thought to generate roughly \$14 billion in revenue per year<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ SEM (also often referred to as “porn”) on the Internet is believed to represent a unique form of sexually explicit media—its ubiquitous nature makes it qualitatively different from non-Internet pornography<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ Increased access to low-cost or free SEM content on the Internet has coincided with the steady decline of brick-and-mortar SEM vendors<sup>3</sup>
- ❑ Internet use among all age groups (18-65+) has grown by more than 34% since 2000 with 96% of adults ages 18-29 using the Internet regularly<sup>3</sup>
- ❑ Use in this age group remains highest among those with some college education or a college degree (92.5%) vs. those with a HS educational or less (71%)<sup>3</sup>
- ❑ Correlates of SEM consumption have been widely researched; however, research has predominantly focused on negative outcomes such as violence, rape, addiction, etc.<sup>4</sup>
- ❑ A recent shift in the literature has begun to advocate for the exploration of SEM consumption for reasons such as entertainment, boredom, and the exploration of sexual identity
- ❑ Association between SEM consumption and both risk and protective factors (e.g. use of safer sex methods) has received limited attention<sup>5</sup>
- ❑ Thus, social context—which includes demographics such as age, gender and sexual orientation—must be considered when attempting to understand the consumption of SEM<sup>6</sup>
- ❑ To the authors’ knowledge, this is the first systematic literature review exploring both risk and protective factors associated with SEM consumption in US college students

For more information:  
<https://osf.io/czf4q/>

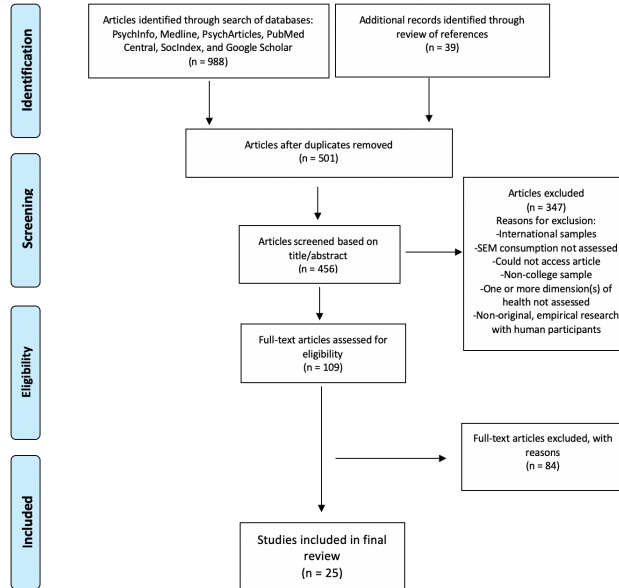


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

Search Term Number	Keyword Search terms
1	porn + college students
2	porn + college students + health
3	porn + undergraduate
4	sexually explicit material + college students
5	sexually explicit materials + college students + health
6	sexually explicit materials + undergraduate

Table 1. Keyword Search Terms

Search Term Number	Initial Database Search Results				Search Results Totals
	PsychInfo, Medline, and PsychArticles	Socindex	PubMed Central	Socindex, PsychInfo, PsychArticles, and Medline	
1	77	50	137	465	729
2	37	10	0	0	47
3	63	25	8	0	96
4	17	11	21	36	85
5	4	0	0	0	4
6	8	3	16	0	27
Results Totals	206	99	182	501	988

Table 2. Keyword Search Results by Database

## METHODS

- ❑ Using the PRISMA approach for systematic literature reviews<sup>7</sup>, a search of the literature was conducted in March 2019
- ❑ Articles were identified for review by searching several social/behavioral and medical databases using specific search strings and keywords (see Table 1)
- ❑ Criteria for full-text review included the following: 1) US college students as the sample; 2) Exploration of individual and voluntary SEM consumption; 3) Exploration of individual sexual risk behaviors; 4) Use of an empirical study design; 5) Written in English; 6) Published in a peer-reviewed journal; 7) Published between 2000 and 2019; and 8) Full text availability

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS/FINDINGS

- ❑ An initial screening of article titles/abstracts yielded 456 potential articles; further screening produced a total of 109 articles for full text review
- ❑ Twenty-five full-text articles were retained for final review; none of the articles included the assignment of an intervention as part of the study’s design
- ❑ As a work in progress, next steps include application of the Quality Index Scale (QIS)<sup>8</sup> to evaluate each study’s quality in the areas of reporting, internal and external validity, and power
- ❑ In addition, study characteristics such as sample size, sample characteristics, study approach and design, behavioral, risk and protective factors, and results/findings will be summarized

## DISCUSSION

- ❑ While the majority of the literature has focused on the potential negative impacts of increased SEM consumption, less research has focused on how risk reduction strategies and protective factors may be associated with the sexual health outcomes of college students
- ❑ The results/findings from this systematic literature review may help to summarize what is currently known about SEM consumption and sexual risk in college populations while also to assist in providing a rationale for future research exploring the potential positive aspects of such behaviors

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