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REVIEW

Pornography and Masturbation Addictions through the Lens of Self-Help: Insights from NeverFap Academy Members

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Main Points

- Participants' exposure to pornography and masturbation addiction typically began during adolescence, influenced by their social environment and easy access to technology.
- These addictions negatively impacted individuals' psychological, academic, social, and familial lives, leading to issues such as guilt, social isolation, lack of focus, and communication problems.
- NeverFap Academy's camps, WhatsApp groups, and digital content provided participants with structured routines, social support, and opportunities for personal growth, significantly aiding their recovery process.

Abstract

This qualitative study analyzes the experiences of individuals struggling with pornography and masturbation addiction, focusing on their engagement with NeverFap Academy, a peer-based self-help platform in Türkiye. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who actively used the NeverFap's resources, including thematic online camps, WhatsApp support groups, YouTube videos, and blog content. Thematic analysis identified three major themes: encountering addiction, effects on life, and fighting addiction. Findings revealed that initial exposure to pornography, often accompanied by compulsive masturbation, typically occurred during adolescence, influenced by peers and easy online access. Participants reported significant negative effects in psychological, academic, social, and familial domains, including guilt, concentration problems, social withdrawal, and strained relationships. NeverFap Academy was seen as instrumental in promoting recovery through structured routines, community support, and value-based motivation. The platform not only helped reduce addictive behaviors but also fostered personal growth and a renewed sense of purpose. While the study shows the value of community-based efforts in addressing addiction, its findings are limited to the NeverFap community. Future research should compare self-help initiatives like NoFap, NeverFap, and Jiese and explore their integration into broader mental health and policy frameworks.
Keywords: Addiction, masturbation, pornography, self-help group

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Introduction

Behavioral addictions refer to persistent patterns of behavior that individuals struggle to control, including internet, gaming, gambling, shopping, and sexual behaviors (Yaman et al., 2015; Zubaroğlu Yanardağ et al., 2020). Pornography and masturbation addictions fall under sexual behavioral addictions. While pornography addiction involves continued use despite value conflicts (Fraumeni-McBride, 2019), masturbation addiction is marked by compulsive sexual stimulation and lack of self-control. Though physical harms of masturbation lack strong empirical support, some studies advocate abstinence (Zimmer & Imhoff, 2020).

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Despite ongoing debate, increasing digital access to sexual content has reignited arguments for classifying these behaviors as addictions (Kızılok, 2021). The DSM-V lacks diagnostic criteria due to insufficient evidence (Weir, 2014). However, the ICD-11 (World Health Organization, 2019) officially recognized compulsive sexual behavior disorder (CSBD). Although it does not explicitly define pornography or masturbation addiction, CSBD provides a diagnostic framework that encompasses compulsive patterns of sexual behavior, including excessive pornography use and masturbation. In this context, Taylor (2019) attributes the addiction framing to media influence and behavioral addiction theories. Based on these perspectives, this study approaches the issue within the addiction framework.

Historically, concerns about masturbation and pornography trace back to Tissot's Onanism (1766), where masturbation was linked to imagination and habit (Garlick, 2011). With technological advancement and widespread internet access, pornography has become more accessible and normalized (McNabney et al., 2020), shifting attention from moral concerns to psychological and social implications (Harper, 2013; Perelman & Rowland, 2008; Magness, 2013). Ullén (2009) sees pornography as a market commodity, with associated masturbation resembling shopping addiction. Lautmann and Schetsche (1990) emphasize the psychological reinforcement of visual stimuli in this process.

These behaviors can impact romantic and sexual relationships. Frequent pornography use may heighten arousal but reduce satisfaction and partnered intimacy (Wright et al., 2021). Similarly, habitual masturbation may diminish emotional closeness (Gottman & Gottman, 2016). More broadly, pornography and masturbation may also have detrimental effects on psychological health (Coleman & Bockting, 2013; Gürel et al., 2025; Sutrisno & Saputra, 2025). Whether these issues should be classified as sexual dysfunctions or behavioral addictions remains debated (Russo et al., 2021; White, 2019; Wood, 2018).

Studies show rising pornography use, with around 75% of men actively engaged (Lewczuk & Gola, 2018; Zattoni et al., 2020). In addressing this, civil society initiatives, especially self-help groups, have gained visibility. One such initiative is NoFap—a peer-support community where members commit to abstinence and support each other (Smith et al., 2022; Taylor & Jackson, 2018). These communities help mitigate triggers like loneliness and boredom (Janssen et al., 2008). The Turkish counterpart of NoFap is NeverFap Academy (NeverFap Akademi, 2023). This study examines NeverFap Academy's role in supporting individuals with pornography and masturbation addictions, based on their lived experiences.

Material and Methods

This study aims to explore the processes of coping with addiction by focusing on the experiences of individuals struggling with pornography and masturbation addiction who have engaged with NeverFap. Designed as a cross-sectional and qualitative inquiry, the research examines participants' addiction-related problems, risk factors, and the perceived functions of NeverFap.

Qualitative research provides in-depth and contextual insights into individuals' lived experiences (Baltacı, 2019). In this study, a phenomenological design was adopted to explore phenomena that are recognized yet insufficiently understood (Creswell, 2013; Tekindal & Uğuz-Arsu, 2020). Rich data were obtained through participants' personal narratives concerning their addiction histories and their experiences with NeverFap. These data were then reinterpreted and analyzed by the researchers.

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa. Participants were informed about the study and selected based on voluntary participation. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent.

Study Group

Given the study's focus, participants were required to be individuals who had received support from NeverFap in their efforts to overcome pornography and masturbation addiction. Accordingly, the researchers contacted the organization's administrators, who then provided information to prospective participants. This process aligns with criterion sampling, in which participants are selected based on predetermined characteristics (Creswell, 2020).

An initial list of 14 volunteers was formed through NeverFap. Following preliminary interviews and consent procedures, 11 participants were ultimately included in the study, as three interviews could not be conducted. All interviews were held via phone calls with participants residing in various cities across Türkiye and were recorded with their explicit permission.

Data Collection

Prior to the interviews, the researchers developed a semi-structured interview form. Following ethical approval, the first interview was conducted on January 3, 2023, and the last on January 11, 2023. The interviews lasted between 45 and 100 minutes, with an average duration of approximately 75 minutes.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible method frequently used in qualitative research to identify patterns and themes within extensive datasets (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The aim was to organize the data and interpret its meaning through a framework of themes and subthemes.

Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and uploaded to MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020. Based on a set of predetermined codes, which were derived from preliminary themes identified by the researchers during the interviews, the data were thoroughly reviewed and coded using the software. The coding process was conducted sequentially by two researchers. After the initial coding was completed by the first researcher, the second researcher reviewed the coding and suggested revisions. Themes and subthemes were generated from these codes, and the analysis process was structured accordingly.

Results

This study primarily aims to examine the effectiveness of NeverFap Academy in addressing pornography and masturbation addictions. Additionally, it contextually explores the development and lived impacts of these addictions. The findings are structured under three main themes and corresponding subthemes and are presented in the Table 2.

Table 1.
Participant Information

Participant	Age, years	Sex	Profession/Department	Duration of Addiction (Years)
P1	28	Male	Imam	16
P2	21	Male	Psychology (S)	8
P3	18	Male	Student	3
P4	19	Female	Law (S)	7
P5	18	Female	International Relations (S)	1.5
P6	25	Male	Dentist	8
P7	22	Male	Guidance and Psychological Counselling (S)	6
P8	19	Male	Theology (S)	8
P9	22	Male	Electrical and Electronics Engineering (Ö)	9.5
P10	22	Female	Psychology (S)	12
P11	23	Male	Medicine (S)	9

Note: P = Participant; (S) = Student.

Encountering Addiction

The initial exposure to pornography and masturbation is considered the starting phase of the addiction process. In this context, the subthemes of "Social Environment" and "Technology" emerge as the primary determinants in this phase.

Social Environment

Some participants stated that their social environment and peer relationships played a significant role in their initial exposure to these behaviors. The school setting, in particular, stood out as a triggering context.

> "When I was in fourth grade, it was a topic that came up jokingly among our friends. We also had internet access at the time. That's how I got introduced to the porn industry ⋯ ⋯ And shortly after, it turned into masturbation behavior. ⋯ I think the main driving factor was not wanting to be excluded by the peer group. Because a child that age doesn't want to feel left out in conversations among friends." (P8)
> "I was probably in eighth grade, and that kind of talk was always circulating among my friends. It didn't really interest me much. But then I remember one of my friends coming to me and saying, 'Look, there's this thing,' and showing it to me. I remember feeling really uncomfortable the first time I saw it." (P11)

Table 2.
Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Encountering addiction	Social environment technology
Effects on life	Psychological effects Academic effects Social effects Familial effects
NeverFap in fighting addiction	NeverFap practices Benefits of NeverFap

Among female participants, however, the process was more often described as individual and self-directed, without external guidance.

> "I discovered it completely on my own. At least that's what I think. Because at first, it didn't make me feel bad. I felt more like ... it seemed normal." (P10)
> "I don't know, I mean, my friends didn't influence me at all. I just discovered it one day, and when I did, I felt like I had invented something—it made me happy." (P5)

Technology

According to participants, technological tools played a key role in their initial exposure to pornography and masturbation. Communication devices such as phones, computers, televisions, and the internet significantly facilitated access to these behaviors.

> "I used to sneak into internet cafés and sit in the back ... Even seeing a photo was enough for me." (P1)
> "A friend said, 'Come, I'll show you something.' I thought it would be a funny video, but it wasn't. Another friend also showed me something when we were studying at their place." (P9)

These statements indicate that technological tools were used not only individually but also through peer influence. Friends actively played a role in introducing participants to pornographic content.

> "When I was 11 – 12 years old, I was sexually harassed."
> "And as a result, it first showed up in the form of watching. I started with YouTube, though it doesn't allow everything—just limited content. From there, I began shifting toward other websites." (P4)
> "I can say I first encountered it when I got my first phone. I was in the first year of high school, and I had internet access. I hadn't seen an actual porn site yet, but I had started coming across accessible content online." (P10)

For some participants, prior traumas or gaining access to technological devices formed the foundation for their initial exposure to these behaviors. Technology not only made content more accessible but also created a pathway for the development of such behaviors.

Impact of Addiction on Life

Pornography and masturbation addiction influence individuals' lives in multifaceted ways. Based on participant accounts, these effects were categorized under four subthemes: psychological, academic, social, and familial.

Psychological Effects

Participants emphasized the profound psychological distress caused by the addiction. Feelings following pornography use or masturbation were described as emotional breakdown, guilt, hopelessness, spiritual conflict, and anger.

> "When your belief in making a change weakens, you fall into a pessimistic state ⋯ You might become angrier, doing things you normally wouldn't." (P2)
> "After each time I masturbated, I felt an intense discomfort, guilt, or something else. I remember feeling it very strongly." (P11)
> "Yes, I constantly feel guilty. It's pleasurable during, but afterwards, I might have a crying episode or feel deep guilt..." (P4)
> "You start to become melancholic. You withdraw and reduce your communication with others to a minimum. You react impulsively—either very angry or completely numb." (P8)

Some participants noted a conflict between the addictive behaviors and their personal values, leading to deep internal struggles. Guilt and anger toward the self were often rooted in the contradiction between public persona and private behaviors.

> "I used to feel intense anger toward myself. Like, how can you not beat this? I was fixated on that purity you see in children. I valued that a lot. And if I'm someone who values innocence, then why can't I escape this? I thought maybe I was just someone God didn't love." (P6)
> "Like, I talk about things like I'm a good person, but I have this addiction. People think highly of me. But when I go home, I become someone else. I do things no one would ever expect. This addiction is disgusting." (P4)

Academic Effects

Pornography and masturbation addiction were reported to negatively impact participants' academic lives. As the onset of addiction often coincided with school years, participants described direct consequences on their academic performance.

> *"In middle school, I used to rank first in my class and in citywide prep exams ... But during high school, when my addiction deepened, it was all about playing games, chatting with friends, goofing around, coming home and watching porn. That's how it went." (P9)*

Several participants described difficulties with concentration and time management, especially during periods of academic preparation.

> "Concentration was my biggest issue. I had the high school entrance exam, LGS, and I couldn't focus at all. My mind was somewhere else while I was trying to study, but it just didn't work." (P5)
> "I was really exhausted. It was a constant fall into addiction, and it prevented me from studying. I couldn't understand the topic, couldn't focus, and couldn't solve the questions." (P4)

According to these narratives, the loss of time and attention due to addiction made it difficult to maintain a consistent academic routine, resulting in decreased motivation, a sense of failure, and guilt.

Social Effects

Participant statements indicate that pornography and masturbation addiction significantly affect social life. Difficulties in maintaining daily routines, a decreased desire for social interaction, and a decline in social skills were frequently mentioned. Some participants deliberately chose solitude to make time for these behaviors, which over time became a habitual lifestyle.

> "It prevents you from controlling yourself, managing your life, sticking to routines, or pursuing your goals. Even when you don't want it, addiction takes your time and weakens your ability to act. It's simply an obstacle in your way." (P2)
> "I really struggled with socializing. I had a shy side and a strong fear of making mistakes. After the pandemic, it got even worse. I realized I was constantly avoiding social settings." (P10)

Several participants mentioned experiencing a lack of self-confidence, particularly in interactions with the opposite sex. Even basic social skills like making eye contact were described as difficult to achieve.

> "I admired scenes where a man talks to a woman in a movie while looking into her eyes. That kind of connection ... I was craving it. Back then, it felt completely unreachable for me." (P6)
> "I didn't want to meet boys. I didn't want to be friends with them ⋯ In middle school, maybe the way men treated women in porn influenced me..." (P5)

In some cases, violent or aggressive patterns seen in pornographic content were consciously or unconsciously reflected in participants' social behavior. P5's comment suggests that such content may negatively shape perceptions of the opposite sex.

Familial Effects

Pornography and masturbation addiction often develop during a period when individuals still live with their families. This context creates significant implications for familial relationships. Participant narratives reveal that such addiction may lead to involuntary outbursts of anger and weakened communication with family members.

"I could have hurt people when they tried to talk to me. I might have hurt my wife ⋯ Even my family. I even almost hurt my father." (P1)
"My mom tells my dad that I used to tell her everything that happened at school, but now I don't say anything. And it's true. I barely told her anything during high school." (P7)

Some participants noted that their addiction was used as a form of threat or coercion within the family, particularly when efforts were made to keep it hidden. This secrecy sometimes led to blackmail or psychological pressure.

"My brother discovered it when I was young. If he didn't get what he wanted, he would threaten me, like 'I'll tell mom.' And I knew my parents wouldn't react well if they found out." (P2)
"One guy said, 'I'm married, but I wasn't satisfied after sex. I went to the bathroom and started masturbating, and my wife caught me ⋯ That's how my family fell apart.' You see what I mean?" (P1)
"My dad is the type to blame others. I always thought he would blame me, so I never shared anything with him." (P4)

In some cases, addiction was described as a destructive factor within marriage. Sexual dissatisfaction between partners, exacerbated by the addiction, deepened communication problems. The experiences shared by participants illustrate that regardless of one's role within the family, this type of addiction can have damaging relational consequences.

NeverFap in Fighting Addiction

Since pornography and masturbation addiction negatively affect various aspects of life, addressing this issue is crucial. However, the recovery process often involves several barriers, particularly related to seeking support and sharing personal experiences. This theme examines the role of NeverFap in fighting addiction under two subthemes: *NeverFap Practices* and *Benefits of NeverFap*.

NeverFap Practices

NeverFap Academy's addiction-fighting dynamics are based on a variety of online applications, including a YouTube channel, blog posts, camps, and WhatsApp groups. Participants emphasized that these structures serve both informational and motivating functions.

Among the services offered, NeverFap's online camps are structured and demand-driven interventions. These camps are thematically organized based on user needs, such as willpower, time management, and stress regulation.

"For example, there's a willpower camp, a time management camp, a stress management camp. There's also the first step camp." (P2)
"Camps are actually demand-based. For instance, the stress management camp is offered during high-stress times like exam periods. Willpower camps are offered regularly." (P8)

Participants described the content of these camps as multifaceted, incorporating awareness-building, task assignment, behavioral monitoring, and developmental support. The process is facilitated through a mentoring system.

"The videos a person should watch in the camps are predetermined, and there are specific assignments. It starts at a basic level that everyone can manage and gradually increases. Each camp group also has a mentor." (P2)
"The camp is run via WhatsApp. You send a photo when you wake up in the morning, saying what you've done that day, how much you studied, and so on. They also assign tasks like reading a certain book. If you don't complete the tasks, you're immediately removed from the camp." (P5)

These camps are conducted through online communication, with mentors overseeing participants' daily routines, content delivery, and behavior tracking. The process follows strict rules and maintains a disciplined structure.

Among the various interventions offered by NeverFap, WhatsApp groups hold a significant role in the fight against pornography and masturbation addiction. According to participants, there are three main types of group structures: the main group, where general information and support are shared; the crisis support group, used for rapid intervention during critical moments; and the off-topic group, where everyday subjects are discussed.

"We have a main group where we talk about the recovery process and personal development. Anyone with a question can ask it, and a more experienced peer or a mentor responds. There's also a crisis support group. When someone is in crisis, they message the group, and available peers or mentors provide support. And then we have an off-topic group." (P3)

These groups help reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen a sense of belonging, thereby increasing motivation for recovery. Participants shared that reading blog posts and personal experiences within the groups made them feel supported.

"People want someone to witness what they're going through or to feel like they're part of a team. That's why we have WhatsApp groups. We regularly share blog posts prepared by NeverFap Academy about pornography." (P6)

Group membership requires a small fee, intended to ensure that participants are genuinely committed to recovery and to prevent the spread of harmful content. The symbolic fee was reported to be 15 Turkish Lira.

"When the WhatsApp groups first started, they were free. But since people were joining just to troll and even shared porn, a symbolic fee of 15 lira was introduced." (P9)

According to participant accounts, a separate group was created specifically for female users, as they are underrepresented in the program. This group includes tailored challenge events and mutual support mechanisms.

"There's a women's group, for example. Because there are fewer women, they created a special group. They do a challenge, like not watching or doing anything for a whole month." (P5)

In summary, the WhatsApp groups have become a functional part of the recovery process, serving both as platforms for information exchange and as sources of social support.

As part of its efforts to combat pornography and masturbation addiction, NeverFap provides online educational content via its YouTube channel and blog page. Participants frequently reported that their initial contact with NeverFap occurred through these resources.

> "There are really well-prepared videos on the YouTube channel. They cover what to do at the beginning of the addiction, the stages of the addiction, and the traps we might face. The content is structured in sections, both as blog posts and videos." (P4)
> "Many of NeverFap's YouTube videos and blog posts are based on scientific studies. People need to have a grasp of the scientific background. Otherwise, they don't develop a strong belief in the process." (P7)
> "We usually share more informative and scientific articles on the blog. On YouTube, if a video goes beyond 8 – 10 minutes, the view count drops. So we post longer content on the blog instead." (P5)

The scientific basis of both the YouTube and blog contents enhanced participants' trust in the program. Due to time limitations on video engagement, more comprehensive information is shared through the blog platform.

Benefits of NeverFap

The services provided by NeverFap have led to significant outcomes in both addiction recovery and personal development. Key gains include recognizing the addiction, accessing support, and developing greater awareness of life quality.

> "Following their content made my life much better. I was depressed and lost, but then I saw people who had been through similar things and supported it with scientific knowledge. I realized that living well was actually possible." (P2)
> "I started exercising, doing push-ups and pull-ups at home. I also began reading, even if just a little. I could focus better on my exams." (P1)
> "After discovering NeverFap, you start realizing how disgusting and disturbing pornography and masturbation really are... You also change your social circle, because if you talk about this with friends, they look at you like you're an alien." (P5)

Joining a new social community, realizing you're not alone in your struggle, and having a space to share without judgment were reported as meaningful social benefits.

> "There are people there who feel the same way I do. I never told anyone about this. But now I gather with a group and talk about it every weekend." (P10)

Some participants stated that being part of NeverFap helped them find new meaning in life and motivated them to adopt a more active lifestyle.

> "When I joined NeverFap Academy, I had completely lost hope. But it helped me realize my potential and strive for it. I used to be socially passive, but now I believe I have a purpose and I will work toward it." (P9)
> "I learned to know myself. It wasn't just about overcoming addiction. Through the camps, I realized I had leadership skills. I got involved in social responsibility projects and community work." (P4)

These outcomes not only support recovery but also contribute to the individual's overall empowerment. Recognizing one's potential and improving social skills increases personal resilience and well-being.

Discussion

This study explored the experiences of individuals struggling with pornography and masturbation addiction within the context of NeverFap Academy. Based on participants' narratives, three main themes were identified: "Encountering Addiction," "Effects on Life," and "Fighting Addiction." The findings revealed that technology and the social environment played key roles in the initiation of addictive behaviors, which negatively impacted individuals' psychological, social, academic, and familial lives. Participants reported benefiting from camps, WhatsApp groups, YouTube, and blog content, gaining improvements in both personal functioning and social engagement.

Consistent with prior research, the study confirms that easy access to pornography—facilitated by digital technologies—often coincides with masturbation, particularly among youth (Attwood et al., 2018; George et al., 2019). The internet and peer influence were cited as primary triggers (Setyawati et al., 2020). Participants described effects such as guilt, social withdrawal, concentration difficulties, and interpersonal problems—findings aligned with existing literature on the psychological and relational consequences of pornography consumption (Butler et al., 2018; Chavan & Khandagale, 2021; Grubbs et al., 2017; Shuler et al., 2021; Mestre-Bach & Potenza, 2023; Ohuakanwa et al., 2012; Qadri et al., 2023; Wilt et al., 2016).

NeverFap Academy emerged as a meaningful support system through its structured interventions and peer-based communication tools. While most literature focuses on online forums like NoFap (Chasioti & Binnie, 2021; Smith et al., 2022; Zou et al., 2023), this study highlights a more organized and multifaceted support model. The broader literature on self-help and peer-support groups suggests that such communities provide normalization, reduced stigma, and strengthened identity (Burke et al., 2019; Ettorre, 2025). In this study, voluntary participation, peer mentorship, and regular challenges helped reduce stigma and foster motivation. NeverFap, by integrating educational content, structured routines, and a supportive community, fosters both recovery and personal growth. Similar to NoFap and Jiese, NeverFap aims to overcome addiction, support healthy sexuality, and enhance well-being (Zou et al., 2023). Most participants believed that without this support, their addiction would have worsened. Overall, the study makes visible the psychosocial dynamics of pornography and masturbation addiction while underlining the empowering role of self-help initiatives.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are several limitations of this study that should be taken into consideration. First, the research focused solely on members of the NeverFap Academy in Türkiye, which limits the generalizability of the findings. While generalizability is not a primary concern in qualitative research, the findings centered on the NeverFap model do not provide insight into the effectiveness of other self-help groups.

Second, the participants were university students or graduates with similar sociocultural backgrounds. This weakens the representativeness of individuals from different sociocultural and demographic contexts.

Third, the study relied solely on self-reported data gathered through interviews. While rich in qualitative detail, these accounts may be influenced by memory bias, especially given the sensitive nature of the topic.

Fourth, the phenomenological design offers only a cross-sectional view of participants' experiences, without capturing long-term changes or relapse patterns. This limits the ability to interpret the long-term effectiveness of the NeverFap group.

For future research, several directions are recommended:

- Comparative studies that examine different self-help communities such as NoFap, Jiese, or other culturally specific initiatives would provide a broader understanding of the effectiveness of varying models.
- Combining qualitative data with quantitative measures such as standardized psychological assessments or behavioral tracking could enrich the analysis and provide more robust evidence regarding the impact of self-help groups.
- Longitudinal designs are needed to explore long-term outcomes, including relapse patterns, sustained recovery, and the durability of personal and social changes attributed to participation in these groups to combat pornography and masturbation.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Kendi Kendine Yardım Perspektifinden Pornografi ve Mastürbasyon Bağımlılıkları: NeverFap Akademisi Üyelerinden Bulgular

Giriş

Davranışsal bağımlılıklar, bireyin bir davranışı üzerinde denetimini yitirmesi, bu davranışı sürdürmekte ısrar etmesi ve yaşam işlevselliğinde belirgin bozulmalar yaşaması ile tanımlanmaktadır. Fiziksel bağımlılıklardan farklı olarak bu bağımlılıklar, özellikle teknolojik gelişmelerle birlikte daha erişilebilir hâle gelmiş ve bireylerin gündelik yaşamlarında yaygınlaşmıştır. Pornografi ve mastürbasyon davranışları da davranışsal bağımlılık türleri olarak ele alınmaktadır. Pornografi bağımlılığı, bireyin kendi değer yargılarına aykırı olmasına rağmen içerik tüketimini sürdürmesi iken mastürbasyon bağımlılığı ise cinsel doyumun kompülsif şekilde sağlanmaya çalışılması ve kişinin bu davranışı üzerinde denetimini kaybetmesiyle tanımlanmıştır. Mastürbasyonun fiziksel zararlarına ilişkin sınırlı bulgu olmasına rağmen, bazı araştırmalar bu davranışın sınırlandırılması ya da dönemsel olarak bırakılmasını önermektedir.

Bu davranışların "bağımlılık" başlığı altında tanımlanması halen tartışmalıdır. DSM-V'te pornografi veya mastürbasyon bağımlılığına ilişkin tanı kriterleri yer almamakta, bu durum bilimsel kanıtların yetersizliğiyle açıklanmaktadır. Ancak dijital çağın getirdiği sınırsız içerik erişimi, bireylerin bu davranışlara daha sık yönelmesi ve gündelik yaşamın çeşitli alanlarında etkilenme durumu, bağımlılık tanımına yönelik argümanları güçlendirmiştir.

Pornografi bağımlılığıyla ilgili yapılan araştırmalar pornografi tüketiminin son yıllarda ciddi şekilde arttığını ve özellikle erkekler arasında aktif tüketicilerin oranının dörtte üç düzeyinde olduğunu göstermektedir Böyle bir sorunla mücadelede kamu ve özel sektörün sorumluluğu kadar sivil oluşumların yeri önemli olmaktadır. Nitekim kendine yardım grupları toplumda ve özellikle dijital mecralarda önemli bir karşılık bulmuştur. Bunlardan biri olan NoFap, bireylerin deneyimlerini paylaştığı ve birbirini desteklediği, pornografi ve mastürbasyondan uzak durmayı hedefleyen bir kendine yardım grubu örneğidir. Grup üyeleri genellikle 90 günlük hedeflerle birbirlerine meydan okuyarak destek sağlar. Mesajlar mizahi veya eleştirel olsa da çoğunlukla motive edicidir.

Bu bağlamda, kamusal veya profesyonel müdahaleler kadar sivil toplum temelli destek mekanizmaları da önem kazanmıştır. Kendine yardım grupları, bağımlılıkla baş eden bireylerin gönüllülük esaslı topluluklar aracılığıyla birbirlerine destek sundukları yapılardır. Bu tür gruplar, bireylerin hem duygusal hem de sosyal ihtiyaçlarını karşılamayı hedefler. Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren NeverFap Akademi, pornografi ve mastürbasyon bağımlılığıyla mücadele eden bireyleri çevrimiçi platformlar aracılığıyla bir araya getiren bir kendine yardım topluluğudur.

Bu araştırmanın amacı, NeverFap Akademi üyesi bireylerin bağımlılıkla mücadele deneyimlerini incelemek ve bu süreçte topluluk yapısının işlevselliğini değerlendirmektir. Çalışma, bağımlılık süreci, etkileri ve NeverFap Akademi'nin sunduğu destek sistemini katılımcı deneyimleri temelinde anlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem

Araştırma nitel desende, fenomenolojik bir yaklaşımla yürütülmüştür. Katılımcıların yaşadığı deneyimlerin özünü anlamaya yönelik olarak derinlemesine bireysel görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Katılımcılar, NeverFap Akademi ile ilişkili 11 kişiden oluşmaktadır (8 erkek, 3 kadın). Yaş aralıkları 18 – 28 arasında değişen katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu üniversite öğrencisi olup aktif olarak NeverFap Akademi faaliyetlerine katılım göstermektedir.

Veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Görüşmeler telefon aracılığıyla sesli olarak gerçekleştirilmiş, ortalama 30 – 40 dakika sürmüştür. Elde edilen ses kayıtları araştırmacı tarafından yazılıya dökülerek MAXQDA 20 yazılımında analiz edilmiştir. Veriler tematik analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir. Kodlama sürecinde araştırmacı dikkatli biçimde çalışmış, benzer anlamlar içeren ifadeler kodlara, kodlar alt temalara ve temalara dönüştürülmüştür.

Araştırmada üç ana tema ve bunlara bağlı alt temalar belirlenmiştir: "Bağımlılıkla Tanışma" (Sosyal Çevre, Teknoloji), "Yaşama Etkileri" (Psikolojik, Akademik, Sosyal, Ailevi), "Bağımlılıkla Mücadele" (NeverFap Uygulamaları, NeverFap Kazanımları). Etik ilkelere uygun olarak tüm katılımcıların kimlik bilgileri gizlenmiştir. Araştırma, sosyal hizmet disiplininin etik kurallarına uygun biçimde yürütülmüştür.

Bulgular

İlk tema olan "Bağımlılıkla Tanışma", bireylerin pornografi ve mastürbasyon bağımlılığıyla ilk temas süreçlerini içermektedir. Katılımcılar, bu içeriklerle genellikle erken yaşlarda, internet kafeler, evdeki cihazlar ya da arkadaş çevresi aracılığıyla tanıştıklarını belirtmiştir. Teknolojik erişim ve sosyal çevre, bağımlılığın gelişiminde önemli faktörler olarak öne çıkmıştır. Bazı katılımcılar için

geçmişte yaşanan travmatik deneyimler, bu davranışların gelişiminde tetikleyici unsur olmuştur. Örneğin, bazıları çocuklukta yaşanan cinsel istismarların ardından bu içeriklere yöneldiğini ifade etmiştir.

İkinci tema olan "Yaşama Etkileri", bağımlılığın bireyin yaşamındaki çeşitli alanlara etkisini kapsamaktadır. Psikolojik etkiler arasında suçluluk, yalnızlık, kaygı ve özgüven eksikliği sıklıkla belirtilmiştir. Katılımcılar, bu bağımlılığın kendilerinde odaklanma sorunu, sosyal ortamlardan kaçınma ve içsel çatışmalar yarattığını aktarmıştır. Akademik etkiler bağlamında, derslere odaklanmada güçlük, zaman yönetiminde başarısızlık ve sınavlarda verim kaybı dile getirilmiştir. Sosyal etkilerde ise karşı cinsle iletişim kurmada zorlanma, sosyal izolasyon ve iletişim becerilerinde gerileme görülmüştür. Ailevi etkiler başlığında ise bağımlılığın aile içi ilişkileri zayıflattığı, öfke patlamalarına ve iletişim sorunlarına neden olduğu ifade edilmiştir.

Üçüncü tema olan "Bağımlılıkla Mücadelede NeverFap", katılımcıların NeverFap Akademi bünyesinde yürüttükleri iyileşme sürecine odaklanmaktadır. Katılımcılar, YouTube videoları, blog yazıları, WhatsApp grupları ve tematik kamplar gibi farklı müdahale araçlarından yararlandıklarını belirtmiştir. Kamplar; irade gücü, stres yönetimi ve zaman planlaması gibi alanlarda yapılandırılmış etkinlikler sunmakta ve mentör desteğiyle sürdürülmektedir. WhatsApp grupları, bilgi paylaşımı, kriz desteği ve motivasyon sağlama amacıyla kullanılmakta; kadın kullanıcılar için özel gruplar da oluşturulmuştur. Katılımcılar bu grupların, aidiyet hissini güçlendirdiğini ve yalnızlıkla baş etmede destek sunduğunu ifade etmiştir. YouTube ve blog içerikleri, bilimsel temelli bilgi sunduğu için katılımcılarda güven duygusu oluşturmuştur.

NeverFap Akademi sürecine dair önemli kazanımlar da ifade edilmiştir. Katılımcılar, bu süreç sayesinde özsaygı geliştirdiklerini, hedef belirleme becerilerinin arttığını ve sosyal becerilerinde olumlu değişimler yaşadıklarını belirtmiştir. Ayrıca, bazı katılımcılar bağımlılık deneyimlerini paylaşma ve başkalarına yardımcı olma motivasyonuyla topluluk içinde daha aktif roller üstlendiklerini aktarmıştır. Bu süreç, sadece bağımlılıkla değil, aynı zamanda bireysel gelişimle ilgili de önemli çıktılar sağlamıştır.

Tartışma

Elde edilen bulgular, literatürdeki çalışmalarla büyük oranda örtüşmektedir. Araştırma, internet ve sosyal çevrenin bağımlılıkla tanışmada önemli bir tetikleyici olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu durum, özellikle genç bireylerin risk altında olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, pornografi ve mastürbasyon bağımlılığının bireyin psikolojik, sosyal ve akademik işlevselliğini olumsuz etkilediği; literatürde tanımlanan suçluluk, kaygı, dikkat sorunları ve ilişki problemleri gibi semptomların katılımcılar tarafından da deneyimlendiği görülmektedir.

Çalışmanın öne çıkan katkılarından biri, kendine yardım topluluklarının bağımlılıkla mücadeledeki rolünü detaylı biçimde ele almasıdır. Literatürde genellikle NoFap gibi forum tabanlı gruplar öne çıkarken, bu çalışmada NeverFap Akademi'nin yapılandırılmış müdahale biçimleri, sosyal destek mekanizmaları ve gönüllü temelli organizasyonu öne çıkarılmıştır. Özellikle kampların yapılandırılmış görevlerle katılımcıyı sürece aktif katma yaklaşımı, bağımlılık müdahalesinde işlevsel bir örnek olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Katılımcılar, topluluk desteğinin hem bağımlılıkla mücadelede hem de kişisel gelişimde dönüştürücü etkiler yarattığını ifade etmiştir. Bu durum, kendine yardım gruplarının sadece bağımlılığı değil, bireyin genel yaşam kalitesini de olumlu yönde etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir.

Çalışmanın sınırlılığı, yalnızca NeverFap Akademi üyeleriyle yapılmış olmasıdır. Gelecek araştırmalarda farklı kendine yardım gruplarıyla karşılaştırmalar yapılması, boylamsal analizlerle süreç değerlendirmesi gerçekleştirilmesi, nitelikli katılımcı araştırma tekniklerinin kullanılması ve kamusal müdahale politikalarının değerlendirilmesi önerilmektedir.

Bu araştırma, dijital çağın davranışsal bağımlılıklarına karşı sivil temelli çözümler üretme noktasında önemli bir katkı sunmakta ve kendine yardım gruplarının potansiyelini ortaya koymaktadır.