

**A Model Rationale of The Moderating Effect Relationship Satisfaction Has on
Moral Incongruence Among Religious Pornography Users**

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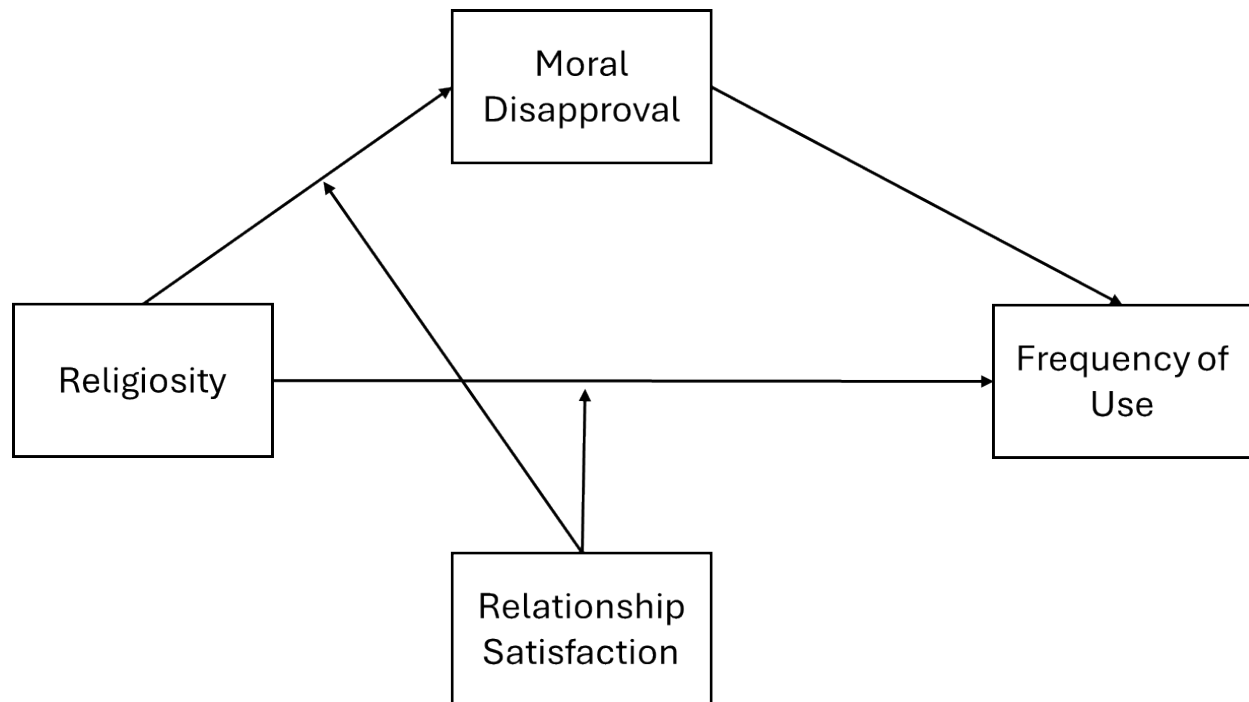
People who consider themselves religious tend to consider their sexual behaviors, including pornography use, incongruent with their values, regardless of the actual behavior (Grubbs & Perry, 2019). However, research has consistently shown that religiosity is not directly related to levels of pornography use among pornography consumers (Borgona et al., 2020; Coleman et al., 2023; Cranney & Štulhofer, 2017; Grubbs et al., 2015, Lewczuk et al., 2021). Simply put, religious individuals who consume pornography are viewing it at similarly high rates as those who are non-religious. Moral incongruence is the experience one has when their behavior is inconsistent with their beliefs, and religiosity is a consistent contributor to moral incongruence pertaining to the use of pornography (Grubbs et al., 2019, Lewczuk et al., 2021, Olmstead et al., 2023). Individuals who experience moral incongruence may tend to label their behavior as problematic or consider themselves addicted even when it is not excessive compared to other normative sexual behaviors (Coleman et al., 2023, Lewczuk et al., 2021). In other words, moral incongruence may encourage pornography consumers to view their behavior as pathological to explain it. Grubbs and colleagues (2019) developed a research model, Pornography Problems due to Moral Incongruence (PPMI), to recognize the distress that consumers of pornography may experience as being attributed to moral incongruence rather than perceived addiction. Their intent in developing the model was to steer clinicians into developing treatment plans focused on resolving internal conflicts tied to moral incongruence and avoiding reinforcing perceptions of pathology or addiction. They concluded that any treatment focused only on pornography use without investigating moral incongruence was too narrow. This fits well with the research model presented here.

A finding of The National Couples and Pornography Study was that couples in healthier relationships are less likely to view pornography either individually or together compared to couples in relationships that are moderately healthy or unhealthy (Willoughby et al., 2021). However, the study only confirmed the type of relationship where pornography consumption was most present. Although not tested, the researchers theorized that those already in unhealthy relationships may attempt to use pornography to cope with frustrations or dissatisfaction with their partner. Perry (2018) supports this assertion with the finding that the frequency of pornography use is more closely associated with negative marital quality than whether one violates one's moral convictions. Volk et al. (2019) found that pornography consumers will assess their values and beliefs ahead of blaming others as it pertains to their perceived process addiction. A strained relationship may contribute to pornography consumers rationalizing (or "blaming") their behavior so that it reduces feelings of moral incongruence.

The aim of the present study is to examine the moderating effect of relationship satisfaction on moral incongruence among religious pornography users. The assumption is that individuals dissatisfied with their relationship will experience less moral incongruence related to pornography, thus justifying its use.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. Religiosity will be positively associated with moral disapproval of pornography through the moderating role of relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. Moral disapproval will be negatively associated with the frequency of use of pornography.

Hypothesis 3. The mediating effect of moral disapproval on the relationship between religiosity and frequency of use will be moderated by relationship satisfaction.

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