

The Use of Video Call Sex in Fulfilling Sexual Desires: Jacques Lacan's Perspective

Frisky Freny Matahari^{1*}, Eli Jamilah Mihardjha²

^{1,2}Bakrie University, South Jakarta, Indonesia
Rasuna Epicentrum area, Jl. HR Rasuna Said No.2
E-mail: ¹friskymatahari@gmail.com, ²eli.mihardja@bakrie.ac.id

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Abstract

The emergence of digital technology, particularly online communication, has opened up new avenues for fulfilling sexual desires. Video call sex is one such phenomenon, offering an alternative for long-distance sexual interaction. Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic concepts of the real, imaginary, and symbolic provide a unique lens for analyzing this phenomenon. This research aims to analyze the phenomenon of using video call sex to fulfill sexual desires according to Lacan's psychoanalytic perspective. This qualitative study employed in-depth interviews with three female participants who actively engaged in video call sex. The findings reveal that modern communication media have transformed traditional concepts of sexuality, enabling virtual activities like video call sex to fulfill sexual needs. Desire, as Lacan posits, is the primary motivator for engaging in video call sex. Sexual satisfaction in this context is not solely reliant on the physical presence of a partner but also on their mental image, or imagination. This unfulfilled desire continually demands satisfaction, leading individuals to repeatedly engage in such activities. Lacan's perspective suggests that video call sex has shifted from a need to a desire. This desire, residing in the realm of symbols and the unconscious, necessitates continuous fulfillment. This research contributes to the understanding of how technology shapes modern sexuality and how psychoanalytic concepts can offer insights into the motivations and dynamics of virtual sexual practices.

Keywords: Sexual desire; Jacques Lacan; Psychoanalysis; Modern Communication Media; Video Call Sex.

Abstrak

Kemunculan teknologi digital, terutama komunikasi online, telah membuka jalan baru untuk memenuhi hasrat seksual. Video call sex adalah salah satu fenomena tersebut, menawarkan alternatif interaksi seksual jarak jauh. Konsep psikoanalisis Jacques Lacan tentang real, imajiner, dan simbolik memberikan sudut pandang unik dalam menganalisis fenomena ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fenomena penggunaan video call sex untuk memenuhi hasrat seksual menurut perspektif psikoanalitik Lacan. Penelitian kualitatif ini melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan tiga partisipan wanita yang aktif terlibat dalam video call sex. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa media komunikasi modern telah mengubah konsep tradisional tentang seksualitas, memungkinkan aktivitas virtual seperti video call sex untuk memenuhi kebutuhan seksual. Hasrat, seperti yang dikemukakan Lacan, adalah motivator utama untuk terlibat dalam video call sex. Kepuasan seksual dalam konteks ini tidak hanya bergantung pada kehadiran fisik pasangan tetapi juga pada gambaran mental atau imajinasi tentang mereka. Hasrat yang tidak terpenuhi ini terus menuntut pemenuhan, mendorong individu untuk berulang kali terlibat dalam aktivitas semacam itu. Perspektif Lacan menunjukkan bahwa video call sex telah bergeser dari kebutuhan menjadi hasrat. Hasrat ini, yang berada dalam ranah simbol dan alam bawah sadar, membutuhkan pemenuhan terus-menerus. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang bagaimana teknologi membentuk seksualitas modern dan bagaimana konsep psikoanalitik dapat memberikan wawasan tentang motivasi dan dinamika praktik seksual virtual.

Kata Kunci: Hasrat seksual; Jacques Lacan; Psikoanalisis; Media Komunikasi Modern; Video call sex.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has ushered in a new era of virtual interactions within cyberspace (Subawa et al., 2021). This virtual realm, while not mirroring reality, significantly impacts human behavior, including sexual practices. The rise of cybercrime, particularly cases involving pornography and prostitution, underscores the potential dangers of this digital landscape. Technological advancements have transformed traditional notions of sexuality, with video call sex becoming a prevalent phenomenon. This shift reflects broader cultural and social changes in how individuals connect and fulfill their desires in the digital age (Briandana et al., 2020). In fact, the number of internet users worldwide has been increasing year after year and has reached 5.44 billion globally, with the growth trend as follows (We Are Social, 2024):

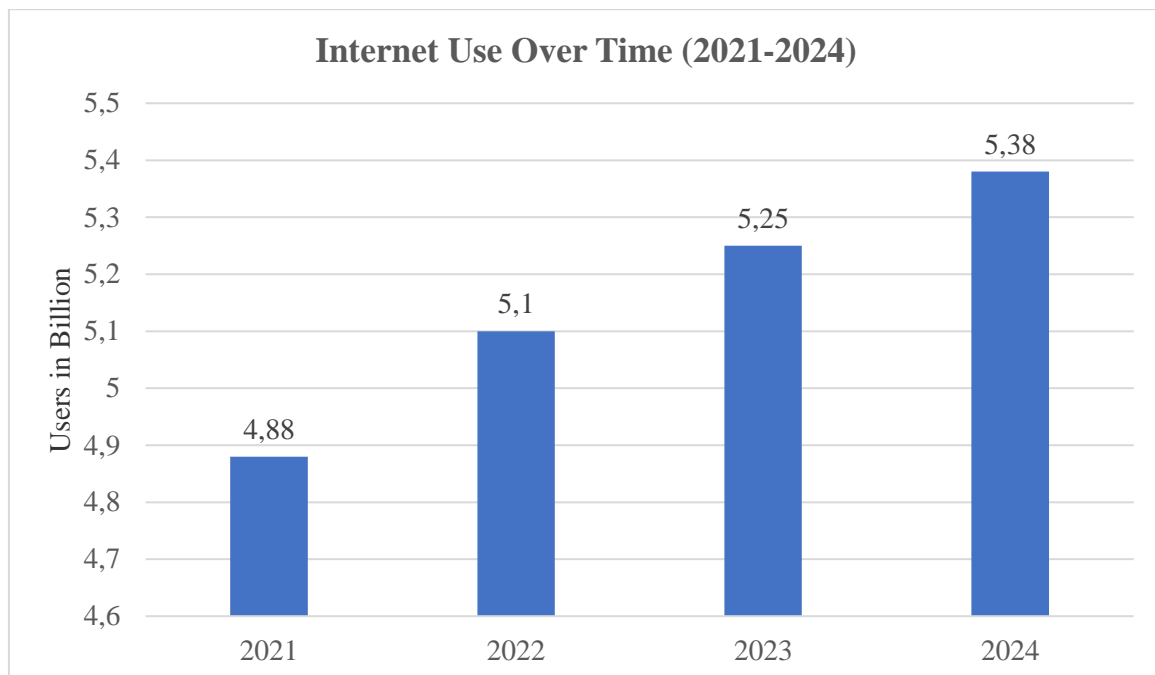


Figure 1. Internet Use Over Time (2021-2024)

Source: We Are Social, 2024

According to Maslow, sex is a fundamental human need, and its digitalization, seen in practices like video call sex, signifies a shift in how this need is fulfilled (Towler et al., 2023). This phenomenon is analyzed through Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, which explores the construction of identity and sexuality through language and symbolic representation. Lacan posits three developmental phases shaping self-concept: the pre-Oedipal (real) phase, the mirror (imaginary) phase, and the symbolic phase. The pre-Oedipal phase involves a sense of unity with the mother, followed by a realization of separation and a transition to the symbolic order, where language and social norms shape desire and identity (Miller & Lacan, 2018).

For Freud, desire is a fundamental force in psychic life, manifesting in dreams, neurotic symptoms, and slips of the tongue. This desire is closely linked to libido, the instinctual energy driving our actions. Lacan, however, reinterprets Freudian desire, positioning it not as an internal drive but as an experience inextricably tied to the "Other" (the symbolic order, language, and social norms) (Boothby, 2014). In Lacanian thought, desire is not about possessing a specific object but rather about the endless pursuit itself. The object of desire is ultimately unattainable, as fulfillment would extinguish desire, and with it, the subject's sense of self. This constant lack fuels our continual longing. Desire, for Lacan, is structured by language and the symbolic order. It's through language that we articulate our desires and understand ourselves as subjects (Macey, 2020).

In Jacques Lacan's view, desire has an important role in the individual's psychic structure. Lacan states that desire is a drive that is never fully fulfilled because it does not originate from a physical need that can be satisfied, but rather from a symbolic representation of an unimaginable emptiness. Lacan's concept of desire also originates from anxiety. The idea of anxiety is always a reaction to a loss. Loss in Lacan's view is the loss of the object that causes desire or what is called *objet petit a*, "a" in French means "autre" or in English means "other." (Boothby, 2014; Macey, 2020)

The use of video call sex becomes an interesting phenomenon in fulfilling sexual desires in the current digital era (Wéry & Billieux, 2017). With increasingly sophisticated technology, individuals can engage in long- distance sexual interactions via video calls, allowing them to share intimate moments virtually. In many cases, video call sex can provide a sense of intimacy and satisfaction that is relatively similar to live sexual interaction, although in a different context (Varfi et al., 2019). Sexual desire is one of the main factors in someone engaging in cybersex, one of these activities is video call sex. Video call sex has now become a common behavior that refers to web-based activities using sexually oriented electronic media that aim to provide erotic fulfillment or sexual satisfaction. This becomes an alternative way to fulfill sexual needs, particularly in situations where face-to- face meetings are not possible or difficult to access (Brahim et al., 2019).

As was the case during the Covid-19 pandemic, in which no restrictions on meetings, and based on research conducted by Eleuteri & Terzitta (2021) that video call sex helped many of their research participants release sexual desires during the Covid-19 pandemic. Another study conducted by Melca et al. (2024) found the same condition that the Covid-19 pandemic shifted some people's sexual habits to become more digitalized, such as making video call sex.

According to research by Milrod & Monto (2023), the digitalization of sexual activity must be questioned again whether it can replace in-person activity or not, because based on the research results, only a small number of people consider video call sex to be as satisfying as in-person sex. Many participants stated that video call sex can only release their sexual desires, but the experience provided is not as satisfying as having sex directly.

In other research, it was found that video call sex is not only used by those who cannot meet in person to fulfill sexual desires, but is also used by commercial sex workers in India to reach customers in different or relatively far away areas. Many customers using video call sex services feel satisfied even though they are served long distances because the prices paid are more affordable (Minestroni & Avio, 2020).

Based on the explanation above, it illustrates that the video call sex phenomenon is an extraordinary phenomenon. The researcher concludes that it is important to conduct research on the phenomenon of video call sex from Lacan's perspective because there is still very little to discuss, while this is an important thing to study in more depth for video call sex users. Lacan has a perspective that can explore this phenomenon more deeply from other angles that have not been studied in previous research. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the phenomenon of using video call sex to fulfill sexual desires from the perspective of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study research design to understand the phenomenon of using video call sex and fulfilling sexual desires from the perspective of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. This method was chosen because it allows the researchers to explore in depth individual cases in the context of video call sex use, thereby gaining a rich and detailed understanding of the subjective experiences and psychological dynamics involved. In addition, the case study approach is consistent with the Lacanian approach in psychoanalysis, which emphasizes the importance of individual case analysis in understanding subjective structure and identity construction. By paying attention to several aspects, such as life history, relationship dynamics, and

individual psychological conflicts, the researchers can find general patterns and themes that emerge in the use of video call sex from the perspective of Lacanian theory.

The research paradigm used in this research is constructivism. This paradigm emphasizes individual subjective understanding and the construction of social reality. Constructivism is also relevant to Lacanian theory, where Lacan emphasizes the role of symbolization in identity formation. This paradigm allows researchers to explore how the interaction between subject, language, and symbols in the use of video call sex shapes an individual's sexual identity, in accordance with the perspective of Lacanian theory.

The research process begins with the selection of research subjects using purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling means a technique for sampling data sources with certain considerations (Ramdhan, 2021). This technique is used to enable the research team to obtain data that matches what is needed. There were three respondents or research subjects selected, each from three different professions, namely disc jockeys, students and private employees. The selected subjects had previously been confirmed to be individuals who actively used video call sex and were willing to share their experiences in the context of fulfilling sexual desires. The three subjects have different backgrounds with their respective professional experiences, allowing the researchers to gain more comprehensive and representative insight into the phenomenon under study.

The data collection technique used in-depth interview techniques with the three previously determined subjects. The data were then analyzed, including aspects of motivations for using video call sex, experiences of fulfilling sexual desires, life history, relationship dynamics, individual psychological conflicts, and the subject's understanding of Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts. Once the data were collected, the next step was to analyze the main patterns and themes that emerge from the subject's experiences. Comparison between the three subjects helps in identifying differences and similarities that may be related to other professions or backgrounds. A Lacanian theoretical framework was then applied to better understand the subject's experiences.

The data analysis technique used the approach by Miles & Huberman in Savin-Baden & Major, (2023) consisting of four stages, including data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Through the reduction process, the data to be analyzed could be more focused because irrelevant data have been removed. Furthermore, the data were presented in a structured and organized manner, allowing the researchers to identify key patterns or themes that emerge. From the presentation of this data, conclusions can be drawn, providing deeper insight into the phenomenon of using video call sex in fulfilling sexual desires from the perspective of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis, in accordance with the analytical framework that has been used. Meanwhile data validation used triangulation techniques.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Modern Communication Media and the Video Call Sex Phenomenon

In this era of increasingly rapid technological development, which is affecting various areas of life, it is now also influencing activities to fulfill sexual needs. Sexual activity has begun to shift to cybersex, which does not require intimate face-to-face meetings, only through virtual media. Cybersex activity practices, such as video call sex have become normal and commonplace in various areas, both cities and villages. The phenomenon of video call sex that occurs cannot be separated from the development of modern communication media.

The researchers conducted interviews with three selected subjects who met previously established criteria. Interviews were conducted with three female subjects aged 18 years, 21 years, and 36 years with separate interviews. The following is the profile of the research subject:

Table 1 Profile of Research Subjects

	Initial	Gender	Age	Work
A		Female	18 years	Student
W		Female	21 years	Private sector employee
		Female	36 years old	Disc Jockeys

Source: Research team data, 2024

In order to answer the problem formulation regarding the practice of video call sex using modern communication media so that it is easier for readers to comprehend. The researchers divided the interview results into six parts, which the researcher analyzed. The six sections include the age at which they first engaged in video call sex, what prompted the subject to engage in video call sex, the media used, the duration of video call sex, the activities carried out, and how to maintain their privacy.

At what age did you first have video call sex?

Of the three subjects answered that they had done video call sex for the first time since they were teenagers, subjects LA and TW first did it at the age of 17 or when they were still in high school, while subject A first did it at the age of 20 during college. The three of them had video call sex with their boyfriend, who was in a long distance relationship.

Entering the adolescent phase of life, which lasts from the age of 15-21 years has its own characteristics and developmental tasks that are different from the previous period. According to Simmons (2017) the characteristics of adolescence are as a transition period from childhood to adulthood, adolescence as a period of searching for identity, adolescence as a period of change because during this period physical changes develop rapidly. Therefore, according to Orenstein (2016) teenagers are in the period of wanting to try various new things, including curiosity about sexual matters. In the case of video call sex, the three subjects in this study first tried to do video call sex activities when they were teenagers, subjects LA and TW at the age of 17 years and subject A at the age of 20 years.

What prompted you to do video call sex?

The first time the desire to make a sex video call arose, subject LA answered because her boyfriend had invited her and had also seen her close friend to do the same thing, so this strengthened LA's desire to accept his invitation to date her. Subject TW first appeared to want to do video call sex because she was invited by her boyfriend who forced her to do video call sex. Several times forced to do it, then TW enjoyed it. TW added another reason is watching movies with sex scenes, which further strengthens the urge to do the same with her boyfriend. Meanwhile, subject A first appeared to want to have video call sex because she had seen that scene in a film, which prompted her to try doing it with her boyfriend.

What media is used to make video call sex?

These three subjects made video calls with their partners or boyfriends using smartphones or laptops with the WhatsApp application by utilizing the video calling feature.

Modern communication media used to make sex video calls, both the WhatsApp application and other video calling applications. Having a video call feature makes it even easier to make video sex calls anywhere. Modern communication media based on the research results of Barker et al. (2018) modern communication media, which is currently developing rapidly has greatly influenced

changes in the concept of intimacy and how to fulfill it in society. One way to fulfill sexual desires is by using modern communication media.

In a week, how many times do you do video call sex activities and how long does each video call sex activity last?

Subjects LA and TW have video call sex activities every day, while subject A is several times a month but not every day. The duration of video call sex activities varies, subject LA usually starts making video call sex at 22.00 until the morning, subject TW does it for an hour every night before bed, and subject A does it for around 10 minutes.

What do you do when doing video call sex activities?

Subject A engaged in video call sex activities by performing actions designed to stimulate the opposite sex. Subject LA initiated these activities with prolonged kisses, progressing further, while subject TW began by teasing their partner with kisses.

How do you maintain privacy regarding video call sex activities that you do with your girlfriend?

To further protect the privacy of subjects TW and A, they did not tell anyone about their habit of making video call sex with their boyfriends, while subject LA, other people knew about their habit of making video call sex, they were people who both liked making video call sex with their boyfriends. To further maintain the privacy of the three subjects, they carried out WhatsApp video calls in a closed room so that no one would know. Subject A added that to further maintain privacy, cellphones should not be held by anyone.

Modern communication media plays a crucial role in changing the concept of traditional sexuality to a more modern one, where now fulfilling the need for sexual activity can be done through virtual activities (Prabowo, 2021). The distance that separates couples, just wanting to fulfill their curiosity, looking for safety so that direct sexual relations don't occur and various other reasons are the motives for using modern communication media to make video call sex.

Subjects LA and TW prefer to have video call sex rather than face-to-face sexual activity because according to them, if they meet face to face in intimacy there will be awkwardness. Meanwhile, subject A prefers to engage in sexual activity in person because she thinks that the intimacy between video call sex and live sex is different, it will feel more intimate if it is done in person.

There are two types of satisfaction in sexual relations, namely erotic sexual satisfaction and orgasmic satisfaction. Erotic satisfaction is satisfaction that arises from stimulation of the genitals or other erogenous zones, while orgasmic satisfaction is the accumulation of the resulting satisfactions. According to Lacan, sexual stimulation and satisfaction can be produced through imagination or images. Sexual satisfaction is not just the physical presence of a sexual partner (Piliang, 2016). In the context of video call sex, satisfaction can still be obtained if in the mind there is an image of the sexual partner, where this image may be different from the original image of the sexual partner in the video call sex.

Sexual Desire from Jacques Lacan's Psychoanalytic Perspective on the Video Call Sex Phenomenon

Regarding the fulfillment of sexual desires, various existing studies more correlate it to the psychology figure of Sigmund Freud through his theory about the subconscious in his psychoanalysis and also Abraham Maslow in his hierarchy of needs theory. In doing various things,

humans are driven by various motives, both internal and external, so that behavior occurs. According to Abraham Maslow, a person's behavior is driven or motivated by needs, including the fulfillment of sexual desires, according to him, is driven by needs (Altymurat et al., 2021).

Jacques Lacan with his version of psychoanalytic theory has another view on this matter. Jacques Lacan or whose full name is Jacques Marie-Emile Lacan was born on April 13 1901 in France from parents named Alfred and Emilee Baudry Lacan. Lacan was a person who developed Sigmund Freud's semiology-based psychoanalysis (Macey, 2020). In 1953-1963, Lacan concentrated on developing the structure of language and the symbolic role of Sigmund Freud's work. Lacan highlights the importance of language in Freud's theory. According to Lacan, the ego is a product of the id, which is formed through misrecognition of oneself in front of the mirror in the image phase. This image phase determines the overall identification within humans. According to Lacan, all human existence is influenced by the unconscious. He assumed that the unconscious structure is like language (Miller & Lacan, 2018).

In Lacan's view, humans experience three phases of development to obtain a self-concept that is related to the inner order of the human psyche. The three stages of development are the pre-odipal phase, which occurs at the real stage, then the mirror phase at the imagination or image stage, and the final development phase is at the symbolic phase or the symbols (Macey, 2020).

In Jacques Lacan's view, desire has an important role in the individual's psychic structure. Lacan states that desire is a drive that is never fully fulfilled because it does not originate from a physical need that can be satisfied, but rather from a symbolic representation of an unimaginable emptiness. Desires are considered as unstable and constantly changing, never fully met. According to Lacan, desire is formed through a process of identification with the desired object, which is always impossible to achieve completely (Manik, 2017).

In the video call sex phenomenon, based on the results of interviews with three research subjects regarding the motivation or encouragement the first time, they made video call sex, namely, subjects TW and LA answered that they were invited and forced by their boyfriends. apart from that, they were also in a long-distance relationship position. Subjects TW and LA added that initially they were forced by their boyfriends to do it, but the more often they did it, the more they enjoyed it and even had a desire to keep repeating it. While subject A's first motivation for engaging in video call sex was that she had seen this scene in a film and made the desire to try it with his boyfriend, subject A was also in a long distance relationship condition.

The motivation or encouragement of the three subjects is supported by the results of research by (Wéry & Billieux, 2017). The presence of technology allows individuals to carry out long-distance sexual activities with their partners to fulfill their sexual desires. The existence of sexual desire within the subject and their partner further encourages them to engage in sexual activity via video call sex. According to Lacan's view, what drives human life is desire. According to Lacan, humans from birth to the real stage always experience deficiencies, these feelings of deficiency nest in the subconscious, giving birth to desires that are never satisfied (Manik, 2017).

This insatiable desire always asks to be fulfilled, including sexual activity. In this study, subjects TW and LA carried out video call sex activities every day. Subject LA did it at night and even finished in the morning, while subject TW did it every day for one hour. What subjects LA and TW did was in line with Lacan's theory of desire that desire will continue to ask to be fulfilled and will never be satisfied, so video call sex activities are carried out every day.

In the three stages of development according to Lacan, namely the symbol stage where there is a shift from need to desire (*desaire*). It is regulated by a linguistic system or symbolic level. Desire lies in lack because fantasy never corresponds to everything in reality (Macey, 2020). Based on the results of interviews with the three subjects, TW and LA said that the current video call sex activity for them is a desire that must be fulfilled. If it is not fulfilled, LA said it will result in dizziness and

bad mood. This is because she is "addicted" to video call sex activities. Meanwhile, subject A said that the current video call sex activity for her is also a desire but does not always have to be fulfilled.

In Lacan's three stages of development concept, what is experienced by research subjects is similar to what happens at the symbols stage, where at this stage, there is a shift from need to desire (*desaire*). Lacan differentiates between needs and desires, when needs have a satisfying object while desires (*desaire*) do not. Desire is in the area of human unconsciousness, it is always another desire that is internalized within humans through utterances of advice, sarcasm, and through language. According to Lacan, humans are always in a state of lack and only desire can fulfill the lack. Sexuality in Lacan's view emphasizes differences in symbolic structure, and these sexual differences are not only a matter of biology but are also shaped by language and culture.

CONCLUSION

The advent of video call sex, facilitated by rapid technological advancements, marks a significant paradigm shift in the landscape of human sexuality. This research, grounded in Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, delves into the intricate relationship between technology, desire, and the symbolic order in shaping contemporary sexual experiences. Technological developments have revolutionized communication, acting as a catalyst for the transformation of traditional sexuality into a more modern and fluid concept. Video call sex, as a virtual activity, has emerged as a viable alternative for individuals to fulfill their sexual needs and desires, particularly in circumstances where physical encounters are impractical or inaccessible. Lacan's tripartite framework of the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary provides a unique lens through which to analyze this phenomenon.

Within the symbolic order, where language and cultural norms dictate our understanding of the world, desire is constructed and mediated. Basic needs are transformed into complex desires, often fueled by societal expectations and personal fantasies. In the context of video call sex, desire manifests as a yearning for connection, intimacy, and pleasure, all mediated through the virtual interface. This research reveals that, for some individuals, video call sex has become a compelling desire, even leading to addictive patterns of behavior. This underscores the potent influence of technology in shaping and amplifying sexual desires, blurring the boundaries between the real and the virtual. The virtual realm, with its illusion of anonymity and control, can create a space where individuals feel empowered to explore and express their sexual desires in ways that may not be possible or socially acceptable in offline contexts. However, this can also lead to a disconnection from the embodied experience of sexuality, potentially hindering the development of healthy and fulfilling relationships. The implications of this research extend beyond the individual level, highlighting the broader societal impact of technological advancements on the concept of sexuality and the fulfillment of desire. The rise of video call sex challenges traditional notions of intimacy, consent, and authenticity, raising ethical questions about the commodification of sexuality and the potential for exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the increasing reliance on virtual interactions for sexual gratification raises concerns about the potential for social isolation and the erosion of real-world relationships.

Future research should delve deeper into the specific mechanisms through which video call sex fulfills or fails to fulfill various aspects of desire, including the role of fantasy, projection, and identification. Longitudinal studies could examine the long-term effects of video call sex on individuals' psychological well-being, relationship satisfaction, and sexual development. Cross-cultural research could investigate how cultural norms and values influence the practice and perception of video call sex across different societies, shedding light on the diverse ways in which technology intersects with sexuality.

Additionally, research could explore the potential therapeutic applications of video call sex in addressing sexual dysfunction, intimacy issues, or trauma-related challenges. The ethical considerations surrounding the use of video call sex, including issues of consent, privacy, and exploitation, also warrant further investigation. By addressing these questions, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between technology, sexuality, and desire in the digital age. Ultimately, this knowledge can inform the development of ethical guidelines, therapeutic interventions, and educational programs to promote healthy and fulfilling sexual experiences in an increasingly virtual world.

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