

(Weiss, 2015). In D/s, a dominant individual derives pleasure from exerting control, while a submissive partner finds satisfaction in surrendering power. S/M refers to the consensual giving (sadism) or receiving (masochism) of physical and/or emotional pain as a source of pleasure (Simula, 2023). From this perspective, both bondage and discipline can be pleasurable due to the exchange of power and control between D/s and/or S/M, making them dimensions more intertwined with the others; in contrast, Domination, Submission, Sadism and Masochism refer to more specific dynamics.

Other pertinent concepts to highlight are fetishism, voyeurism and exhibitionism, which exist in both BDSM and kinky contexts. Fetishism involves obtaining sexual arousal through specific objects, body parts, or actions (Holvoet et al., 2017). In voyeurism, sexual arousal is obtained by watching others engage in sexual or non-sexual activities (e.g., changing clothes or showering) (Akhtar, 2020; Thomas et al., 2021). In exhibitionism, on the other hand, arousal derives from exposing one's body to other people, whether in sexual or non-sexual contexts (Thomas et al., 2021). These dynamics are considered kinky and may or may not fall under BDSM, depending on their integration into power exchange dynamics or structured roles such as D/s and S/M.

Sexual fantasies encompass a wide variety of mental images that provoke sexual arousal or eroticism in the individual (Loggins, 2023). It's necessary to highlight that having fantasies does not necessarily lead to participation in effective activities, a distinction often disregarded in the literature (A. Brown et al., 2022). With this in mind, the present paper refers to "practices" when describing a certain action, which can be manifested through fantasies and/or activities (i.e., physical involvement). Research demonstrates a significant gap between the prevalence of kinky and BDSM fantasies and activities. International studies estimate that fantasies related to these practices range between 30% and 70% (Holvoet et al., 2017; Joyal & Carpentier, 2017; Joyal et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2009), while participation in activities vary from 2% to 70% (Holvoet et al., 2017; Joyal & Carpentier, 2017; Moser & Kleinplatz, 2007; Richters et al., 2003, 2014; Ten Brink et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2009). The contrast between fantasies and activities reflects a widespread interest, even if many do not act on these fantasies (Ten Brink et al., 2021). Furthermore, these prevalence rates show us that these practices are common rather than statistically abnormal, thus providing further confirmation of Howard Becker's (1997) labeling theory of deviance. According to Becker, the labeling of certain behaviors or groups as "deviant" is a social process related to the establishment and enforcement of culturally situated norms through symbolic power struggles, rather than the result of differentiating between majority or minority behaviors. Given the incidence rates found in the literature, this topic merits further investigation.

However, few studies to date have assessed these rates specifically within the Portuguese context. It is important to keep in mind that Portugal was under a conservative fascist Catholic dictatorship from the early 1920's until 1974, which profoundly impacted the ability for sexual minority communities to organize and express themselves (Cascais, 2006), and for sexual literacy, gender equality policies and other sexual

rights to develop (for more in-depth discussion, see the edited volume by José Mattoso (2011)). Furthermore, research has shown that Southern European countries (which share common historical and cultural traits) tend to have specificities in sexual mores and behaviors (Ferreira & Cabral, 2010). This raises the possibility that Portugal might have specific patterns of reported practices, which might help illuminate its own sexual cultures, as well as draw more evidence-based comparisons with other countries for which more detailed and reliable data already exists.

The research conducted in Portugal by Cardoso et al. (2023), involved a survey where BDSM practitioners were asked about challenges in relationships between kinky and non-kinky individuals, and where respondents commented on various forms of stigma (real or anticipated, internalized or external) as impactful on their relationships. Additionally, Mota (2011) explored the experiences and perceptions of participants in Portuguese online BDSM forums. Pascoal et al. (2015) compared BDSM and non-BDSM contexts based on preferred activities, though they focused only on individuals within the Portuguese BDSM community, and showed how desire to engage and actual engagement were sometimes separated by several years, reinforcing the possibility that specific patterns of engagement with kink might exist in Portugal. Oliveira and Neto (2023) used Wilson's Sexual Fantasies Questionnaire (Saramago et al., 2017) to explore various sexual fantasies, including BDSM themes, among Portuguese youth. Although limited in scope, these last two studies offer a preliminary understanding of BDSM practices in Portugal. However, it should be emphasized that one study used open-ended questions focused on favorite activities and the other used a questionnaire that assesses some fantasies related to BDSM dynamics, along with other types of sexual fantasies. This highlights the absence of instruments in the Portuguese context to assess these type of practices.

Regarding instruments used to assess kinky and BDSM-related practices, the BDSM-Q-II by Schuerwegen et al. (2023) is one of the few instruments for assessing the frequency of BDSM fantasies and activities. Additionally, Rehor (2015) developed a questionnaire specifically for studying participation in kinky activities among women. However, neither instrument has undergone psychometric validation. Upon reviewing the existing literature in this area, it became evident that researchers often develop ad hoc questionnaires and instruments to assess kinky and BDSM practices (Dahl et al., 2023; Holvoet et al., 2017; Kimberly et al., 2018; Rehor, 2015; Schuerwegen et al., 2023; Ten Brink et al., 2021). This lack of standardized instruments significantly compromises the development of cohesive and consistent investigations, as the same topic is studied using different classifications, definitions, and questions (Paarnio et al., 2023). Existing scales, such as the Kink Orientation Scale (Wignall et al., 2024), the BDSM Proclivity Scale (Boyd-Rogers et al., 2022), as well as other instruments (A. Brown et al., 2022; Seto et al., 2024; Yost, 2010), contribute valuably to kink and BDSM research. However, they primarily measure attitudes, identity, arousal, or generalized proclivities, rather than specific practices, frequencies, or detailed BDSM profiles. In contrast, the BDSM Fantasies and Activities Inventory (Inventário de Fantasias e

Atividades kinky e BDSM) (IFAKBDSM) was developed to provide a comprehensive assessment of actual involvement in BDSM and kinky activities and fantasies, allowing for a detailed understanding of engagement patterns. Therefore, while these scales are important in the literature, they are not extensively discussed in this paper due to differences in measurement objectives.

In the absence of standardized instruments, studies are usually based on the self-identification of participants in kinky and BDSM dynamics (Botta et al., 2019; Connolly, 2006; Damon, 2003; Dancer et al., 2006; Hébert & Weaver, 2014; Marujo et al., 2023; Niebudek & Iniewicz, 2023; Pascoal et al., 2015; Schuerwegen et al., 2023; Yost & Hunter, 2012), often recruiting from online communities (Alison et al., 2001; Botta et al., 2019; S. L. Brown et al., 2017; Marujo et al., 2023; Rehor, 2015; Rogak & Connor, 2018; Roush et al., 2017; Vilkin & Sprott, 2021; Wismeijer & Van Assen, 2013), or to BDSM clubs (Nordling et al., 2000, 2006; Sagarin et al., 2009). This approach limits the generalizability of results, as these studies only focus on already self-identified participants.

This lack of psychometrically validated instruments highlights challenges in the general characterization of kinky and BDSM practices, as well as in their understanding, particularly with regard to the various roles individuals may adopt within these dynamics and the subsequent exploration of these phenomena in relation to other variables. Beyond its contributions to BDSM research, the development of a validated instrument also enhances the replicability and comparability of findings across different population samples. Such an instrument ensures more consistent data collection, enabling future studies to reliably compare results and build upon each other, thereby advancing the overall understanding of kinky and BDSM behaviors and interests. Thus, the central objective of this research was to construct and validate a questionnaire to characterize kinky and BDSM fantasies and activities in Portuguese adults, regardless of their involvement in BDSM communities. The IFAKBDSM was designed to measure the frequency of engagement in BDSM activities and fantasies, identify different BDSM profiles based on participation patterns, and document a broader range of kinky practices.

Development of the IFAKBDSM

The Kinky and BDSM Fantasies and Activities Inventory (*Inventário de Fantasias e Atividades kinky e BDSM*; IFAKBDSM) was firstly based on the BDSM-Q-II (Schuerwegen et al., 2023), a questionnaire designed to assess engagement in BDSM fantasies and activities. It was also substantially inspired by

Rehor's (2015) kinky questionnaire, designed to assess kinky behaviors in women. Therefore, the IFAKBDSM is structurally divided into two sections: the first refers to BDSM dynamics and the second to broader kinky practices. Modifications were made to the response formats and items were removed, adapted, and added (see Table 1). These alterations were carried out based on relevant literature review of instruments, on the definition of concepts and practices in the field of psychology, discussion with experts in the field (i.e., researchers within the topic and clinical psychologists with experience in intervention with individuals who are involved in these types of practices), and in discussion with people involved in kinky and BDSM dynamics.

Translation and Adaptation of the BDSM-Q-II

The translation and adaptation of the BDSM-Q-II was the first step in constructing the IFAKBDSM. This instrument consists of 64 items and assesses involvement in fantasies and activities related to BDSM. Participants indicate the frequency of their level of interest in response to each item regarding their fantasies ("I have never fantasized about this," "I fantasize about this occasionally" or "I fantasize about this frequently") and engagement in the activity ("I have never done this," "I have done this occasionally" or "I have done this frequently"). It is also able to generate a fantasy subscore and an activity subscore in eight dimensions/subscales (Bondage, Discipline, Domination, Submission, Sadism, Masochism, Voyeurism and Exhibitionism). The BDSM-Q-II has demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values between .67 and .92 in activity items and fantasy items, on the Bondage, Domination, Submission, Sadism, Masochism, Voyeurism and Exhibitionism subscales, except for the Discipline subscale ($\alpha = .35$ for activity items and $\alpha = .48$ for fantasy items) (Schuerwegen et al., 2023).

The BDSM-Q-II was initially translated to Portuguese by two bilingual psychology researchers, and then independently re-translated to English by two other bilingual psychology researchers, in order to ensure linguistic accuracy. The two final versions resulting from this process were compared with the original instrument and the most similar items were selected.

Translation and Adaptation of Rehor's Kinky Questionnaire

Subsequently, relevant items originating from Rehor's (2015) kinky questionnaire were selected, translated, and, in some cases, adapted. Specifically, 14 items remained unaltered,

Table 1. IFAKBDSM'S first version structure.

Section	Dimension	Number of original items	Number of adapted items	Number of new items	Total number of items
BDSM	Domination	7	5	0	12
	Submission	7	5	0	12
	Sadism	5	4	1	10
	Masochism	5	4	1	10
	Voyeurism	2	1	1	4
	Exhibitionism	2	1	1	4
	Fetishism	0	0	4	4
		14	12	12	38
Kinky					

while 12 items were adapted (see Supplementary Appendix A for the list of unaltered and adapted items). This instrument includes, in a total of 126 items, various sexual activities, categorized into distinct groups: activities related to BDSM, roleplay scenarios, exhibitionist behaviors, various forms of eroticism, fetishistic activities and various erotic activities. Participants are asked to select activities that they have performed for their own sensual or erotic pleasure, with the opportunity to provide additional comments.

These items were also translated into Portuguese and then independently re-translated into English by four bilingual researchers in the field of psychology, to guarantee linguistic accuracy. The two versions that resulted from this process were compared with the original instrument, and the items most similar to it were selected. Although this instrument was created and applied to a sample comprised only of women, all items were extrapolated and adapted so that the IFAKBDSM could be answered by all individuals, regardless of their gender.

Literature Review and Discussion with Experts and Individuals with Kinky Practices

After translating the instruments, discussion groups were held with experts, including researchers in the field, clinical psychologists with experience in intervention with individuals who engaged in these types of practices, and members of kinky and BDSM communities. Simultaneously, a comprehensive review of the literature on instruments, concepts and practices in the field of psychology was carried out. Based on these discussions and on the literature review, items from the BDSM-Q-II and from Rehor's questionnaire were selected, adapted and removed, while new items were also added. These steps were crucial to ensuring the relevance and reach of the IFAKBDSM.

Consequently, both Bondage and Discipline dimensions were removed from the BDSM section due to the intersection observed in the different BDSM dynamics, where aspects of these dimensions intertwine with the others. It was considered that these dimensions might not have contextual relevance, which is why they were disregarded in the section in question. A new dimension (Fetishism) was included due to its recognized significance within the kinky and BDSM community (Faccio et al., 2020; Holvoet et al., 2017; Weiss, 2015) and its ability to provide relevant information about individuals' preferences, behaviors and sexual experiences. With the aim of increasing response sensitivity, the response format for this section was modified to a five-point Likert scale for fantasies ("I have never fantasized about this," "I rarely fantasize about this," "I occasionally fantasize about this," "I frequently fantasize about this," and "I regularly fantasize about this"), and for activities ("I have never done this," "I rarely do this," "I occasionally do this," "I frequently do this," and "I regularly do this"). In addition, a temporal component was added, assessed on a four-point Likert-type scale, for both fantasies and activities ("Does not apply," "In the past," "Currently" and "In the past and currently"). This temporal component allows participants to indicate the time of their involvement in the

various fantasies and activities. By discerning between past and current involvement, the aim was to verify whether certain practices had disappeared over time, whether they had emerged more recently or whether they had always been present.

In the kinky segment of the questionnaire, which is descriptive in nature, we decided to include some items relating to bondage and discipline, with the aim of making the instrument more inclusive. For this section, the response format was modified to a dichotomized one ("No"/"Yes"), in order to evaluate participants' involvement, both in fantasies and activities, in the various kinky practices. This response format makes it easier to understand whether individuals have already fantasized about a certain practice and whether they have actually engaged in it.

Finally, a pretest was carried out with a group of six participants. Each participant responded individually to the questionnaire, and then participated in a group discussion, in order to collectively identify and discuss any inconsistencies or unclear items. This process ensured the correction of these items before the phase of data collection.

First Version of the IFAKBDSM

The first version of the IFAKBDSM encompasses 94 items divided into two sections: the first contains 56 items and refers to BDSM practices, based on the BDSM-Q-II, and the second includes 38 items referring to various kinky practices, based on Rehor's instrument. This item organization can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 presents the first version of the IFAKBDSM, showing its initial structure before any factor analysis, including the proposed item groupings and dimensions.

Study 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Method

Participants

This study comprised 260 participants, all of whom held Portuguese nationality, were proficient in the Portuguese language, and were aged 18 years or older. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 72 years ($M = 29.22$; $SD = 12.07$), with 138 (53.0%) identifying as women, 112 (43.1%) as men and five (1.9%) as non-binary. Notably, only 1.9% reported being part of a BDSM community. The majority of participants lived in Lisbon (49.2%), and 52.7% of participants held a bachelor's degree, which is higher than the proportion in the general population of Portugal (Sá et al., 2024). Other sociodemographic data can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 presents the sociodemographic data of participants from Study 1, including variables such as education level, sexual orientation, and relationship status and format.

Measures

First Version of the IFAKBDSM – Section 1. In the present study, only the first section of the first version of the IFAKBDSM was used. Although the questionnaire is divided

Table 2. Study 1 – Sociodemographic data of participants ($N = 260$).

		n	%
Academic Qualifications	6th grade	1	0.4
	9th grade	1	0.4
	12th grade	43	16.5
	Vocational/Technical Course	9	3.5
	Bachelor's Degree	137	52.7
	Master's Degree	63	24.2
	Postgraduate Studies	6	2.3
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	181	69.6
	Bisexual	39	15.1
	Homosexual	17	6.5
	Pansexual	10	3.8
	Asexual	2	0.8
	Other	10	3.8
	Preferred not to disclose	1	0.4
Relationship Status	In relationship(s)	109	41.9
	Single	106	40.7
	Married	22	8.4
	Divorced	9	3.5
	Common-Law Union	8	3.1
	Widowed	2	0.8
	Other	1	0.4
Relationship Format	Preferred not to disclose	3	1.2
	Monogamy	221	85.0
	Open Relationship	12	4.6
	Polyamory	4	1.5
	Casual BDSM relationships	3	1.2
	Other	7	2.7
	Preferred not to disclose	13	5.0

into two sections, in this study data were only collected from the first section (BDSM) because it is subject to factor analysis, as it has several dimensions. The kinky section, by contrast, is merely descriptive and does not imply dimensions or factors. Data collection for the second section was carried out in Study 2.

As mentioned previously, this section contains a total of 56 items and is structured according to seven dimensions, namely: Domination, Submission, Sadism, Masochism, Voyeurism, Exhibitionism and Fetishism. The response format is a five-point Likert scale for fantasies (“I have never fantasized about this,” “I rarely fantasize about this,” “I occasionally fantasize about this,” “I frequently fantasize about this,” and “I regularly fantasize about this”) and for activities (“I have never done this,” “I rarely do this,” “I occasionally do this,” “I frequently do this,” and “I regularly do this”). In addition, it also integrates a temporal component, assessed on a four-point Likert-type scale, for both fantasies and activities (“Does not apply,” “In the past,” “Currently” and “In the past and currently”).

Sociodemographic Questionnaire. A brief sociodemographic questionnaire was developed to obtain information about participants’ age, gender identity, area of residence, education, sexual orientation, relational status and format, and whether or not they belonged to a BDSM community.

Procedure

To collect the data, the questionnaire’s link was shared on social networks (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and in online BDSM communities related to sexuality and BDSM including FetLife and a Portuguese-speaking subreddit focused on discussions about sex. This subreddit is not exclusive to

BDSM, but includes general discussions on sexual practices, including BDSM.

The advertisement clearly stated that the study was focused on BDSM and kinky practices, so participants were aware of the topic before agreeing to take part. Every participant provided their informed consent at the beginning of the questionnaire, which described the aims of the study, the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation, and the exclusivity of data collection for research purposes only. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were provided with relevant contact information for psychologists, should they require further support.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics software (v. 29) and Amos version 29 (IBM SPSS, Chicago, IL). Although the IFAKBDSM assesses both fantasies and activities, it was decided to exclusively perform an EFA for data pertaining to activities only. This decision was supported by the literature indicating that kinky and BDSM fantasies are more prevalent than activities (A. Brown et al., 2022; Holvoet et al., 2017; Joyal & Carpentier, 2017; Joyal et al., 2015; Richters et al., 2003, 2014; Ten Brink et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2009). Thus, it was considered that activities are capable of providing a better understanding and consequent delineation of BDSM profiles, and of roles within the community. To conduct the EFA, Principal Axis Factoring extraction and Promax rotation with Kaiser normalization were employed. In order to decide on the number of factors to be retained, eigenvalues and scree plots were considered, establishing a minimum limit of .30 for the factor loading values of the items within each factor. Additionally, the internal consistency of each factor was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha.

As a following step, a preliminary CFA was carried out using the Maximum Likelihood Method, in order to verify the structure identified by the EFA. To evaluate the model’s goodness of fit, the following fit indices were considered: Comparative Fit Index ($CFI \geq .80$), Goodness of Fit Index ($GFI > .80$), Parsimony Comparative Fit Index ($PCFI > .50$), Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index ($PGFI > .50$), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual ($SRMR \leq 0.08$) (Bentler, 1990; Doll et al., 1994; Hasan Tehrani et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Nikkhah et al., 2018; Sarkin & Güvercin-Seçkin, 2023). The values mentioned here are considered acceptable.

Finally, another preliminary CFA was carried out with the Maximum Likelihood Method for fantasies data, considering the items and factors extracted in the CFA for the activities, in order to determine whether the results were similar to the activities’ factor analysis. The internal consistency of each dimension was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

To assess the sample’s adequacy for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test was performed ($KMO = .791$) along with Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($p < .001$), indicating that the data were suitable for this type of analysis. Initially, a general EFA was carried out with all items, which resulted in factor loadings

that were quite dispersed across 14 factors, which explained 62% of the variance. Item communality varied between .30 and .91.

Following this, since the items can be conceptually grouped into seven pre-determined dimensions (Domination, Sadism, Submission, Masochism, Voyeurism, Exhibitionism and Fetishism) based on their content, it was decided to conduct a second EFA, forcing the extraction to seven factors. This second extraction, also with Promax rotation, explained 48% of the variance. After consulting the scree plot and eigenvalues, items with low factor loadings (<.30) and items that loaded on dimensions that, according to the literature, were incongruent with its content, were eliminated. Based on this analysis, of the initial set of 56 items, 26 were eliminated.

Subsequently, after analyzing the content of the remaining 30 items in light of the previously described dimensions, it was concluded that the items were grouped into four conceptually coherent factors: Factor I – Domination and Sadism, Factor II – Submission and Masochism, Factor III – Voyeurism and Exhibitionism, and Factor IV – Fetishism. A third four-factor forced extraction was then performed, with the selected items explaining 48% of the variance. This analysis revealed that two items (9 – “Scratching, pinching, or pulling someone’s hair” and 25 – “Obstructing someone’s breathing (using hands or plastic, breath play, strangling, hanging, etc.)”) were loading on Factor IV. However, their content refers, respectively, to the pleasure of inflicting pain (sadism) and exercising control (domination), thus not being aligned with the concept of fetishism. It is possible that some participants endorsed these items due to fetishistic interests e.g., a hair fetishist responding to the mention of hair rather than the act of pulling it, or a rubber fetishist associating breath play with the sensation of being encased in plastic. This suggests the items may not be sufficiently specific, which is why it was decided to remove both items.

After this elimination, a final four-factor forced EFA was carried out with the remaining 28 items. The items demonstrated strong grouping in the four factors, as can be seen in Table 3, further indicating conceptual congruence with the content of the items. In this extraction, the four factors explained 48% of the variance, with eigenvalues above one (ranging between 1.8 and 7.4), and were in accordance with the scree plot analysis (Figure 1). Item communality varied between .30 and .70.

Table 3 presents the results of the final EFA for the IFAKBDSM based on data from Study 1. The table includes the remaining items, their corresponding factor loadings (only those greater than .30), and the factor structure, showing how the items loaded onto the retained factors.

Figure 1 presents the Scree plot from the Final EFA of BDSM activities, illustrating the eigenvalues for each factor, aiding in the determination of the number of factors retained in the model.

Item 51 (“Consuming sexually arousing content created by others (ex: photography, video, audio, etc.)”), which was initially part of the Voyeurism dimension, presented a relatively strong factor loading in the Fetishism dimension. In theoretical terms, the consumption of pornographic content to which the item refers to can be considered a fetish when sexual arousal is derived not only from the actions represented, but from the means of

Table 3. Results of the final exploratory factor analysis.

IFAKBDSM Item	Factor Loadings			
	1	2	3	4
Factor I: Domination and Sadism				
(1) Blindfold someone	.384			
5. Gag someone (ex: with a gag ball, mouth opener, etc.)	.606			
7. Spank someone	.544			
15. Inflict pain on someone	.647			
17. Verbally humiliate someone (ex: yelling, name-calling, etc.)	.701			
19. “Force” someone to perform sexual acts (ex: masturbation, other sexual behaviors, nudity, etc.)	.564			
21. Physically humiliate someone (ex: slap their face, hit them, make them crawl, etc.)	.922			
27. Hit someone with an object (ex: belt, whip, paddle, flogger, etc.)	.721			
31. Have a submissive obey my orders, which I give as the dominant	.482			
41. Penetrate someone with a large object (ex: fist, large dildo, etc.)	.570			
Factor II: Submission and Masochism				
(1) Being blindfolded by someone	.581			
8. Being spanked by someone	.822			
10. Being scratched, pinched, or having my hair pulled by someone	.716			
16. Having someone inflict pain on me	.729			
18. Being verbally humiliated by someone (ex: being yelled at, being called names, etc.)	.546			
22. Being physically humiliated by someone (ex: being slapped in the face, being hit, crawling, etc.)	.620			
26. Having my breathing obstructed by someone (ex: using hands or plastic, breath play, being strangled, being hanged, etc.)	.738			
28. Being hit with an object (ex: belt, whip, paddle, flogger, etc.)	.619			
32. Being submissive and obeying orders given to me by a dominant	.697			
Factor III: Voyeurism and Exhibitionism				
47. Observing someone tie another person	.833			
48. Being observed while I tie someone or while I am tied by someone	.647			
49. Watching a person inflict pain on another	.724			
50. Being observed while I inflict pain on someone or while another person inflicts pain on me	.654			
Factor IV: Fetishism				
51. Consuming sexually arousing content created by others (ex: photography, video, audio, etc.)	.446			
53. Becoming sexually aroused by specific pieces of clothing, regardless of the type of fabric (ex: lingerie, shoes, corsets, etc.)	.707			
54. Becoming sexually aroused by specific types of fabric (e.g., leather, rubber, vinyl, etc.)	.498			
55. Becoming sexually aroused by specific body parts (ex: breasts, feet, hair, nose, hands, etc.)	.774			
56. Becoming sexually aroused by bodily fluids (ex: semen, saliva, urine, blood, sweat, etc.)	.471			

N = 260. The extraction method used was Principal Axis Factoring with oblique rotation (Promax with Kaiser normalization). Only factor loadings above .30 are presented.

consumption itself. Consumption of sexually arousing content may involve an interest or fascination with the specific way in which the content is delivered, which may be considered an object of desire. Although pornography is generally sexual in a broad sense, fetishism can manifest itself through a preference for specific means of consumption, such as photos, videos, and audios, which become essential for sexual arousal (Schussler, 2013). Of further importance is the fact that a significant amount of pornography is dedicated to specific fetishes, where sexual

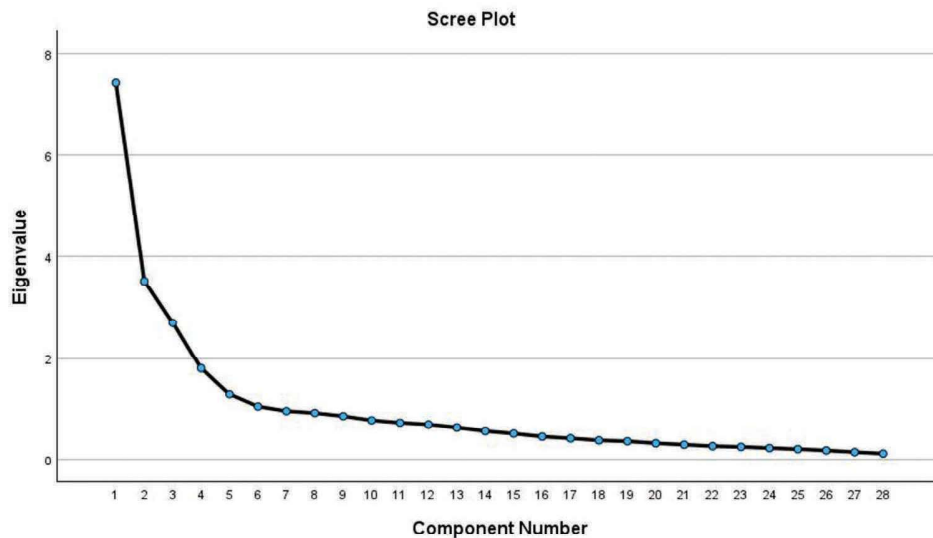


Figure 1. Scree plot of the final exploratory factor analysis.

arousal is obtained by specific objects or behaviors depicted in the pornographic content (Oronowicz-Jaśkowiak et al., 2020). In this sense, the consumption of pornography works in a way similar to fetishistic fantasies, in that it is an active process of imagining or projecting future (or hypothetical) experiences as a form of pleasure-seeking and/or self-exploration and discovery. Additionally, we observed that removing this item resulted in a slight decrease in internal consistency within the Fetishism dimension, and no alternative item removal led to improvement. While this alone did not justify retaining the item, taken together with its potential relevance to some individuals' fetishistic engagement with pornography, we ultimately chose to retain it.

Summarizing, the final structure of the first section of the IFAKBDSM is based on four factors comprising 28 items. Factor I consists of 10 items (1, 5, 7, 15, 17, 19, 21, 27, 31 and 41), explaining 24.68% of the total variance. The items in this dimension refer to dynamics of exerting control and inflicting pain on other people. Factor II is composed of nine items (2, 8, 10, 16, 18, 22, 26, 28 and 32), explaining 10.9% of the total variance. The items belonging to this factor allude to dynamics of giving up control and receiving pain from others. Factor III is composed of four items (47, 48, 49 and 50) and explains 7.94% of the total variance. The items to which this factor refers involve dynamics of observing certain practices and being observed while performing certain practices, to obtain pleasure. Finally, Factor IV is composed of five items (51, 53, 54, 55 and 56), explaining 4.67% of the total variance. These items refer to dynamics of sexual arousal through non-sexual objects, specific body parts and through the consumption of pornographic content.

Preliminary Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The preliminary CFA for activities revealed satisfactory results. All items demonstrated strong factor loadings ($\geq .50$), and the model fit was acceptable (CFI = .71; GFI = .74; PCFI = .65;

PGFI = .62; SRMR = .08), with CFI and GFI values slightly below the recommended thresholds.

Similarly, the preliminary CFA for fantasies revealed satisfactory results. Most items showed strong factor loadings ($\geq .50$), with one item (Item 1) displaying an acceptable factor loading ($\lambda = .48$). The model fit was acceptable (CFI = .80; GFI = .80; PCFI = .70; PGFI = .63; SRMR = .08).

Internal Consistency

The analysis of the questionnaire's internal consistency revealed good values of Cronbach's alpha across all identified factors related to activities: Factor I (Domination and Sadism): $\alpha = .866$; Factor II (Submission and Masochism): $\alpha = .879$; Factor III (Voyeurism and Exhibitionism): $\alpha = .804$; and Factor IV (Fetishism): $\alpha = .775$. Additionally, good Cronbach's alpha values were also found for all dimensions for fantasies: Domination and Sadism: $\alpha = .883$; Submission and Masochism: $\alpha = .900$; Voyeurism and Exhibitionism: $\alpha = .777$; and Fetishism: $\alpha = .780$.

Study 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Method

Participants

Study 2 involved a total sample of 515 participants, independent from Study 1. Participants were individuals with Portuguese nationality and with understanding of Portuguese language, aged 18 or over. These selection criteria align with the guidelines used in Study 1.

The participants' ages range from 18 to 79 years ($M = 29.76$; $SD = 11.76$), with 306 (59.4%) identifying as women, 198 (38.4%) as men, and two (0.4%) as non-binary. Most participants resided in Lisbon (55.3%), and only 3.5% reported belonging to a BDSM community. Furthermore, 46.8% of participants held a bachelor's degree, which is higher than the proportion in the general Portuguese population (Sá

Table 4. Study 2 – Sociodemographic data of participants ($N = 515$).

		n	%
Academic Qualifications	9th grade	7	1.4
	12th grade	76	14.8
	Vocational/Technical Course	43	8.3
	Bachelor's Degree	241	46.8
	Master's Degree	119	23.1
	Postgraduate Studies	27	5.2
Sexual Orientation	Doctorate/PhD	2	0.4
	Heterosexual	426	82.7
	Bisexual	44	8.5
	Homosexual	15	2.9
	Pansexual	12	2.3
	Asexual	4	0.8
	Aromantic	1	0.2
	Other	9	1.7
Relationship Status	Preferred not to disclose	4	0.8
	In relationship(s)	215	41.7
	Single	207	40.2
	Married	42	8.2
	Divorced	14	2.7
	Common-Law Union	23	4.5
	Separated	3	0.6
	Widowed	2	0.4
	Other	2	0.4
	Preferred not to disclose	7	1.3
Relationship Format	Monogamy	439	85.2
	Open Relationship	27	5.2
	Casual BDSM relationships	31	6.0
	Poliamory	17	3.3
	24/7 BDSM Relationship	9	1.7
	BDSM Family	5	1.0
	Swingers	5	1.0
	Other	10	1.9
	Preferred not to disclose	24	4.6

Participants ($N = 515$) were allowed to select more than one relationship format, so the total exceeds the number of participants.

et al., 2024). Additional sociodemographic data of participants can be found in Table 4.

Table 4 presents the sociodemographic data of participants from Study 2, including variables such as education level, sexual orientation, and relationship status and format.

Measures

IFAKBDSM. The final adapted version of the IFAKBDSM, resulting from Study 1, was used (see Supplementary Appendix B for the full questionnaire in Portuguese). Thus, the first section of the questionnaire comprises a total of 28 items organized into four dimensions: Domination and Sadism, Submission and Masochism, Voyeurism and Exhibitionism, and Fetishism. The response format for this section is the same as that of the first version used in Study 1. The first section of the IFAKBDSM generates a subscore for fantasies and a subscore for activities across the four evaluated dimensions, allowing for the creation of profiles, calculated through the sum of the individual item scores.

In the second section of the questionnaire, consisting of 38 items, the response format is dichotomized (“No”/“Yes”) to assess participants’ involvement in both fantasies and activities across various kinky practices. At the end of the questionnaire, a blank space is provided for participants to describe any additional sexual fantasies and activities that were not captured by the questionnaire items.

Sociodemographic Questionnaire. The same sociodemographic questionnaire used in Study 1 was included to obtain information on age, gender identity, area of residence, educational qualifications, sexual orientation, relationship status and format, and whether or not participants belonged to a BDSM community.

Procedure

The sample was collected using a method similar to that of Study 1, with the only difference being the additional distribution and posting of a QR code that directed potential participants to the questionnaire in public places (e.g., cafés, universities, subway stations). All participants provided their informed consent at the beginning of the questionnaire, and this form was identical to that used in Study 1.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics software (v. 29) and Amos version 29 (IBM SPSS, Chicago, IL). For the first section of the questionnaire, a CFA was performed to validate and confirm the structure identified by the EFA in Study 1. Initially, a CFA was conducted on data collected from activities using the Maximum Likelihood method, followed by a CFA for the fantasies to determine if the results were similar to those of the factor analysis for activities. For both analyses, the following fit indices were considered: Comparative Fit Index ($CFI \geq .80$), Goodness of Fit Index ($GFI > .80$), Parsimony Comparative Fit Index ($PCFI > .50$), Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index ($PGFI > .50$), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual ($SRMR \leq 0.08$) (Bentler, 1990; Doll et al., 1994; Hasan Tehrani et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Nikkhah et al., 2018; Sarkin & Güvercin-Seçkin, 2023). The values mentioned here are considered acceptable. Internal consistency for the dimensions assessed in each CFA was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha.

The first section of the IFAKBDSM generates a subscore for fantasies and a subscore for activities across the four assessed dimensions, allowing for the creation of profiles. Each of these subscores is calculated by summing the individual item scores related to the frequency of involvement. Prevalence rates for involvement in kinky and BDSM activities and fantasies were also assessed using frequency analysis.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To assess the adequacy of the sample for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test ($KMO = .901$) and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($p < .001$) were conducted, indicating that the data was suitable for this type of analysis. The CFA for activities revealed satisfactory results. All items demonstrated strong factor loadings ($\geq .50$) (Figure 2), and the model fit was acceptable ($CFI = .81$; $GFI = .79$; $PCFI = .71$; $PGFI = .64$; $SRMR = .08$). The four factors identified, though distinct, were positively correlated, as shown in Figure 2.

The CFA for fantasies also yielded satisfactory results. All items exhibited strong factor loadings ($\geq .50$), and the model fit

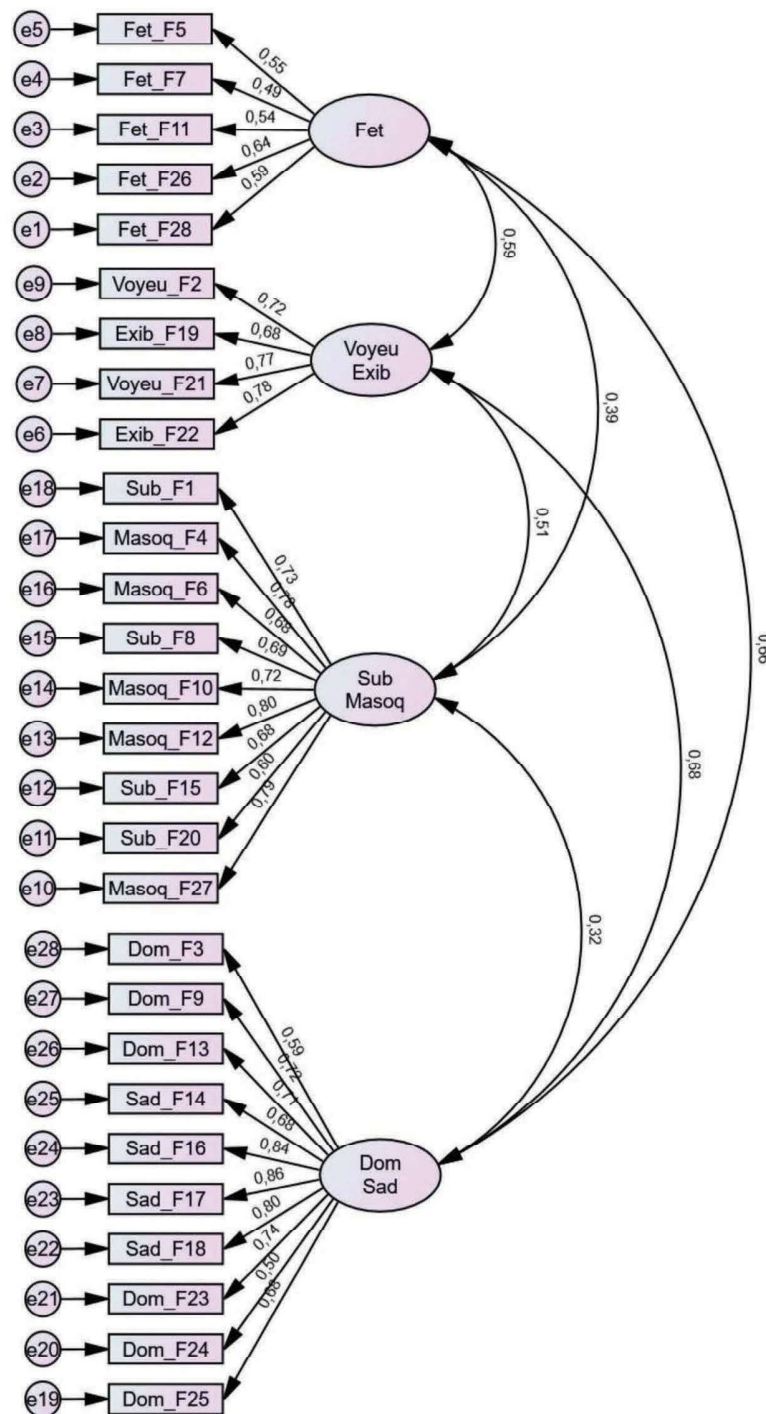


Figure 2. Confirmatory Factor analysis for activities. Fet = Fetishism; Voyeu. = Voyeurism; Exib. = Exhibitionism; Sub. = Submission; Masoq. = Masochism; Dom. = Domination; Sad. = Sadism.

was acceptable (CFI = .80; GFI = .79; PCFI = .73; PGFI = .64; SRMR = .07).

Internal Consistency

The analysis of internal consistency revealed good values of Cronbach's alpha across all dimensions for activities: Domination and Sadism: $\alpha = .891$; Submission and

Masochism: $\alpha = .885$; Voyeurism and Exhibitionism: $\alpha = .819$; and Fetishism: $\alpha = .652$.

The internal consistency analysis also indicated good values for Cronbach's alpha for all dimensions for fantasies: Domination and Sadism: $\alpha = .905$; Submission and Masochism: $\alpha = .903$; Voyeurism and Exhibitionism: $\alpha = .812$; and Fetishism: $\alpha = .696$.

Figure 2 displays the CFA model generated in AMOS for BDSM activities. The model illustrates latent factors, observed variables, standardized factor loadings, and correlations between factors.

Prevalence Rates

Prevalence rates showed that 99.7% of participants reported engaging in at least one BDSM fantasy, and 99.4% in at least one BDSM activity. Fetishistic fantasies were the most prevalent, reported by 87.4% of participants, followed by submissive and masochistic fantasies (84.7%) and dominant and sadistic fantasies (76.5%). Voyeuristic and exhibitionist fantasies were the least reported (29.9%). Similarly, fetishistic activities were the most frequently reported (87.0%), followed by submissive and masochistic activities (79.0%), and dominant and sadistic activities (70.5%). Voyeuristic and exhibitionist activities had the lowest prevalence (20.4%). For both fantasies and activities, the majority of participants indicated they had been present in both the past and currently. The delineation of BDSM profiles based on frequency of involvement revealed that the fetishistic profile was the most prevalent, while the voyeuristic and exhibitionist profiles were the least prevalent. Regarding kinky practices, 96.2% engaged in at least one kinky fantasy, and 93.6% in at least one kinky activity. These results indicate a high prevalence of both fantasies and activities among participants, in kinky and BDSM practices.

Discussion

The present study addressed a significant gap in the literature by introducing a psychometrically validated questionnaire, thereby providing a standardized tool for assessing involvement in BDSM and kinky fantasies and activities among Portuguese adults. Based on the BDSM-Q-II (Schuerwegen et al., 2023) and elements from Rehor's (2015) kinky questionnaire, the construction process of the IFAKBDSM included a pretest, discussions with researchers and psychologists with experience in the field, and members of the kinky community, along with an extensive literature review.

In order to develop and validate the questionnaire, two distinct studies were conducted. Study 1 used an EFA to reduce items and to determine the overall factor structure, while Study 2 validated this structure through a CFA. The results of the EFA, where Domination and Sadism, Submission and Masochism, and Voyeurism and Exhibitionism clustered together rather than separately, can be explained by understanding BDSM dynamics and by empirical evidence. Domination involves exercising control, while sadism entails deriving pleasure from inflicting pain; studies by Dinić et al. (2021) and Moshagen et al. (2018) demonstrated a positive association between these roles, although they focused on personality traits rather than sexual practices. Similarly, submission, which involves relinquishing control, and masochism, which entails pleasure in receiving pain, often overlap, with a significant percentage of BDSM practitioners identifying with both roles (Alison et al., 2001). Finally, voyeurism and exhibitionism, which involve observing others or being observed, respectively, show a strong correlation (Dawson

et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2021), as both share the common aspect of involving a partner who is being watched.

The overlap between fetishism and BDSM practices is evident, as both involve specific interests within the kinky realm. In BDSM and fetishism, specific objects or scenarios enhance the experience for the participants involved (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2007). In fact, for some individuals, BDSM dynamics are considered a type of fetish on their own (Loschi de Melo, 2010). Interestingly, in the first study, fetishism emerged as a dimension distinct from the others, although there is evident overlap with this dimension, as observed in the CFA of the second study. The items in the IFAKBDSM for this dimension specifically refer to arousal derived from specific fabrics, bodily fluids, specific clothing items, and specific means of consumption of sexually exciting content, emphasizing a possible solitary nature, in contrast to the broader interpersonal dynamics of BDSM. This singular focus on the object or material, without necessarily involving another person in the fulfillment of fetishistic desire, may explain why fetishism appears as an individual dimension.

Furthermore, some practices related to fetishism may be more commonly perceived as normophilic and, therefore, seen within the community as less intense – physically or psychologically – when they do not include elements typically associated with BDSM. The inclusion of pornography consumption (Item 51) was aimed at capturing a modern facet of fetishistic engagement, where specific types of pornography can be used as a means of exploring or engaging with fetishes, particularly when partnered enactment (where desired) is not feasible. Pornography can provide more private and pseudonymous access to niche interests, acting as a source of sexual literacy and self-exploration for anyone, but its importance is heightened in the case of individuals navigating stigmatized identities and interests (Cardoso, 2020). In addition, the context in which the question was formulated might have (usefully) primed our research participants to frame it as a fetishistic activity, or to answer in relation to their self-defined fetishistic experiences of pornography consumption (e.g., when pornography operated in a way akin to fantasies, when watching porn in certain ways or forms is a fetishistic activity in itself, etc). We acknowledge that this item may not align with traditional definitions of fetishism, and its role in the IFAKBDSM's factor structure is complex. Researchers in future studies should remain mindful of this item. We further address this when discussing the limitations of the study.

The results of the CFA conducted in the second study suggested satisfactory fit indices, confirming the structure previously identified by the EFA. As expected, in the CFA, the four identified factors, although distinct dimensions, were interconnected within the domain of kinky and BDSM practices, exhibiting positive correlations. Despite these overlaps, each factor captures unique aspects of BDSM practices (Weiss, 2015).

The high levels of involvement in both BDSM and kinky fantasies and activities observed in the second study suggest that these practices are far from uncommon. These results challenge the perception of kink and BDSM as deviant, indicating that they are integrated into the sexual experiences of

many individuals. Notably, the prevalence rates observed in this study were higher than those typically reported in previous international research (Holvoet et al., 2017; Joyal & Carpentier, 2017; Joyal et al., 2015). This may be due to the IFAKBDSM's comprehensive design, which includes a broad range of kinky and BDSM practices, as well as the diverse sample composition that included participants from both general and kinky-specific contexts.

These findings may be indicative of emerging shifts in sexual attitudes in Portugal, a country historically shaped by conservative social norms. The higher prevalence of BDSM and kinky practices observed could reflect a gradual opening toward greater sexual diversity, as societal constraints have loosened in recent decades. The significant engagement in these practices suggests that kink and BDSM are more widespread than often perceived and are part of a broader spectrum of human sexual expression, reflecting a wide range of preferences and interests.

These observations highlight the need for better understanding of kinky and BDSM dynamics, as they are prevalent among a substantial portion of the sample. It is anticipated that the IFAKBDSM will not only advance sexuality research but also have significant implications for clinical psychology and sexuality education. By reducing the stigma around BDSM practices, this instrument can help prevent misinterpretations and inappropriate treatment, especially as many clinicians remain uninformed about alternative sexual practices (Dunkley & Brotto, 2018). Additionally, since studies on BDSM in Portugal are scarce, providing a validated measure addresses a crucial gap, enabling culturally relevant research. The IFAKBDSM can support non-pathologizing therapeutic interventions, validate individuals' experiences, and normalize BDSM as a legitimate sexual and/or self-expression. By fostering a greater understanding of these practices, therapists can provide psychoeducation, reduce self-stigmatization, and help clients navigate their sexual identities in a healthy and accepting way.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The present study had several limitations that should be noted. One limitation of this study is that the model fit indices were only deemed as satisfactory, though still within the acceptable range based on the considered cutoff values. This can be understood in light of the highly intertwined nature of the BDSM dimensions assessed, which encompass a range of practices and preferences that often overlap. As such, the anticipated interrelation among these constructs may have affected the fit indices (Kyriazos & Poga, 2023). Given the inherent overlap among these constructs, such results were expected and do not undermine the overall reliability of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the questionnaire demonstrated strong internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha values across the various dimensions. Consequently, the findings still support the questionnaire's reliability and utility in effectively capturing the complexities of BDSM fantasies and activities.

A note of caution, however, is necessary in regards to the inclusion of pornography consumption in the Fetishism

dimension, especially considering the exact phrasing used in item 51. It is possible that the fact that this item positively loaded into Factor IV could be due to a correlation between being a fetishist and consuming more pornography. The literature on the topic suggests this possibility, but is not specific enough to allow us to infer that fetishists consume, on average, more pornography than both the general population and other kinksters (Ballester-Arnal et al., 2022; Herbenick et al., 2020). In this case, the item would statistically behave as we have seen, but it may not conceptually align with the construct of fetishism.¹ If, on the other hand, certain forms of pornography consumption are experienced as a fetish (e.g., watching porn in specific ways, contexts, or types), or if they are part of fetishistic fantasizing, then the item's loading onto Factor IV would be theoretically consistent with the others, therefore retaining face validity. This highlights the need for further research on two fronts: first, to explore whether there is a relationship between different kink/BDSM subgroups and pornography consumption that is not explicitly perceived as a kinky activity (or whether certain types of pornography are experienced as kinky in themselves and second, to explore how this item functions within the broader scale, both in relation to other items in the Fetishism dimension and in relation to the scale's other dimensions). Researchers might test the scale structure with and without this item, as well as with more explicitly fetishistic formulations of the item, to determine which version offers stronger ecological and face validity. Nonetheless, we advise cautious interpretation of its meaning within the overall construct.

The current sample was predominantly composed of heterosexual individuals with high levels of education, as well as individuals who identify within a binary gender framework, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, or educational backgrounds. While our sample included a higher proportion of highly educated individuals compared to the general Portuguese population, this is a well-documented trend in sexuality research, particularly in studies on BDSM, which often attract more highly educated participants (A. Brown et al., 2022). Future research should include individuals with varied sexual orientations, gender identities, and education levels. Expanding the sample recruitment methods to include participants who may not have internet access could also enhance the representativeness of the sample. While the present study provides an initial psychometric evaluation of the IFAKBDSM, further research is necessary to establish its validity across more diverse and representative samples.

Conclusion

This research sought to improve the understanding of human sexuality by recognizing the diversity of sexual desires and preferences. It also aimed to destigmatize unconventional sexual practices, fostering a more inclusive and non-judgmental environment, something that previous

¹We would like to thank the anonymous Reviewer 2 for their feedback and the productive discussion around this topic.

research has identified as needing significant attention (Bennett, 2024; Cardoso, 2022). Consequently, the exploration of these dynamics facilitates improved assessment and support for individuals who integrate such practices into their sexual lives, promoting a more receptive approach to mental health. The IFAKBDSM can be utilized to guide interventions in clinical contexts, reducing misdiagnoses, characterizing and normalizing patients' experiences, and allowing for the addressing of specific concerns related to these practices, in line with existing research and guidelines (e.g.: Ansara, 2019). We hope that the IFAKBDSM will serve as a valuable resource in both research and clinical contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of these practices and their implications.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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