

## **Sex Talks and Encounters: An Evaluation of Young People's Encounter of Sexuality and Pornography in the rural communities of Negros Occidental.**

### **Project Sex Z Endline Report**

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Sexual education has been identified as a necessary global tool in equipping adolescents with the information and resources to cope with the changes around their bodies and be introduced to the social sexual landscapes they belong to. (Menon, 2002). This is supported by Kumar et al. 2017, stating that the gradual introduction of sex in primary education through bringing age-appropriate topics is necessary for magnifying the advocacy towards a more adolescent-friendly approach in sex education to reinforce health-seeking behaviors. A lot of studies have focused on the relationship between media and the sexual behaviors of young adolescents, including the impact of social characteristics, *i.e., parent communication*. (Lebedíková, 2021). In the age of information and technology, adolescents are influenced by their interaction with the media, including their usage and comprehension, as it extends to the influence of media to define their love, sex, and relationships. (Adarsh and Sahoo, 2023).

The vulnerability of young people to succumb to detrimental behaviors in relation to their sexuality has been proven to be caused by misguided exposure to sexually explicit media. (Lin et al., 2020). They further emphasized that exposure has a substantive relationship with risky and misinformed sexual behaviors in their adolescent years. It is necessary, therefore, to navigate the intricacies of these behaviors to their fullest extent to understand and tailor fit the appropriateness of media. It is that exposure to younger ages makes young people subscribe to violent and coercive porn that contains abuse, rape, and child sex. This is proven to be associated with normalized behaviors of abuse that permit explicit content to have a strong influence on adolescents' sexually permissive attitudes. (Matcovic et al., 2018).

These realities shift in the perspective of traditional rural communities. Despite the availability of modern media and pornography, young people living in traditional societies acquire the most knowledge about sex from local knowledge systems, *i.e., families, peers, and religiosity*, compared to global and technological systems. (Jabareen and Zlotnicck 2023). The sexual behaviors they exhibit are attributed to the external environment they subscribe to, including the customs, beliefs, cultural affiliations, and norms. However, there is a gap in the

literature that directly examines the influence of traditional/local knowledge systems on the sexual behaviors of young people. Furthermore, identifying the impact of social factors is necessary to significantly create a social behavioral change framework intended to target these behaviors and understand them better.

Negros Occidental remains to confront high teenage pregnancy and rape cases that are incited to go alongside the rise of HIV-AIDS in the province. The prevalence of these cases is due to poor communication of sex, attributed to the culture of silence that has for so long influenced how communities in the province tackle such topics. In the previous baseline data, the institute identified that health communicators must ensure that the introduction of sex education and adolescent reproductive health materials must complement existing traditional belief systems. Collaborative efforts involving local leaders, influencers, and community organizations are essential to build trust and ensure the success of initiatives aimed at breaking the silence, fostering open communication, and addressing the interconnected issues of teenage pregnancy, rape, and the spread of HIV-AIDS. Moreover, previous data has correlated with a lack of innovative campaign materials to co-create observable behavioral change that targets their sexual behavior. It must be imperative for the province to significantly reduce cases while also increasing the rate of testing to encourage positive health-seeking behaviors.

This paper aims to identify pathways of how young people first encountered and learned *sexuality and pornography* and examine the social factors that are attributed to the formation of their perception of it. It will be vital to recognize the communication and structural gaps correlated with these events to ensure that the strategies for combatting these issues are holistically understood and tailor-fitted with the nuances specific to the target communities.

## **Methodology**

The research employed a mixed-method approach, utilizing key informant interviews and focused group discussions to explore how participants acquired knowledge about sex through both offline and online means. Sixty (60) participants were involved in the study, selected through a random sampling method to ensure a representative and diverse sample. The data gathering took place at Negros Occidental, Philippines, representing component cities and municipalities from Sibalay City, Kabankalan City, Hinigaran, Pontevedra, La Carlota City, San Enrique, Bago City, Murcia, Manapla, and Toboso.

## *Theoretical Framework*

The study theorizes with the Cultural Ecology of Health and Illness (Helman, 2007). The Cultural Ecology of Health and Illness theory enriches the framework by emphasizing the interconnectedness of cultural, social, and environmental factors in shaping health-related beliefs and practices. In the context of sexual education, this theory helps explore how cultural and social environments contribute to the development of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding sex.

In the context of sexual education, the Cultural Ecology of Health and Illness theory becomes particularly relevant in unraveling the nuanced dynamics that contribute to the development of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding sex. This theory recognizes that individuals do not exist in isolation but are intricately connected to their cultural and social environments, which play a pivotal role in shaping their understanding of and approach to sexuality.

By applying the Cultural Ecology of Health and Illness theory to the study, the research seeks to move beyond individual-centric perspectives and delve into the broader ecosystem in which sexual education unfolds. This holistic approach enables a more comprehensive exploration of the sociocultural factors that impact the development of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to sex. Ultimately, integrating this theoretical framework enhances the study's capacity to unveil the complex and interconnected influences that shape the landscape of sexual education, both offline and online.

### *Sample Selection*

- Random sampling enhances the generalizability of the findings to the broader population, reducing biases and ensuring that the sample reflects the more extensive demographic characteristics.

### *Data Collection Methods*

- Key informant interviews provided an in-depth exploration of individual experiences, allowing participants to share personal narratives and insights.
- Focused group discussions fostered a dynamic interaction among participants, enabling the exploration of shared experiences and perspectives and the emergence of common themes.

### *Research Instrument:*

- The main question focused on participants' pathways to acquiring knowledge about sex, encompassing both offline and online sources. This broad yet focused question allowed for a nuanced exploration of the diverse ways individuals engage with and learn about sexuality.
- Open-ended questions within interviews and discussions encouraged participants to share their experiences freely, providing rich qualitative data.

### *Ethical Considerations:*

- Informed consent procedures were implemented to ensure that participants were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and the voluntary nature of their participation.
- Anonymity and confidentiality measures were in place to protect participants' privacy, fostering a safe environment for open and honest discussions about sensitive topics.

### *Data Analysis:*

- Qualitative analysis techniques, such as thematic analysis, were employed to identify patterns, themes, and variations in participants' responses.
- The iterative data analysis process involved multiple researchers to enhance the rigor and reliability of the findings, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the data.
- The data was also compared to related pieces of literature that share the same findings and/or conversely affect the conclusions.

*Limitations:*

- The study is limited by its reliance on self-reported experiences, which may be influenced by recall bias or social desirability bias.
- The findings may need to be more generalizable to populations outside the sampled demographic, and caution should be exercised when applying the results to different cultural or socio-economic contexts.

*Implications for Future Research:*

- The study opens avenues for future research to delve deeper into specific demographic groups or cultural contexts to understand further variations in how individuals acquire knowledge about sex.
- Longitudinal studies could explore changes in patterns of knowledge acquisition over time, considering the evolving nature of offline and online information sources.

The methodology employed in this research seeks to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how individuals acquire knowledge about sex through a mixed-methods approach, ensuring a balance between individual narratives and shared experiences within a diverse participant pool.





“I witnessed our neighbors having sex at night, and I told my classmates about it. We talked about it, and they informed me that it was sex.”

The supplemental knowledge given to these children is limited to what they can only access, considering that schools regard sex as “*bastos*” or inappropriate for the learners and their age.

Lastly, the most alarming entry point for the offline mediums is cases of abuse that arose during the discussion with the participants. Numerous participants have detailed how they were abused at a young age or experienced sex at an earlier stage of their lives. The participants regarded these cases of sexual abuse as one major event that they can not forget because they never knew it was happening, nor did they know it was abuse. Most of these cases are undocumented, as their perpetrators are family members or someone ultimately more powerful than them. With the culture of silence that has caused victims to be slut-shamed and dehumanized, these cases were never brought to life. The participants mentioned that they never knew that they could do something about the matter, as they accepted the fact that they are no longer *virgin* or *pure* for their future partner in life. The internalized impact of sexual abuse has made the participants desensitized to either actively look for more sexual encounters or abstain totally from having sex. For some survivors, the internalized impact of sexual abuse may result in a heightened need for control or a distorted perception of personal worth. This can lead to engaging in more sexual encounters as a way to regain a sense of agency or reclaim control over their bodies and experiences. Conversely, another coping mechanism that may emerge from the aftermath of sexual abuse is the decision to abstain completely from sexual relationships. The experience of violation can create a profound aversion to intimacy, leading survivors to build emotional walls as a protective measure. This withdrawal from sexual encounters can be a means of self-preservation, an attempt to shield oneself from the vulnerability that intimate relationships may bring. In this context, abstaining from sex becomes a defense mechanism against potential re-traumatization.

Offline mediums are the most common entry points for young people to encounter sex, either through living the act of sex or experiencing it within the bounds of traditional norms, cultures, and religious beliefs about the matter. Offline mediums not only serve as the initial points of contact for young individuals with the complex realm of sexuality but also act as influential forces in shaping their perceptions, values, and behaviors. The interplay between familial, cultural, religious, and educational influences within the offline sphere contributes to the intricate tapestry of attitudes and beliefs surrounding sex, guiding young people as they navigate the multifaceted journey of self-discovery in the context of established societal norms.



Figure 4. Word Tree for Offline Entry Points for Sex and Pornography

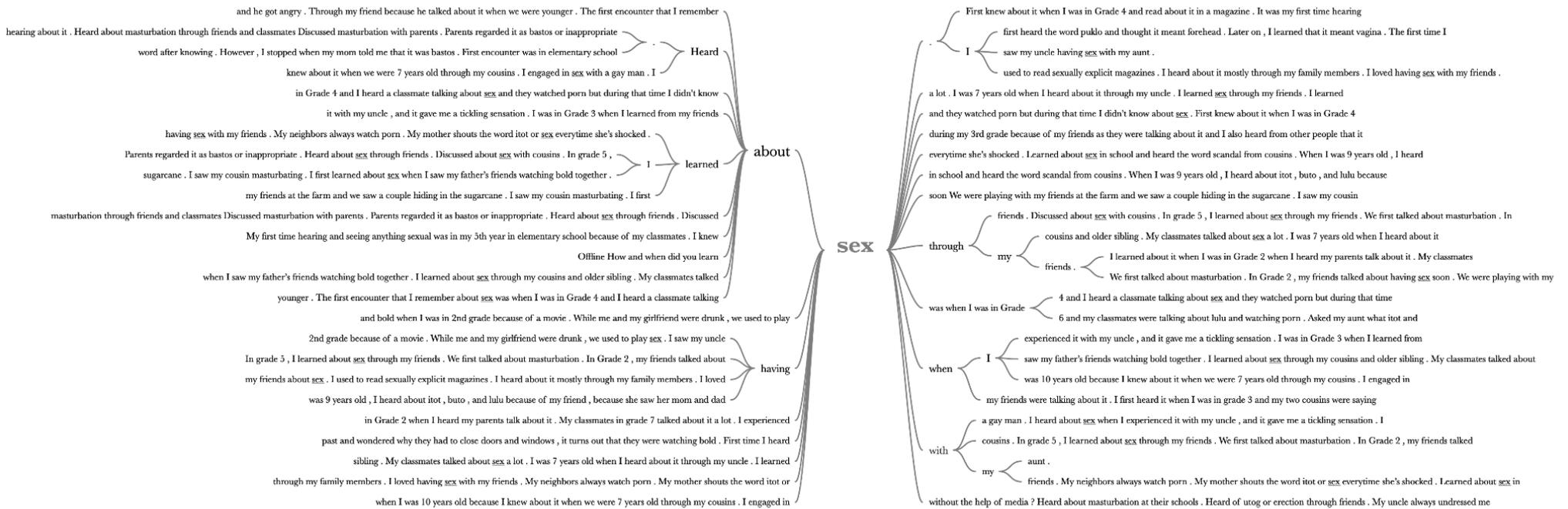


Figure 4 shows the interconnected discussions of sex to their exposures through offline means such as their parents, peers, schools, classmates, and even with their experiences of abuse under substance control. These results correlate with the word cloud above.

Figure 5. Word Tree for Online Entry Points for Sex and Pornography

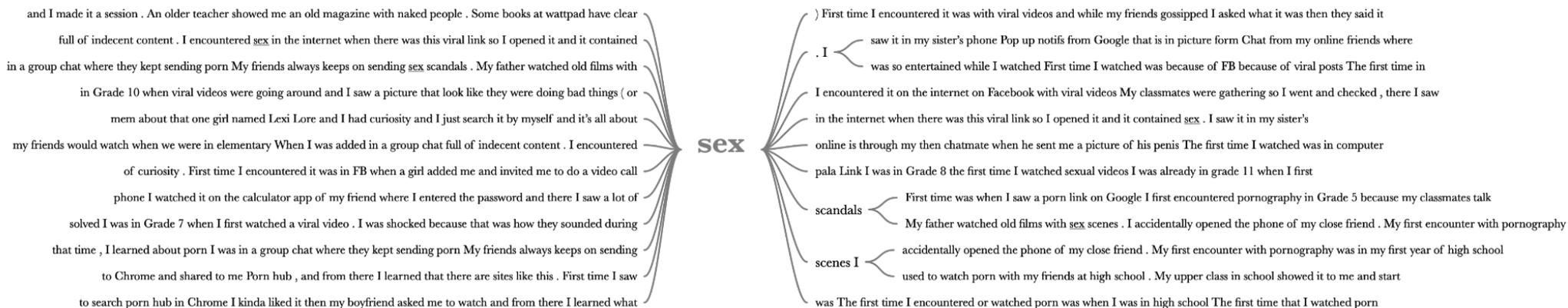


Figure 5 shows the interconnected discussions of sex to their exposure through online means, such as their exposure to media, pornographic content, scandals, and even online sex. This validates the data from the word cloud above.

## Discussions

### Entry Point of Abuse

Among the most significant findings that the study unveiled is the way young people understood and learned about sex through their experience of being sexually abused. It has been found that participants find *sex and pornography* disturbing as they are somewhat disturbed by the acts they see. The influence of abuse on their sexual behaviors is reflected by how they are able to identify themselves as a sexual being, as these traumatic experiences influence the formation of their positive future orientation. (Brumley et al., 2017). It is important, then, to determine how abuse takes place in the normative state of pornography with its accessibility plastered in all media platforms and spaces. The repercussions of child sexual abuse have profound implications for health, manifesting either in the short term or persisting over a long time. Children exposed to child sexual abuse face an increased risk of enduring physical injuries, anxiety, depression, substance use disorders, engaging in risky sexual behavior, and encountering gynecological issues such as sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain (Cate Fisher, Goldsmith, Hurcombe, Soares, & IICSA, 2017; Maniglio, 2009).

### *Coping with abuse*

Survivors of child sexual abuse refrain from seeking assistance due to a perception of being unwanted. This is significantly drawn by imperative factors on self-blaming from power imbalances between genders, leading to a reluctance to seek help. (Smith, Bryant-Davis, Tillman, & Marks, 2010, p. 262). Resistance to the therapeutic process may also arise, driven by a fear of being mentally transported back to traumatic events that they wish to forget. Caretakers may further contribute to this resistance by urging the survivor to move on and avoid discussing the incident (Mathews, Abrahams, & Jewkes, 2013, p. 651). Thus, the reluctance to seek professional help is influenced by feelings of unworthiness and a desire to suppress distressing memories, serving as non-cultural barriers to seeking assistance. (Sawrikar and Katz 2017). The occurrence of child maltreatment, particularly child sexual abuse, was identified as having a notable connection with post-traumatic stress symptoms. These symptoms, in turn, were linked to an elevated likelihood of developing psychotic disorders or experiencing psychotic symptoms (Choi et al., 2015; McCarthy-Jones, 2018). The desensitization resulting from sexual abuse can lead survivors down divergent paths, either intensifying their pursuit of sexual encounters as a means of regaining control or prompting a complete withdrawal from intimate relationships as a protective response. Understanding the nuanced ways in which

survivors cope with the internalized impact of abuse is crucial in tailoring support and interventions that foster healing and resilience.

Participants noted that they were not able to process the [abusive] event as soon as possible; however, they are reminded in the presence of available media that steers their perception about the [abusive] sexual activity. This coincides with the study of Smith, Bryant-Davis, Tillman, & Marks, 2010, p. 262, as the realization of being *abused* comes late, as the [abusive] event took place at the time when their formative years are yet to identify what must not be done to their sexual being. Moreover, the participants' exposure to pornography has significantly affected the way they understood their sexuality, either through being actively sexual or abstaining from sex. However, it is critical to nuance that the scenes they experience in pornographic materials do not reflect real-life sexual activities. Hence, sexual behaviors must not pattern with those.

### *Case Management of Child Sexual Abuse*

It is commonly observed that most children and adolescents who undergo sexual abuse do not avail themselves of any type of support services. The dwindling numbers of child sexual abuse are undocumented as of the moment, and barriers in relation to its rise are identified to be due to systemic factors, including political, economic, and social conditions that constrain local health and welfare service deliveries to accompany cases of abuse.

The multifaceted nature of child sexual abuse often intersects with broader societal structures, and documenting its true extent faces hurdles deeply embedded in systemic issues. The identification and reporting of cases are influenced by political factors that shape legislative frameworks and law enforcement priorities. Economic conditions also play a crucial role, as limited resources may hinder the establishing of robust support systems and preventative measures. Additionally, social factors, such as stigmas associated with reporting abuse or societal norms that perpetuate silence, further contribute to the underreporting and undocumented nature of child sexual abuse.

The impact of political, economic, and social conditions on child sexual abuse documentation is substantiated in existing literature. For instance, studies have highlighted the influence of political will and policy frameworks on the prevalence and reporting of child abuse cases (Finkelhor, 2019; Pereda, Guilera, Forns, & Gómez-Benito, 2009). Economic factors, including disparities in resource allocation, have been identified as barriers to establishing effective prevention and intervention programs (Gilbert et al., 2009). Social conditions, encompassing cultural attitudes and community dynamics, have also been recognized as critical

in shaping the willingness of individuals to report and seek help in cases of child sexual abuse (Jones, Finkelhor, & Kopiec, 2001).

According to the participants, the culture of silence has influenced case management systems as it is difficult to prove that you are taken advantage of in front of a male-dominated legal space or courts. It is, therefore, important to understand these variables in co-creating safe spaces for individuals to navigate case management, especially for child sexual abuse survivors. These are consistent with existing pieces of literature proving that social environments play a critical role in making justice accessible for victims of child sexual abuse.

### *Sexual Behaviors of Sexually Abused Children*

The research has signified that encountering sex through sexual abuse becomes a dangerous precedent for abuse to be normative in society. Considering that the country has weak enforcement mechanisms on case management for child sexual abuse, it is critical to identify and understand what sexual behaviors are elicited by victims to further tailor-fit their needs and communicate the appropriate knowledge without retraumatizing these individuals.

As documented by previous studies (Fergusson, Lynskey, & Horwood, 1996; Paolucci, Genius, & Violato, 2001), individuals who experience sexual abuse may be at an increased risk of perpetuating similar behaviors in their adulthood. This distressing pattern emphasizes the urgent need to address not only the immediate effects of abuse but also the long-term repercussions on victims and, consequently, on societal norms. In the context of a country with weak enforcement mechanisms for case management of child sexual abuse, the research recognizes the importance of tailoring interventions to the specific needs of victims. Understanding the sexual behaviors elicited by victims becomes crucial for designing effective support systems without inadvertently retraumatizing these individuals. This acknowledgment aligns with trauma-informed approaches, emphasizing sensitivity to the psychological impact of abuse and fostering an environment that promotes healing and resilience (Herman, 1992; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).

The research advocates for a nuanced understanding of the sexual behaviors elicited by victims of sexual abuse to design and implement interventions that are not only sensitive to their needs but also contribute to breaking the cycle of abuse within society. By incorporating trauma-informed approaches and tailoring support systems, it becomes possible to navigate the complexities of addressing the long-term impact of abuse on individuals and fostering a culture of healing.

## **Sexuality and Pornography and the Influence of Technology**

The convergence of sex and technology is a critical aspect in understanding the behaviors of young people and adolescents toward *engaging in sex*. The participants highlighted that most of their current exposures are drawn from the internet or social media platforms, or they engage in pornographic and sexual activities online, including *online sex (vidjakol)*, *onlyfans*, and *alter*. It is crucial to navigate the digital landscape to understand their sexual behaviors further.

The participants' revelations underscore the significance of online spaces as influential environments for sexual exploration among young individuals. Research has similarly documented the rise of online sexual activities, ranging from the consumption of sexually explicit content to participation in virtual communities (Döring, 2009; Daneback, Cooper, Månsson, & Tikkanen, 2005). The study aligns with these findings, emphasizing the prevalence and diversity of online sexual behaviors among young people. This proves that the internet and digital spaces are part of our living environment. The mention of platforms such as OnlyFans and engagement in "alter" communities highlights the evolving nature of digital spaces for sexual expression. OnlyFans, for instance, has gained prominence as a platform where individuals can share and monetize their sexual content. The emergence of "alter" communities, characterized by individuals adopting alternate personas online, adds another layer to the multifaceted ways in which young people navigate their sexual identities in the digital realm.

Understanding the digital landscape becomes imperative in deciphering the motivations, risks, and implications associated with the sexual behaviors of young individuals. The digital realm introduces unique challenges, such as issues of consent, privacy, and the potential for exposure to explicit or harmful content. Navigating this landscape requires a nuanced approach that considers the diverse ways technology intersects with sexual exploration.

Given the pervasive influence of the internet on the sexual behaviors of young people, promoting digital literacy and comprehensive sexual education becomes paramount. Empowering individuals to engage with online content critically, understand the implications of their digital activities, and navigate virtual relationships responsibly are crucial components of fostering a healthy and informed approach to sex in the digital age.

The convergence of sex and technology, as illuminated by the participants' experiences, necessitates a comprehensive exploration of online sexual behaviors. The study's insights underscore the need for ongoing research and educational initiatives that address the intricacies of the digital landscape, providing young individuals with the tools and knowledge to navigate the complexities of sex in the digital age.

## **State of Understanding Sex and Pornography in Rural Areas of Negros Occidental**

In the contemporary era of digital advancement, the transformation of spaces for the expression and exploration of sexuality is evident. The increasing digitization of information and content related to sexuality has led to a paradigm shift in the way individuals engage with and perceive sexual matters (Tolman, Anderson, & Belmonte, 2014). However, this progress is not uniform across all communities, and the impact of digitalization on sexuality is distinctly nuanced, particularly when considering the context of rural communities.

Rural communities often present a unique set of challenges and dynamics that significantly influence the reception and integration of digitalized sexual spaces. Cultural norms and perceptions about sex in these rural areas form a complex tapestry that interacts with the digital landscape in distinctive ways. Participants in our study emphasized the existence of a cultural makeshift, which, despite the accessibility of sexual content, creates an environment where discussions about sexuality are not welcomed.

This reluctance to engage in open conversations about sex in rural communities contributes to a profound impact on the prevailing culture. The participants underscored that this cultural resistance serves to perpetuate an atmosphere of violence and abuse. In rural areas, the lack of discourse on sexuality becomes a breeding ground for the concealment of issues related to sexual violence and abuse. The silence surrounding these matters acts as a barrier to addressing and preventing such incidents, creating an environment where the victims are often left without a voice.

Supporting this perspective, Matković, Cohen, and Štulhofer (2018) highlight the critical role of communication in addressing issues related to adolescent sexual activity. They argue that open and informed discussions contribute to a healthier understanding of sexuality among adolescents. The absence of such discussions, as observed in the rural context, can have detrimental effects on the well-being of individuals, particularly the youth, who may lack essential information and support.

Moreover, the perpetuation of a culture of silence in rural areas contradicts the broader trend of destigmatizing sexuality through digital platforms. As Tolman, Anderson, and Belmonte (2014) highlighted, the digital realm can challenge traditional discourses and mobilize discussions around sexuality. In rural communities, however, the existing cultural makeshifts act as barriers to the positive influence that digital platforms could have in fostering healthy conversations about sex.

In light of these findings, it is imperative to recognize the need for targeted interventions and educational initiatives tailored to the specific cultural contexts of rural communities. Efforts to bridge the gap between digitalized sexual spaces and rural cultures must be sensitive to the existing norms and work towards dismantling the barriers that inhibit open discourse. As Finkelhor (2019) emphasizes in the prevention of child sexual abuse, a comprehensive approach involves breaking down the cultural barriers that perpetuate silence and fostering an environment where discussions about sexuality are not only accepted but encouraged.

Addressing these challenges is crucial not only for promoting healthy attitudes toward sexuality but also for combating the culture of violence and abuse that thrives in the silence of rural spaces. This resonates with the work of Hald, Malamuth, and Yuen (2010), which emphasizes the importance of creating an environment that discourages violence against women by challenging attitudes supportive of such behaviors.

While the digitalization of sexual spaces is a progressive step towards expanding conversations about sexuality, its impact is contingent on the cultural context in which it unfolds. Rural communities, with their unique cultural makeshifts and resistance to open discussions about sex, present a challenge that necessitates thoughtful and culturally sensitive strategies to ensure that the benefits of digital progress are inclusive and accessible to all (Finkelhor, 2019). Addressing these challenges is not only an essential step in fostering healthy sexual attitudes but also in creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals in rural areas who may be vulnerable to the detrimental effects of a culture of silence (Matković et al., 2018).

## **Sexuality, Pornography, and Families.**

The role of families in fostering a safe space for their children remains a constant thrust towards ensuring that young people have the space for their experiences and curiosity to be narrowed down. The results showed the gap in parent communication and the vital role they could have played in ensuring their children are safe from misinformed materials regarding HIV-AIDS, sex, and pornography. As a result, children resorted to outsourcing information elsewhere, hidden from their parents' knowledge. These instances challenge existing patriarchal and familial values as sex is seen as an exclusive concept for married individuals. Hence, it is crucial to foster a safe communicative environment.

The results highlighted that most participants have talked about it through their family members but not necessarily to their parents. Moreover, most of them chose to hide it from their parents for fear of being told. It can be attributed to the lack of communication of children with their parents, complemented by the prevailing stigma about the topic.

According to Mullis et al. 2020, parents and their children encounter notable challenges when engaging in conversations about sexual health (Mullis et al., 2020). These difficulties arise from parental embarrassment, discomfort, and a lack of knowledge (personal barriers). Additionally, there is an inclination to seek explanations from external sources or others (communal barriers) and the presence of taboos and generational disparities (cultural barriers). These results are consistent with the findings of the study as they highlight the communication barriers within nuclear families that affect the behavioral response of young people in relation to sexuality. Young people may feel conflicted about determining appropriate behavioral responses to sexual issues, as the divergence in values between traditional and contemporary lifestyles is particularly evident in sensitive areas like sexuality. Young individuals are consistently exposed to the societal norms and behaviors related to sexuality in Western culture, including gender roles, dating, and engaging in sexual activities (Cihangir, 2013; Homma et al., 2015). However, these values are not necessarily discussed in modern families, as they find themselves in a dilemma, torn between fulfilling strong family expectations, such as upholding family honor and pursuing their desires for dating and relationships (Dayan, 2021). In essence, young people may face the challenge of meeting family expectations or aligning with mainstream norms and values influenced by modernization and peer influences (Flores & Barroso, 2017; Negy et al., 2016).

Hence, the role of families in communicating sex education is crucial. Shaping sexually smart families is necessary for fostering sexually smart communities. The community can build on the strength of a family's support to increase access to accurate sex information.

## **Sexuality and Pornography in Social Spaces**

With the results centered on pornography and sexuality taking place in social spaces like schools, it is imperative to understand the underpinning factors that correlate to this phenomenon. The participants highlighted a significant correlation between learning about sex and exposure to pornographic content, with a notable emphasis on the role of peer interactions in this educational process. This finding underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics at play in shaping sexual knowledge within the context of school environments.

The participants' accounts align with existing research that underscores the influential role of peers in shaping adolescent attitudes and knowledge about sex (Lefkowitz, Espinosa-Hernández, & O'Neill, 2016; Tolman, Anderson, & Belmonte, 2014). As a social space, the school setting emerges as a key arena for exchanging information, experiences, and curiosity related to sexuality. Peers who share similar age and developmental stages provide a more accessible platform for discussing sensitive topics compared to familial relationships. The accessibility of pornographic materials, coupled with the taboo nature of discussing such content with parents, directs individuals toward their peers for clarification and understanding. This aligns with previous research highlighting the influence of media, including pornography, on shaping sexual attitudes and behaviors among adolescents (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006; Sabina et al., 2008). The reported preference for discussing sexual curiosity with peers rather than parents points to the comfort and accessibility factors at play. Adolescents often navigate a period of heightened self-discovery and curiosity about sexuality, and the perceived openness and relatability of peer discussions create an environment where questions can be asked without fear of judgment or restriction.

The reported preference for discussing sexual curiosity with peers rather than parents points to the comfort and accessibility factors at play. Adolescents often navigate a period of heightened self-discovery and curiosity about sexuality, and the perceived openness and relatability of peer discussions create an environment where questions can be asked without fear of judgment or restriction.

The study emphasizes the pivotal role of social spaces, particularly schools, in shaping individuals' understanding of sex, with peer interactions playing a central role. Acknowledging the interplay between peer-driven sexual education and exposure to pornography is crucial for designing effective sexual education programs that address the diverse needs and curiosities of adolescents within a supportive and informed environment.

## **Gender, Sexuality, and Pornography.**

The intersection of sexuality, pornography consumption, and gender dynamics, introduces a nuanced layer to the understanding of how individuals shape their gender identities. A wealth of research has delved into the gendered nature of sexuality and pornography, highlighting disparities in consumption patterns and the associated implications for gender roles and expectations (Hald, Malamuth, & Yuen, 2010; Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, Sun, & Liberman, 2010). In the context of this study, the findings emphasize a notable gender divide, with men being more openly engaged in discussions about sex and pornography compared to women and other gender spectrum members.

The observation that men are more actively involved in discussions about sex and pornography aligns with existing literature that suggests a disproportionate prevalence of male viewership in the consumption of pornographic materials (Hald et al., 2010). The study contributes to this discourse by highlighting the societal factors that contribute to the gendered nature of pornography consumption, shedding light on the prevailing attitudes and entitlements that influence individual behaviors. According to the participants, men are openly engaging in watching pornographic content and acting in sexual activities openly since they are entitled to do so. The participants' perspectives offer insights into the societal expectations and entitlements that underpin the observed gender disparities. The notion that men are seen as entitled to sex due to their perceived role as "bringers of life" aligns with traditional gender norms that prescribe distinct roles and responsibilities based on biological differences. This perspective, rooted in historical and cultural narratives, reinforces a dichotomy where men are expected to actively pursue sexual experiences while women are positioned as the gatekeepers of reproduction, necessitating a nuanced understanding of how to engage in sexual activities responsibly. These societal expectations not only shape individual attitudes toward sex but also have profound implications for the gender formation process. The study suggests that the perceived entitlement of men to sex influences their openness and engagement with sexual content, potentially impacting how they perceive their roles and identities within the broader framework of gender.

The study contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the gendered nature of sexuality and pornography by highlighting the perceptions of entitlement that influence men's more open engagement with these topics. By recognizing and challenging these entrenched norms, societies can work towards fostering a more inclusive and equitable understanding of sexuality that respects diverse experiences and identities across the gender spectrum.

## Conclusions

The comprehensive exploration of offline and online entry points for young individuals into the realms of sex and pornography reveals a complex interplay of familial, societal, and technological factors. Offline mediums, deeply rooted in traditional norms, cultural values, and religious beliefs, serve as the primary entry points for sexual encounters among the youth. The study underscores the significant influence of family, peers, schools, and instances of abuse in shaping young people's understanding of sex. This offline landscape not only introduces them to the act of sex but also contributes to the formation of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding sexuality.

Intriguingly, the study delves into the internalized impact of sexual abuse on participants, shedding light on how survivors navigate their sexuality. The aftermath of abuse manifests in a spectrum of responses, from actively seeking more sexual encounters to complete abstinence. These responses highlight the profound and lasting impact of abuse on individuals' perceptions of self-worth, control, and intimacy. The study emphasizes the need for tailored interventions that address the nuanced coping mechanisms adopted by survivors.

The intersection of sex and technology emerges as a critical aspect of the participants' experiences, with online platforms playing a significant role in shaping their sexual behaviors. The digital landscape, marked by the accessibility of explicit content and online communities, presents both opportunities and challenges. Understanding the digital realm becomes imperative to navigate the evolving behaviors of young people, necessitating interventions that promote digital literacy and responsible online engagement.

Moreover, the study uncovers the gendered dynamics of sexuality and pornography consumption, with men more openly engaging in discussions and activities related to sex. The perceived entitlement of men to sexual experiences, rooted in traditional gender norms, underscores the need to challenge and redefine societal expectations. Fostering a more inclusive and equitable understanding of sexuality is crucial for breaking down gender disparities and promoting healthier attitudes toward sex.

Finally, this study contributes valuable insights into the multifaceted landscape of young people's encounters with sex and pornography, both offline and online. The recommendations aim to inform interventions and initiatives that foster a more informed, supportive, and equitable environment for young individuals as they navigate the complexities of sexuality in the modern world.

## Recommendations

**Trauma-Informed Interventions:** Develop trauma-informed interventions that recognize and address the diverse coping mechanisms adopted by survivors of sexual abuse. These interventions should prioritize creating safe spaces for survivors to navigate their experiences without re-traumatization.

**Cultural Sensitivity in Rural Communities:** Tailor interventions and educational initiatives to the specific cultural contexts of rural communities. Address cultural makeshifts and resistance to open discussions about sex, fostering an environment that encourages healthy conversations and dismantles barriers to reporting abuse.

**Enhanced Case Management:** Strengthen case management systems for child sexual abuse by addressing systemic factors such as political, economic, and social conditions. This includes advocating for political will, resource allocation, and cultural shifts to improve the identification, reporting, and documentation of abuse cases.

**Digital Literacy Education:** Implement comprehensive digital literacy programs as part of sexual education initiatives. These programs should equip young individuals with the skills to engage with online content critically, understand the implications of digital activities, and navigate virtual relationships responsibly.

**Family-Based Sex Education:** Encourage open communication within families about sex, fostering a safe and supportive environment for children to seek information.

**School-Based Sexual Education:** Recognize the pivotal role of schools as social spaces in shaping sexual knowledge. Develop school-based sexual education programs that address the diverse needs and curiosities of adolescents, acknowledging the influence of peer interactions and providing accurate information.

**Challenge Gender Norms:** Promote a more inclusive and equitable understanding of sexuality that respects diverse experiences and identities across the gender spectrum.

**Community Support:** Build community support systems that recognize the role of families in shaping sexually smart communities. By strengthening family communication and support, communities can contribute to increased access to accurate sex information and promote a healthier approach to sexuality.

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