

Determinants of Sexual and Non-Sexual Risk-taking Behaviors of Digital Natives

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Abstract--- *This study examines the determinants of sexual and non-sexual risk-taking behaviors of digital natives of a university in Northern Philippines utilizing the descriptive-correlational method of research with a validated structured survey-questionnaire as data gathering instrument. Findings revealed that majority of the digital natives were exposed to various means of pornographic materials and had experienced engaging in non-sexual risk-taking behaviors including drinking alcoholic beverages, cheating in school, and smoking cigarette. Moreover, most of the independent variables are highly associated with premarital sex (PMS) behavior. Respondents' age, sex, course, year level, religion, academic performance, and living away from home significantly interrelates to premarital sex behavior. Further, select sex-related circumstances and non-sexual risk-taking behaviors of the digital natives were significantly correlated with PMS. On the select peer-related sexual risk-taking behaviors, only reading pornographic materials was found to be not correlated. Furthermore, the peer-related non-sexual risk-taking behaviors were found to be significantly related to PMS. Hence, with PMS as a critical societal issue, it is but relevant to intensify programs and growth sessions invoking collaborative efforts among the stakeholders in higher education institutions.*

Keywords--- *Digital Natives, Non-sexual Behavior, Pornography, Premarital Sex, Sexual Behavior.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Reproductive health behavior of adolescents is one great concern of the Philippines and the world society today. Many agencies including educational institutions are alarmed with surveys regarding adolescents' sexual behaviors and their lifestyles. Surveys show that many adolescents become parents even if they are not yet ready to assume the mature role of being parents. In the 2011 United Nations Population Fund-Philippines 2011 annual report, teenage pregnancies in the country rose by 70 percent in a span of ten years from 1999 to 2009. Almost ten percent of all Filipino women aged 15-19 have already given birth. The National Statistics Office data show that the number of babies born to teenage mothers increased from 7.1 percent to 11 percent and that 13 to 14 percent of all registered marriages are among teenagers below 20 years old. The National Youth Commission shows that the rate of teen pregnancy in the country is among the highest in the ASEAN region and the only country where the rate is increasing (Torrevillas, 2013). Statistics show a continuing rise of teenage pregnancy despite the awareness of these adolescents of the numerous disadvantages of being very young parents.

The Philippine government tries its best to intervene in this concern. The law on reproductive health is a clear manifestation. Different agencies like the Commission on Population seriously conduct various researches and programs in order to address this pressing concern. However, despite those government programs, the problem of reproductive health is still a big concern in our society today. It is a big challenge to the educational institutions to

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do intervention measures to help the government on its advocacy most especially so, that most of the adolescents are in the school, hence this study.

Objectives

The study was conducted in order to shed light on the determinants of premarital sex among digital natives. Specifically, it tried to answer the following questions: (1) Is there an association between the profile of the digital natives and their sexual risk-taking behaviors? (2) Is there a relationship between students and peers' sexual and non-sexual risk-taking behaviors?

II. METHOD

The descriptive method of research employing the survey and correlational techniques was used in this study. The respondents were the 2037 second to fourth year college students of a University in Northern Philippines. A structured questionnaire was the main gathering tool, which is composed of three Parts: personal profile, reproductive health behavior of respondents, and reproductive health behaviors of respondents' friends/peers.

Questionnaires retrieved were tallied and tabulated. All statistical analyses performed were through the use of SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency count and percentage were used. In order to determine the interrelationships of the variables, statistical procedure using correlation and Chi Square were used. Correlation coefficient analysis was used to assess the degree of correlation between the variables. In the determination of correlates, the dependent variable considered was premarital sex because the concomitant sexual practices would eventually lead to it. On the other hand, the correlates of non-sexual risk-taking behaviors were centered only on two major dependent variables, smoking and drinking liquor. These variables were chosen only because these are the common non-sexual risk-taking behaviors of the digital natives' population.

III. RESULTS

The results showed that digital natives were predominantly female with 1233 or 60.5 percent. This finding goes to show that gone were the days when males were the priority of parents to be sent to school. Parents now see the importance of education not only for males but for both sexes. As to age, more than half of the students belong to the age 16 to 17. Ninety nine percent of the whole population belong to age bracket 16-19. Mean age is 19.39 with standard deviation of 1.58. This means that although 99 percent of the students fall on the age range between 16 to 19, the remaining 20 or 1 percent of the students are older. They are in their 20s, 30s and even 40s. It is viewed that preferred courses of students would likely signify the type of job a graduate is expected to work in the future. Four among the five major oversubscribed courses in the Philippines according to CHED Memorandum Number 32 are offered in the University. These are Business Administration, Teacher Education, Hotel and Restaurant Management and Information Technology. These programs have been producing very large number of graduates, but the labor market cannot absorb much of them. For the four courses mentioned, it gets almost three-fourths (1,521 or 74.67 percent) of the total population of the students.

More than three-fourths (79.45 percent) of the students are Roman Catholics. This finding is a normal reflection of the total population in the Philippines which is predominantly Roman Catholics. As to sibling order, almost fifty

percent (43.2%) were middle born, almost one-fourth are eldest (24.7%), 29.3% youngest and 2.8% only child. The digital natives were asked to state their self-esteem using a 5-point Likert scale. With an overall weighted mean of 3.59, the participants generally agree that they have a high regard of themselves. They feel they are valuable to their friends, have a positive attitude towards themselves and that they are a person of worth, at least on equal basis with others. The academic performance of the students based on their average shows that nearly half or 44.3 percent of the students were satisfactory in terms of performance. While majority of the students have satisfactory and good ratings, some students need more time to focus on their academics and strive harder to excel in their respective courses.

Among the seven personal variables, five are significantly correlated: age, sex, course, religion and academic performance. As shown in the table, as students grow older, they are likely to engage in premarital sex because it is in this period where production of sex hormones is at its peak. As expected, in the Philippine culture, males tend to engage more in PMS. This finding corroborates with the 2013 young adult fertility survey. Courses like BS Criminology and BS Industrial Technology shows a propensity of students to engage in PMS. This tendency is attributed to the fact that these are male-dominated courses. Religion is correlated with PMS behavior, chi square value is 5.35. More Roman Catholics are engage in PMS.

This means that many Roman Catholics do not hold to the church teaching that engagement in PMS is wrong. When it comes to academic performance, chi value is 16.09, those students whose grades are lower tend to engage more in PMS. This indicates that one possible reason of low academic performance is because of preoccupation with sexual and non-sexual risk-taking behaviors.

The study hypothesized that there is no relationship between premarital sex behavior and select variables. The results of the chi-square analysis revealed, however, that it is not true as all the independent variables are highly associated with premarital sex behavior (Table 2).

Among the personal variables, age, sex, course, year level, religion, academic performance, and stress management are significantly related to premarital sex behavior of students. As students grow older, they are likely to engage in premarital sex because it is in this period where production of sex hormones is at its peak until middle age. Moreover, it is more acceptable in our community when sex is done at an older age.

Sex is significantly correlated with PMS, and chi-square value is at 168.71. As expected, males tend to engage more in PMS because they are usually the ones who initiate it with their partner. This finding resembles the YAFS4 finding that there is a higher level of PMS among males (35.5percent) than females (28.6percent).

Revealed in the finding on the course as a variable is the propensity among students in the BS Police Administration program (68.6percent), BS Industrial Technology (57.8percent) and BS Criminology (50.9percent) to engage in PMS than students in other programs. The computed chi-square value is 174.60. This tendency is attributed to the fact that most of the students enrolled in these programs are males.

Year level is also significantly correlated to PMS behavior, as shown in the chi-square value of 42.97. An observation in the data indicates that students in third year (36.9 percent) and fourth year (42.8 percent) have a

greater tendency to engage in PMS. This finding coincides with the earlier finding that older students tend to engage in PMS. Similarly, YAFS4 revealed that there is a higher level of PMS among older youth with 16.9 percent for 15 to 19 years old, and 54.2 percent for 20-24 years old.

Moreover, religion is significantly associated with PMS behavior; having a chi-square value at 5.35. More Roman Catholics (36.7percent) are engaged in PMS than the non-Catholics (30.6 percent). It means that Catholics are more promiscuous than non-Catholics. It means that many Catholics do not hold or agree to the church teaching that PMS or fornication is always wrong. In a survey conducted in 2008, only 14 percent of Catholics attending mass at least once a week responded that PMS is “always wrong,” and among Catholics who do not go to mass, 86 percent of them do not agree that PMS is wrong (aggiecatholicblog.org). In the study of Galban and Marquez (2004), Catholics exhibit a higher likelihood of engaging in sex in 1994, but the pattern is reversed in 2002 wherein non-Catholics appear to be catching up with the Catholics.

Academic performance correlates significantly with PMS behavior; having a chi-square value at 16.09. Those students whose grades are lower (41.2percent) tend to engage more in PMS than those obtaining higher grades (32.3percent). It indicates that one possible reason for low academic performance is because of the distraction caused by preoccupation with sexual and non-sexual risk-taking behaviors which eventually may result in engaging in PMS.

Table 1: Relationship between Personal Variables and Premarital Sex

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Computed X2</i>	<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Statistical Inference</i>
Age	3	158.6	0.000	Significant
Sex	1	168.7	0.000	Significant
Course	8	174.6	0.000	Significant
Religion	1	5.35	0.021	Significant
Sibling order	3	2.75	0.432	Not significant
Self-esteem	1	0.72	0.40	Not significant
Academic Performance	1	16.09	0.000	Significant

Table 2 reveals that reading pornographic materials, watching pornographic movies, and opening a pornographic website and listening to green jokes correlate significantly with PMS, chi-square value is 27.89, 78.13, 159.19 and 6.915 respectively. In the study of Choe et al. (2004), on the causes of PMS, it was established among others, that pornography among youth is one of the causes of PMS.

Table 2: Relationship between Sex-related Circumstance and Premarital Sex

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Computed X2</i>	<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Statistical Inference</i>
Ever read pornographic materials	1	27.9	0.000	Significant
Ever watch pornographic movies		78		Significant
Ever opened pornographic websitr	1	159	0.000	Significant
Ever listened to green jokes	1	6.9	0.000	Significant

Among the non-sexual behaviors, smoking, drinking liquor/alcoholic beverages and cheating in the school are significantly related to PMS.

As shown in the table, smoking is significantly associated with PMS; having a chi-square value of 185.59. Smokers tend to engage more in PMS than non-smokers. According to the study carried out by Ramesh (2008), it was assumed that consumption of alcohol is considered as an activity which is mostly influenced by peers and

friends. As the results revealed, drinking alcohol was a significant predictor for boys' to have premarital sex. This could be a high-risk factor for early initiation of sexual behavior because of the lack of a specific reasoning process due to which young people cannot protect or control themselves (Dittus and Jaccard, 2000). Young people may use alcohol as a strategy to obtain sex; it, therefore, has a negative impact on judgment, inhibition, and physical coordination and its association with reduced condom use. PMS in Thailand is common among the youth. The study of Choe et al. (2004) revealed that the youth, the ones most engaged in the use of drugs and alcohol is linked to premarital sex practices among the youths. The analysis carried out by (Xiaowen Tu, 2012) indicated that many of the individual characteristics such as alcohol consumption, smoking habits, drug use had a significant association with experience of premarital sex.

Table 3: Relationship between Select Non-sexual Behavior and Premarital Sex

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Computed X2</i>	<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Statistical Inference</i>
Ever smoked	1	185.6	0.000	Significant
Ever drank liquor	1	52.9	0.000	Significant
Ever cheated	1	11.05	0.000	Significant

This study revealed the influence of peers on the premarital sex behavior of college students. The finding shows the significant relationship between PMS and select peer sexual risk behaviors. Students whose peers watch pornographic movies and who have opened a pornographic website are significantly related to PMS behavior of students. The study conducted by Viatonu et al. (2014) revealed that peer group had significantly influence premarital sex behavior of secondary school students. A similar analysis was carried out by (Chiao et al. 2012) which indicated that perception of peer sexual behavior had a significant association with experience of premarital sex. Ramesh (2008) also found that peers behaviors have a positive effect on the prevalence of premarital sex. In his study, he found that those students whose close friends had premarital sexual experience had also a very high level of premarital sex. In this, he concluded that regarding peer sexual behavior, the prevalence of premarital sex is far higher for those who had close unmarried friends with sexual experience. The results are alarming, hence a call to educational managers for them to provide adequate guidance to students who may be carried away by their developmental changes most especially that students are becoming promiscuous. This is shown in the recent 2013 survey of Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study, with 19,178 respondents, that one out of three Filipino youth had experience in premarital sex (Marquez, 2014).

Table 4: Relationship between Peer-related Sexual behavior and Premarital Sex

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Computed X2</i>	<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Statistical Inference</i>
Students' peers				
Ever read pornographic materials	1	2.89	0.089	Not significant
Ever watch pornographic material	1	33.67	0.000	Significant
Ever opened a pornographic website	1	108.55	0.000	Significant

The results of the chi-square analysis revealed that drinking and cheating are highly associated with the students' and peers' behaviors. The finding indicates that if the students have peers who drink liquor and cheat in school, they themselves engage in these types of behavior. It seems that the peers are giving the students the wrong models. This tendency of the students is attributed to the fact that constant companionship breeds sharing similar attitude and actions.

Table 5: Relationship between Students' and Peers' Select Peer-related Non-sexual Behavior

Variable	Df	Computed X2	Prob.	Statistical Inference
Smoking	1	427.11	0.089	Not Significant
Drinking liquor	1	305.77	0.000	Significant
Cheating	1	695.14	0.000	Significant

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it is concluded that sexual and non-sexual risk-taking behaviors are related. Those who are engaged in non-sexual risk-taking behaviors are predisposed to sexual risk-taking behaviors.

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