

# Post-Millennial Filipinos: Renewed Hope vs Risks

Further Studies of the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) Study

*The  
Association  
Between  
Exposure to  
Pornography  
and Early  
Sex Among  
Metro  
Manila  
Youth*



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Randolf S. Sasota, Maria Paz N. Marquez and Lolito R. Tacardon

# **The Association Between Exposure to Pornography and Early Sex Among Metro Manila Youth**

*Randolf S. Sasota, Maria Paz N. Marquez and Lolito R. Tacardon*

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## Message from the Executive Director

Since the turn of the century over fifteen years ago, the Philippines has seen the rise of the millennial generation of young Filipinos who are currently shaping the political landscape in late 2016 as they take a committed stand on the issues of the day.

It is appropriate for those concerned with Philippine development work to now start looking at the next generation of Filipinos and the Commission on Population has had a tradition of producing studies concerning young people.

“Post-Millennial Filipinos: Renewed Hope vs Risks” compiles 17 regional papers based on the dataset of the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) Study. These studies explore and discuss the emerging issues and concerns of the youth that need appropriate policy and program responses.

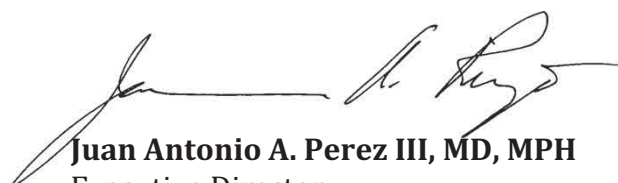
The latest YAFS comes more than a decade after the 2002 YAFS. The 2002 YAFS showed the concerns of the millennial Filipino much like the latest YAFS of 2013 marks the rise of the Filipinos born around the turn of the century and could foretell the shape of things to come for the 21<sup>st</sup> century young Filipino.

The post-millennial Filipino is focused on screens (smart phone, tablet and monitor) and the media is full of “hashtag-worthy” statements of 140 words.

The studies we are presenting continue to note and update matters such as sexual risk behaviors, early sexual involvement, teen pregnancy, reproductive health problems including sexually-transmitted infections as well as non-sexual risk behaviors such as smoking, alcohol abuse and drug use as well as suicide ideation and lifestyle.

We invite you to tune in to the latest findings about the post-millennial Filipino. It can only result in a more informed thread of interaction with the shapers of our country’s future.



  
**Juan Antonio A. Perez III, MD, MPH**  
Executive Director  
Commission on Population





## **Background**

The 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) Study is the fourth installment of a series of nationally representative cross-sectional surveys on Filipino youth aged 15-24 (for YAFS 1 and 2 and 15-27 for YAFS 3). The YAFS has yielded valuable information about young people's sexual and non-sexual behavior, education, labor force participation, family relationships, attitudes and values regarding certain issues concerning them, personal characteristics like self-esteem, and adverse conditions like suicidal ideation and depression symptoms, all of which are of pertinence to one's understanding of this significant sector of society. The 2013 YAFS or YAFS 4 in particular was a response to the need of updating information on the situation of today's young people. From YAFS 3 in 2002, there have been many important new developments in the environment where young people are situated that need to be studied as these affect not just their sexual and non-sexual risk taking behaviors but also their total well-being. For instance, the changes in communication and information technology such as the prevalent use of cellular phones and the internet and the new forms of communication that these have produced like social networking were not explored in the previous YAFS. The foregoing expansion in technology is presumed to have resulted to notable changes in the patterns and topographies of courtship, dating and relationships among young people. The upsurge in the incidence of HIV infection primarily among men who have sex with other men (MSMs) requires more recent reliable data on male sexual and non-sexual risk behaviors which is currently not available because regular survey rounds like the National Demographic and Health Surveys conducted every five years does not routinely include men. Moreover, with YAFS 4, core behaviors that have been monitored over time in YAFS 1, 2 and 3 were also updated. Among these are the sexual risky behaviors, such as the prevalence of early sexual involvement, teen pregnancy and reproductive health problems including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well as non-sexual risk behavior like smoking, drinking and drug use.

With the wealth of information yielded by the YAFS 4, the Commission on Population (POPCOM) in partnership with the Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (DRDF) came up with seventeen (17) regional papers (Regions 1-13, 4B, CAR, NCR and ARMM) that explore and discuss the emerging issues and concerns of the young people that need appropriate policy and program responses.



# **The Association Between Exposure to Pornography and Early Sex Among Metro Manila Youth**

*Randolf S. Sasota,<sup>1</sup> Maria Paz N. Marquez<sup>2</sup> and Lolito R. Tacardon<sup>3</sup>*

## **Abstract**

Young people in Metro Manila are the highest consumers of pornographic materials among all regions in the country. Similarly, youth sexual risk-taking behavior including early sexual initiation is most prevalent in Metro Manila. Given these findings, the study examined the association between exposure to pornography and early sexual initiation, defined as first sexual activity before age 18, among the youth in Metro Manila. The study employed the National Capital Region sample of 698 respondents 18–24 years old drawn from the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study data. Results of logistic regression analysis show that exposure to pornographic materials, particularly to X-rated videos, facilitates early sexual initiation for both males and females. Exposure to pornographic print media only, relative to non-exposure to any type of pornographic media, is not significantly associated with early sexual debut. The study also underscored the importance of education as a deterring factor against early sexual activity, particularly among females. The youth's main activity, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, and experience of peer pressure with regard to sexual activity did not emerge as significant determinants of early first sex. The predominance of males over females in both exposure to pornographic materials and early sexual initiation was likewise validated by the study.

**Keywords:** pornography, sexual initiation, Metro Manila, youth

## **Background and context**

Composed of 17 cities and municipalities, Metro Manila is the political, social, economic, and cultural center of the country. Strategically located in the big island of Luzon, the country's

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capital is bounded by the provinces of Bulacan to the north, Rizal to the east, and Cavite and Laguna to the south. Based on the 2010 Census of Population and Housing (CPH), Metro Manila recorded a total population of 11.9 million, which earns the region the distinction of being the most populous in the country next to CALABARZON (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2012). It is, however, the most densely populated region in the country. Its land area of 619.5 square kilometers translates to a population density of 19,137 persons per square kilometer in 2010, about 62 times higher than the population density of the entire country (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013).

The 2010 CPH reported that the youth population of Metro Manila aged 15–24 years totals to 2.36 million, which is 20 percent of the region’s total population (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2012). Female youth, at 1.23 million, outnumber male youth at 1.13 million. Metro Manila’s youth population accounts for about 13 percent of the country’s youth population.

The sheer size of Metro Manila’s youth population warrants a deeper understanding of the changes in the behavior of this important segment of the population. For instance, the past decade has seen a rising trend in the prevalence of risky sexual behavior among Filipino youth. This is nowhere more evident than in the country’s capital region, where young people consistently reported the highest levels of risky sexual activities among all 17 regions in the country. For instance, data from the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS4) revealed that a quarter of the youth in the National Capital Region (NCR) have multiple sexual partners and more than one tenth of ever-married youth have extramarital sexual partners (Marquez, 2016). Nearly one in ten NCR youth also reported having a “fuck buddy,” more than double the proportion in other regions.

YAFS4 findings also show a dramatic upsurge in the prevalence of premarital sex among NCR youth over time, from 24 percent in 1994 to 41 percent in 2013 (Demographic Research and Development Foundation [DRDF] & UP Population Institute [UPPI], 2014b), levels that surpassed the national figure in all survey years. The proportion of the youth who engaged in early sexual activity in 2013 is also highest in Metro Manila at 30.6 percent, which is 7 percentage points higher than the national level of 23.4 percent (DRDF & UPPI, 2014a). Early sexual initiation is a particular concern because it exposes young people to greater risks of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), situations that many youth might be ill prepared to face at their young age.

Equally striking is the Metro Manila youth’s level of exposure to pornographic materials, which is also the highest in the country. Nearly half (47.4%) of young people 15–24 years old in the region have read pornographic materials, while 66.2 percent have watched X-rated movies or videos (Laguna, 2016). One in three NCR youth (33.3%) have visited websites with sexually explicit content, which is much higher than the national level of 15.5 percent (DRDF & UPPI,

2014b). The sharing of sex videos at 29.5 percent is also most prevalent in NCR compared with other regions in the country (DRDF & UPPI, 2014b).

In recent years, activists in the United States have suggested that pornography among the youth should be considered a social issue alongside teenage smoking and drunk driving. They contend that pornography is so widespread that porn sites get more visitors than some social media networks. Filipinos are among the world's top consumers of pornography, ranked at number 19 in 2014 and at number 16 in 2015, according to Pornhub, the world's largest pornography site on the Internet ("Pinoys Among World's," 2015; "Pornhub's 2015 Year in Review," 2016). In terms of the time spent watching pornography on the site, Filipinos even recorded the longest duration among the countries in the list, with an average visit duration of 12 minutes and 45 seconds ("Pornhub's 2015 Year in Review," 2016).

Given these scenarios, it would be instructive to determine if exposure to pornography is a significant determinant of risky sexual behavior. To the authors' knowledge, only two local studies—Laguna and Pagaduan (2005) and Laguna (2010)—have examined the link between exposure to pornography and sexual behavior among Filipino youth. Both studies, which utilized the 2002 YAFS dataset, found that young adults who have been exposed to pornography are more likely to engage in premarital sex and to have early sexual initiation, defined as sexual intercourse before age 18. However, both studies failed to consider the timing of pornography exposure when the timing of sexual initiation was examined.

Thus, this paper explores the association between exposure to pornography and early sexual initiation among the youth in Metro Manila, highlighting gender differences. Other factors such as peer influence on sexual behavior and the youth's background characteristics were also examined as possible correlates of exposure to pornography and sexual initiation. The major difference of this paper from earlier local studies is that it ensured that the timing of exposure to pornography transpired prior to the initiation of sexual activity. In addition, the study focuses on young people residing in NCR, a group that behaves differently from their counterparts in other regions of the country, as noted earlier.

## **Review of related literature**

Research studies have established the significant link between pornography and sexual behavior. In recent years, researchers have paid close attention to young adults, as the rising prevalence of premarital sex alongside exposure to pornography has become a cause for concern among the adolescent population. Mass media facilitates exposure to pornographic materials as Internet use among the youth has become commonplace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Scholars and

advocates have recognized the greater influence of mass media on young people's sexual attitude and behavior over that of other social institutions such as the family, school, and religion.

There is agreement in the literature that the youth can learn sexual behaviors from observing the behaviors depicted in sexually explicit materials (Alexy, Burgess, & Prentky, 2009; Haggstrom-Nordin, Sandberg, Hanson, & Tyden, 2006; Haggstrom-Nordin, Tyden, Hanson, & Larsson, 2009; Hunter et al., 2010). Haggstrom-Nordin et al. (2006) supported previous findings showing adolescents' belief that sexually explicit material may serve as a source of knowledge but at the same time distort their images of sexuality. This study "extended these findings by revealing that pornographic media conveyed expectations and demands regarding what to do" (p. 391).

A 2005 study conducted by Lo and Wei explored the relationship between exposure to sexually explicit materials and sexual behaviors of 2,001 Taiwanese adolescents. The study revealed that exposure to sexually explicit materials increased the likelihood that adolescents will accept and engage in sexually permissive behaviors. These findings were further confirmed by Braun-Courville and Rojas (2009), Brown and L'Engle (2009), Lam and Chan (2007), and Peter and Valkenburg (2006, 2007, 2008).

Haggstrom-Nordin, Hanson, and Tyden (2005) analyzed the sex lives and pornography consumption of high school students in Sweden. Ninety-eight percent of male and 76 percent of female respondents reported having consumed pornography, 75 percent of the overall sample had engaged in sexual intercourse, and 71 percent had used a contraceptive at first intercourse. Having intercourse with a friend, group sex, oral sex, and anal sex were all associated with frequent exposure to sexually explicit materials. In addition, 71 percent of adolescents believed that sexually explicit materials influenced the sexual behaviors of peers, but only 29 percent of adolescents believed that sexually explicit materials influenced their own sexual behaviors. This study also suggested that adolescents who were more frequently exposed to sexually explicit materials had their first experience of sexual intercourse at an earlier age than adolescents who were not frequently exposed.

Kraus and Russell (2008) conducted a study on exposure to sexually explicit Internet materials and the age of first sexual experience as well as the number of sexual partners. Participants who had Internet access reported significantly younger ages of first sexual experiences than those without Internet access. However, there was no significant difference when the number of sexual partners was compared. The authors argued that "the Internet, which often promotes and sells sexually explicit material, may be acting as an accelerant for earlier reported ages for first oral sex and first sexual intercourse" (p. 166).

Brown and L'Engle's (2009) findings confirmed those of Haggstrom-Nordin et al. (2005)

and Kraus and Russell (2008), specifically that early exposure to sexually explicit materials increases the likelihood that both male and female youth will engage in oral sex and sexual intercourse earlier than their non-exposed counterparts. In their study, 66 percent of male and 39 percent of female adolescents reported that by the age of 14, they had been exposed to pornography in the previous year. Moreover, 90 percent of adolescent males reported having oral sex, and 88 percent reported having sexual intercourse.

These data suggest that young adults are being exposed to sexually explicit materials and engaging in a variety of sexual behaviors, some of which are considered risky and problematic. Braun-Courville and Rojas' (2009) study of 433 young adults revealed that those who are exposed to sexually explicit materials are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors such as anal sex and sex with multiple partners and to use drugs or alcohol during sex. This study was validated by Brown, Keller, and Stern (2009), who found that young adults who watched high-risk sexual practices in sexually explicit materials in the absence of education on the potential negative consequences are more likely to engage in some form of high-risk sexual behavior themselves. A psychotherapist also linked pornography to sexual violence and sexual trauma (Agence France-Presse, 2014). Furthermore, Medina (2015) asserted that the rising rate of sex crimes in the country, such as sexual harassment, sex trafficking, and rape, may be partly attributed to sexual stimulation provided by mass media including television, movies, and tabloids.

In the country, there is limited empirical research on the linkage between pornography and sex. Apart from the two previous studies mentioned earlier that examined the association between exposure to pornography and sexual initiation among Filipino youth using earlier YAFS data (i.e., Laguna, 2010; Laguna & Pagaduan, 2005), a more recent study on exposure to sensual print media and attitudes toward sex was conducted by Bernarte, Bartolata, and Laureta (2015). Based on a survey of 400 single male college students, the study found that more liberal attitudes toward sex are evident with an increasing level of exposure to sensual print media.

## **Data**

The study employed YAFS4 data. YAFS4 is the fourth in a series of nationwide surveys of Filipino youth 15–24 years old conducted by DRDF and UPPI. The survey utilized face-to-face interviews to elicit information about young people's socio-demographic characteristics, mass media exposure including pornography, characteristics of family and friends, and sex-related attitudes and behavior, among other issues. A two-stage sampling design was employed with regions as the domain and barangays as the primary sampling unit. (For further information about the survey sampling design, refer to Natividad, 2016.)



The total number of survey respondents was 19,178, of which 1,090 were interviewed in Metro Manila. The latter figure represents 2,507 weighted cases. For the purpose of this study, the analytic sample was restricted to the unweighted data of 698 respondents (306 males and 392 females) in the ages 18–24 years.

## Measures

The dependent variable is the experience of early sexual initiation, which is derived from the age at first sex. This variable was drawn from two questions: the age at first premarital sex (among those with premarital sex experience) and the age at marriage (among ever-married youth with no premarital sex experience). Early sex is defined as engaging in sexual intercourse before the youth reached 18 years old. This age was used as the cut-off for a number of reasons. First, the adverse consequences associated with births to young women prior to this age are well established. In addition, age 18 is the legal age of marriage in the country. Finally, since the national data show that 18 years old is the mean and median age at first sex among young Filipinos (Marquez, 2016), the study adopted the median-split methodology employed by Crockett, Bingham, Chopak, and Vicary (1996) in determining what is considered early sexual initiation. The variable on experience of early sex is transformed into a dichotomous variable, with category 1 covering the youth with sexual debut below age 18 and category 0 including those who either have no sexual experience or have engaged in sex at a later age.

The main independent variable is exposure to pornography prior to sexual initiation. The survey included several questions that assess exposure to different types of pornographic materials, namely sexually explicit books, magazines, or tabloids (print materials); X-rated movies or videos; and websites with sexually explicit contents. It should be noted that the interpretation of what is considered pornographic was left entirely to the survey respondents. Since the study is concerned with exposure to pornography prior to first sex, and the age at which the youth first accessed sexually explicit websites was not asked in the survey, the analyses focused on exposure to pornographic printed materials and videos only. To determine if the exposure to pornography transpired prior to sexual initiation, the ages at which the respondents were first exposed to either printed materials or videos were compared with the age at first sexual intercourse. The study thus created a variable on exposure to pornography prior to first sex with four categories: (1) no exposure before first sex, (2) exposed to printed materials only, (3) exposed to videos only, and (4) exposed to both printed materials and videos. Note that the first category, “no exposure before first sex,” includes respondents with no pornographic exposure at all and those whose exposure occurred after their first sex.

The potential influence of peers on the youth’s sexual initiation is captured from responses to two questions. The first is “(When you were still single,) have any of your friends

tried to encourage you to have sexual intercourse with anyone?” This question is answerable by yes or no. The second is “(When you were still single,) did any of your friends try to pressure you to have sexual intercourse with anyone?” This question has four possible responses: (1) no pressure at all, (2) a little pressure, (3) a moderate amount of pressure, and (4) a lot of pressure. A variable measuring peer influence was created by combining the responses to these two questions. Because very few young people in NCR reported that they were “not encouraged but were pressured” by their friends to have sex, this category was combined with those who were “encouraged and pressured.” The final variable yielded three categories: (1) not encouraged or pressured, (2) encouraged, and (3) pressured. The last category includes those who were pressured regardless of whether there was encouragement involved.

Drawing from existing literature, a number of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were examined as predictors of early sexual initiation. Educational attainment refers to the highest level of schooling completed by the youth. In the descriptive profile, educational attainment has four categories: no schooling or elementary, high school undergraduate, high school graduate, and college or higher. Education was collapsed into two categories, high school undergraduate or lower and high school graduate or higher, in the regression analysis. Main activity was based on the question on the youth’s main activity in the three months prior to the survey date. This variable was classified into studying, working, doing housework, and idle (neither studying nor working). In the regression analysis, the first three categories were combined to yield a main activity variable with two categories: (1) studying or working and (2) idle. Socio-economic status was classified into poor or non-poor. This was derived from the wealth scores created using information on housing characteristics and ownership of household assets. Based on the 2012 national poverty incidence of 25.2 percent, households with wealth scores belonging to the lower 25.2 percent were considered poor households, while the remainder were considered non-poor households. (Refer to Tabaco [2015] for a detailed discussion of the creation of the socio-economic status variables in the YAFS4 data.)

In addition to these variables, several other characteristics of the youth were examined as part of the profile of the respondents. Age, which refers to the respondent’s age at the time of interview, is categorized into two: 18–19 years old and 20–24 years old. Marital status refers to the respondent’s marital status at the time of the survey. This variable has two categories: never married (single respondents) and ever married, which includes those in a living-in arrangement, the formally married, and those who are separated. Religion has two categories: Catholic and non-Catholic; the latter includes adherents of all religions other than Catholicism. Since Metro Manila is located in the Tagalog region, the ethnicity of the respondents was classified into two: Tagalogs and non-Tagalogs.

## Methodology

Since it is well documented that sexual behavior varies by sex, all analyses were done separately for males and females. The study employed several statistical techniques. Descriptive measures such as percentages, means, and standard deviations were used in describing the profile of the respondents. Crosstabulations and chi-square tests were employed to determine the pattern of differences across background characteristics and to ascertain the statistical significance of the differences, respectively. Binomial logistic regression was conducted to examine the likelihood of engaging in early sexual initiation (sex before age 18) as against engaging in sex at age 18 or older or not engaging in sex at all. Two regression models each were estimated for males and females. The first model examines the bivariate association between exposure to pornography and experience of early sexual initiation, while the second model examines the association between exposure to pornography and early sex, controlling for the other independent variables.

## Findings

### *Characteristics of NCR youth*

A total of 698 respondents 18–24 years old in Metro Manila were interviewed. The females outnumbered the males (56.2% and 43.8%, respectively). A little more than a third (35.5%) of the male and female respondents were teenagers aged 18 to 19. The majority (63.9%) of respondents were never married, with a higher proportion of single youth among males than females (78.7% and 52.3%, respectively). Over one third (34.4%) of female youth were in a living-in arrangement. Very few young people for both sexes were in a formal union. Worth noting is the relatively high proportion (7.4%) of females who are separated from their husbands or live-in partners (Table 1).

Table 1. Percent distribution of youth 18–24 years old by background characteristics and sex

Background characteristics	Male	Female	Both sexes
<b>Age</b>			
18–19 years old	33.3	37.2	35.5
20–24 years old	66.7	62.8	64.5
<b>Marital status</b>			
Never married	78.7	52.3	63.9
Living in	18.3	34.4	27.4
Formally married	2.3	5.9	4.3
Separated	0.7	7.4	4.4
<b>Educational attainment</b>			
Elementary	7.8	2.3	4.7
High school undergraduate	23.2	16.1	19.2
High school graduate	32.7	41.8	37.8
College or over	36.3	39.8	38.3
<b>Main activity</b>			
Studying	29.4	19.9	24.1
Working	43.5	29.8	35.8
Doing housework	3.6	37.2	22.5
Idle	23.5	13.0	17.6
<b>Socio-economic status</b>			
Poor	1.3	0.8	1.0
Non-poor	98.7	99.2	99.0
<b>Religion</b>			
Catholic	89.2	90.3	89.8
Non-Catholic	10.8	9.7	10.2
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Tagalog	84.0	86.2	85.2
Non-Tagalog	16.0	13.8	14.8
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Percent</b>	43.8	56.2	100.0
<b>N of cases</b>	306	392	698

In terms of educational attainment, females fared better than males, as more females than males have either graduated from high school or have reached college (81.6% vs. 69.0%, respectively). However, males are more dominant as far as economic activities are concerned. At the time of the survey, more male youth were either studying (29.4%) or working (43.5%), while more female youth were engaged in housework (37.2%). A considerable proportion, particularly



among males (23.5%), is considered “idle” youth (i.e., neither working nor studying). Almost all (99.0%) NCR youth belong to non-poor households. Expectedly, a great majority of NCR youth are Catholics (89.8%) and Tagalogs (85.2%), with no substantial differences between sexes.

### *Exposure to pornography*

Table 2 presents information on the NCR youth’s exposure to pornography. Overall, eight in ten youth have been exposed to pornographic print and video materials. More males have been exposed to pornography than their female counterparts (94.4% vs. 68.6%). A substantial 63.4 percent of male youth have been exposed to both print materials and videos compared with only 36.2 percent among female youth. Videos appear to be the more popular medium for pornography for both male and female youth.

In addition to print and video platforms, the NCR youth have also accessed pornography through the Internet. Four in ten NCR youth have visited websites with sexually explicit contents. Again, there is a clear gender disparity, with overwhelmingly more males (70.8%) admitting to having done such an activity compared with females (15.4%).

In terms of age at first exposure to pornography, males’ initial exposure to pornography transpired at younger ages than that of females. On average, males started reading materials with adult contents one year earlier than females (mean age of 16.0 vs. 17.1 years, respectively). The gender disparity is even wider in the age at first exposure to pornographic videos. The mean age for males is 15.6 years as against 17.5 years among females, a difference of nearly two years. The gender divide is also evident in the specific age at which the young people started their exposure to X-rated videos. For instance, nearly three quarters (73.6%) of male youth had watched pornographic videos before they reached age 18, much higher than females’ 47.6 percent. In general, based on the mean ages, males were exposed earlier to pornographic videos than to printed materials, while the reverse is true for females.

Since the focus of the study is on exposure to pornography as a precursor to sexual activity, it is important to examine the proportion of young people who have been exposed to pornographic materials prior to their sexual initiation. Table 2 shows that only 3.5 percent among males and 23.3 percent among females had not been exposed to pornography before they engaged in any sexual activity. However, more than half of NCR youth (55.3%) had already been exposed to both video and print materials before initiating sexual activity. Higher exposure to both video and print materials was observed among males (71.2%) than females (41.8%). Fewer male and female youth were exposed solely to print materials as compared to those who were exposed only to videos.

Table 2. Percent distribution of youth 18–24 years old by pornography exposure characteristics and sex

Characteristics	Male	Female	Both sexes
<b>Exposure to pornographic materials</b>			
No exposure	5.6	31.4	20.1
Exposed to print materials only	1.6	9.7	6.2
Exposed to videos only	29.4	22.7	25.6
Exposed to both video and print materials	63.4	36.2	48.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of cases	306	392	698
<b>Exposure to websites with sexually explicit contents</b>			
No exposure	29.2	84.6	60.4
With exposure	70.8	15.4	39.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of cases	281	363	644
<b>Age at first exposure to pornographic print materials (in years)</b>			
Below 13	12.0	6.1	9.2
13–15	27.0	16.1	21.9
16	17.0	13.3	15.3
17	14.0	17.9	15.8
18	13.0	18.3	15.5
19	9.5	10.0	9.7
20 and over	7.5	18.3	12.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean (SD)	16.0 (2.7)	17.1 (2.6)	16.5 (2.7)
N of cases	200	180	380
<b>Age at first exposure to pornographic videos (in years)</b>			
Below 13	14.5	4.3	9.9
13–15	30.4	16.9	24.3
16	16.3	12.1	14.4
17	12.4	14.3	13.2
18	13.1	19.5	16.0
19	6.2	9.1	7.6
20 and over	7.1	23.8	14.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean (SD)	15.6 (2.9)	17.5 (2.8)	16.4 (3.0)
N of cases	283	231	514
<b>Exposure to pornographic materials before sexual initiation</b>			
No exposure	3.5	23.3	14.2
Exposed to print materials only	1.0	6.5	4.0
Exposed to videos only	24.2	28.4	26.5
Exposed to both print materials and videos	71.2	41.8	55.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of cases	198	232	430

### *Access to pornographic materials*

Table 3 displays the distribution of NCR youth by frequency of access to pornographic materials and place where they accessed pornographic materials in the past three months. The data provide a picture of the extent of the youth's recent exposure to such materials. In terms of frequency of reading pornographic materials, two of ten NCR youth read pornographic materials at least once a month in the three months prior to the survey. Male youth were more frequent consumers of pornographic reading materials than females. About 9 percent of males read such materials at least once a week, with 2 percent consuming these materials daily. On the other hand, only 3.9 percent of their female counterparts were exposed to X-rated reading materials weekly.

Metro Manila youth are more habitual consumers of pornographic movies or videos than reading materials. In the three months prior to the interview, about one third of NCR youth watched X-rated movies/videos at least once a month. Males were also more frequent viewers of porn than females. Nearly a quarter (24.2%) of males watched pornographic movies/videos at least once a week compared with a measly 3.1 percent of females. None of the female youth admitted watching porn on a daily basis in the past three months.

Most NCR youth prefer the privacy of their own homes when viewing pornographic videos and movies. About half of males and 62.8 percent of females reported watching such videos in their own homes in the past three months. Internet cafés and friends' houses are also among the usual places where both male and female youth watch pornographic movies/videos. More males (30.2%) than females (10.5%) watch such videos in Internet cafés, which afford less privacy than their residences.

Cell phones are the most commonly used media through which the youth access pornographic videos and movies. Eight out of ten NCR youth watched pornographic movies/videos in the past three months through their cell phones. Other channels where the youth watched pornographic movies/videos are DVDs/VCDs (64.2%), desktop computers/laptops/iPads/tablets (55.8%), and TV/cable (32.1%). Interestingly, two thirds (67.6%) of males but less than half of this figure (31.4%) among females accessed such videos through computers and tablets.

The majority of NCR youth (63.4%) accessed websites with sexually explicit content in Internet shops or cafés. Aside from Internet cafés, many NCR youth identified their own homes and their friends' houses as the places where they usually surf online for websites with pornographic content. Similar to the viewing of pornographic videos, more males (67.7%) than females (48.2%) accessed websites with sexually explicit content in Internet cafés, while more females (33.9%) than males (19.7%) did so within the confines of their own homes.

Table 3. Percent distribution of youth 18–24 years old by frequency of access to pornographic materials, place where they access pornographic materials, and sex

Characteristics	Male	Female	Both sexes
<b>Frequency of reading pornographic materials in the past 3 months</b>			
Every day	2.0	0.6	1.3
Once to 6 times per week	6.5	3.3	5.0
Once to 3 times per month	16.1	12.2	14.2
Occasionally	19.1	15.6	17.5
Did not read any in the past 3 months	56.3	68.3	62.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of cases	199	180	379
<b>Frequency of watching pornographic movies/videos in the past 3 months</b>			
Every day	2.7	0.0	1.4
Once to 6 times per week	21.5	3.1	12.9
Once to 3 times per month	23.1	12.8	18.3
Occasionally	21.5	22.0	21.8
Did not read any in the past 3 months	31.2	62.1	45.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of cases	260	227	487
<b>Places where the youth watched pornographic movies/videos in the past 3 months (among those who watched pornography in the past 3 months)<sup>a</sup></b>			
Home	51.4	62.8	55.1
Friend's house	17.9	19.8	18.5
Internet shop/café	30.2	10.5	23.8
Relative's house	0.6	4.7	1.9
Workplace/office	6.7	2.3	5.3
School	5.6	1.2	4.2
Movie house	1.1	2.2	1.1
Others	11.7	4.7	9.4
N of cases	179	86	265
<b>Media by which the youth watched pornographic movies/videos in the past 3 months (among those who watched pornography in the past 3 months)<sup>1</sup></b>			
Cellphone	86.6	72.1	81.9
DVD/VCD	64.8	62.8	64.2
Desktop computer/laptop/iPad/tablet	67.6	31.4	55.8
TV/cable	30.7	34.9	32.1
Movie house	7.3	3.5	6.0
N of cases	179	86	265

<sup>a</sup>Multiple response.



Table 3. Percent distribution of youth 18–24 years old by frequency of access to pornographic materials, place where they access pornographic materials, and sex (con't)

Characteristics	Male	Female	Both sexes
<b>Places where the youth usually access the Internet for sexually explicit content<sup>a</sup></b>			
Home	19.7	33.9	22.8
Friend's house	8.6	12.5	9.4
Internet shop/café	67.7	48.2	63.4
Relative's house	1.0	1.8	1.2
Workplace/office	2.5	1.8	2.4
School	0.0	1.8	0.4
Street	0.5	0.0	0.4
N of cases	198	56	254

<sup>a</sup>Multiple response.

### *Sexual experience*

More than three in five or 62 percent of the youth have sexual experience; 54.4 percent had their first sexual experience before they got married, and only around 8 percent had their sexual initiation upon marriage (Table 4). Males posted a greater prevalence of premarital sexual initiation compared with females (64.4% and 46.7%, respectively). Conversely, more females had marital sexual initiation compared with their male counterparts (12.5% and 1.3%, respectively).

Examining the age at sexual initiation reveals that 28.4 percent of the youth had early sexual initiation (i.e., they had their first sexual intercourse before they reached age 18). More males have early first sex experience than females (33.3% and 24.6%, respectively). The mean age at sexual initiation of male youth is 17.4 years, which is younger than that of female youth at 18.0 years.

Young people's sexual initiation may be hastened by encouragement or pressure from friends. This is particularly true among males; peer pressure may encourage them to engage in sex early to conform to the group's sexual norms (Medina, 2015). Nearly a quarter of the youth have experienced either encouragement or pressure from their friends to have sex with anyone, more among males than females. Validating Medina's (2015) observation, proportionately more males reported having friends who exerted pressure on them to engage in sex (18.7%) than friends who encouraged them (15.6%). In contrast, more females were encouraged (10.5%) than pressured (6.4%) by their friends to have sex.

Table 4. Percent distribution of youth 18–24 years old by sexual experience characteristics and sex

Characteristics	Male	Female	Both sexes
<b>Sexual experience</b>			
No sexual experience	34.3	40.8	38.0
With premarital sexual initiation	64.4	46.7	54.4
With marital sexual initiation	1.3	12.5	7.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of cases	306	392	698
<b>Age at sexual initiation (in years)</b>			
Below 13	4.0	0.4	2.1
14–17	46.8	41.0	43.6
18–19	27.4	36.2	32.1
20 and above	18.4	19.8	19.2
No information	3.4	2.6	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean (SD)	17.4 (2.3)	18.0 (2.0)	17.7 (2.2)
N of cases	201	232	433
<b>Percentage with early sexual initiation (among all respondents)</b>			
	33.3	24.6	28.4
N of cases	306	392	698
<b>Encouraged/pressured by friends to have sex with anyone</b>			
Encouraged	15.6	10.5	12.7
Pressured	18.7	6.4	11.7
Neither encouraged nor pressured	65.7	83.1	75.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N of cases	306	392	698

*Variations in exposure to pornography before first sex*

Table 5 presents the differentials in the exposure to pornography prior to first sex across selected background characteristics. The table reveals that around 28 percent of youth aged 18–24 years in Metro Manila had been exposed to pornographic materials before their first sex, and the level varies significantly by the young people’s background characteristics. More male youth were exposed to pornography before their sexual initiation compared with females (49.0% vs. 27.8%).

Except for socio-economic status, religion, and ethnicity, the other characteristics are significantly associated with exposure to pornography before first sex. More of the older youth were exposed to pornography before first sex than their junior counterparts. This pattern holds true for both males and females. More ever-married youth, regardless of sex, were likewise exposed to pornography before sexual initiation than the never married.

Table 5. Percentage of youth 18–24 years old who were exposed to pornographic materials before their first sex by background characteristics and sex

Characteristics	Male		Female		Both sexes	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
<b>Age</b>	**		**		**	
18–19 years old	31.4	102	19.9	146	24.6	248
20–24 years old	57.8	204	32.5	246	44.0	450
<b>Marital status</b>	**		**		**	
Never married	45.2	241	14.6	205	31.2	446
Ever married	63.1	65	42.2	187	47.6	252
<b>Educational attainment</b>	ns		*		*	
Elementary	50.0	24	11.1	9	39.4	33
High school		71		63		134
undergraduate	53.5		34.9		44.8	
High school graduate	48.0	100	33.5	164	39.0	264
College	46.8	111	19.9	156	31.1	267
<b>Main activity</b>	**		**		**	
Studying	31.1	90	9.0	78	20.8	168
Working	60.9	133	33.3	117	48.0	250
Doing housework	36.4	11	34.9	146	35.0	157
Idle	51.4	72	23.5	51	39.8	123
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	ns		ns		ns	
Poor	(75.0)	4	(33.3)	3	(57.1)	7
Non-poor	48.7	302	27.8	389	36.9	691
<b>Religion</b>	ns		ns		ns	
Catholic	49.8	273	28.2	354	37.6	627
Non-Catholic	42.4	33	23.7	38	32.4	71
<b>Ethnicity</b>	ns		ns		ns	
Tagalog	48.2	338	26.6	257	36.0	595
Non-Tagalog	53.1	54	35.2	49	43.7	103
<b>Encouraged/pressured by friends to have sex with anyone</b>	ns		*		*	
Encouraged	53.2	47	29.3	41	42.0	88
Pressured	58.9	56	48.0	25	55.6	81
Neither encouraged nor pressured	45.7	197	25.8	325	33.3	522
<b>Total</b>	49.0	306	27.8	392	27.5	698

Note. ns = not significant.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

By educational attainment, females' exposure to pornographic materials before first sex reveals no consistent pattern. Generally, those who have reached high school or are high school graduates tend to have a higher level of exposure than those with elementary schooling only or those with college education. Among males, the association between exposure to pornography before first sex and educational attainment is not significant.

As to main activity, the association is significant for each sex. A lower level of exposure to pornographic materials before first sex was found among students compared with youth who were working, doing housework, or doing nothing. For males, exposure to pornography is highest among those who were working and those who were idle, while for females, the proportion is highest among working youth and those who were engaged in housework.

Interestingly, relative to the youth who have not experienced peer pressure, exposure to pornography before first sex is higher among youth who were either encouraged or pressured by their friends. However, the association is not significant when analysis is done separately for males and females.

#### *Variations in the prevalence of early sexual initiation*

About 28 percent of the youth had early sexual initiation, and the level differs across selected background characteristics (Table 6). Early sexual initiation is more common among males than females (33.3% vs. 24.5%). Age is not significantly associated with early sexual initiation for either sex. Ever-married youth among both males and females reported a higher prevalence of early sexual initiation than those who were not yet married. This is expected, since the marriage or cohabitation could have been a consequence of their early sexual activity.

There is a monotonic decline with increasing educational attainment in the proportion who have engaged in early sex among females. The same pattern is also apparent among males, but the association is not statistically significant. By main activity, there is no significant difference in the proportion with early sex among males. Among females, the lowest prevalence of early sexual initiation can be found among students, and the highest can be found among those who were engaged in housework. Socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, and peer pressure to engage in sex are not significantly associated with early sexual initiation.

Table 6. Percentage of youth 18–24 years old with early sexual initiation by background characteristics and sex

Characteristics	Male		Female		Both sexes	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
<b>Age</b>	ns		ns		ns	
15–19 years old	33.3	102	25.3	146	28.6	248
20–24 years old	33.3	204	24.0	246	28.2	450
<b>Marital status</b>	**		**		**	
Never married	29.5	241	8.3	205	19.7	446
Ever married	47.7	65	42.2	187	43.7	252
<b>Educational attainment</b>	ns		**		**	
Elementary	37.5	24	77.8	9	48.5	33
High school undergraduate	36.6	71	46.0	63	41.0	134
High school graduate	33.0	100	26.8	164	29.2	264
College and higher	30.6	111	10.3	156	18.7	267
<b>Main activity</b>	ns		**		**	
Studying	30.0	90	5.1	78	18.5	168
Working	40.6	133	24.8	117	33.2	250
Doing housework	18.2	11	32.9	146	31.8	157
Idle	26.4	72	29.4	51	27.6	123
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	ns		ns		ns	
Poor	(25.0)	4	(33.3)	3	(28.6)	7
Non-poor	33.4	302	24.4	389	28.4	691
<b>Religion</b>	ns		ns		ns	
Catholic	34.4	273	25.4	354	29.3	627
Non-Catholic	24.2	33	15.8	38	19.7	71
<b>Ethnicity</b>	ns		ns		ns	
Tagalog	34.2	257	25.1	338	29.1	595
Non-Tagalog	28.6	49	20.4	54	24.3	103
<b>Encouraged/pressured by friends to have sex with anyone</b>	ns		ns		ns	
Encouraged	34.0	47	29.3	41	31.8	88
Pressured	41.1	56	32.0	25	38.3	81
Neither encouraged nor pressured	31.5	197	23.4	325	26.4	522
<b>Exposure to pornographic materials before sexual initiation</b>	**		ns		**	
No exposure	23.7	156	23.0	283	23.2	439
Exposed to print materials only	42.9	7	22.7	22	27.6	29
Exposed to videos only	42.9	49	40.0	40	41.6	89
Exposed to both print materials and videos	43.6	94	21.3	47	36.2	141
<b>Total</b>	33.3	306	24.5	392	28.4	698

Note. Figures in parentheses are based on fewer than 30 cases. ns = not significant.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Exposure to pornographic materials is significantly associated with early sexual initiation, but this holds true only for males. Males who have been exposed to pornography through any of these types of media tend to engage in sex early compared with those who have no exposure at all.

#### *Association between pornography exposure and early sexual initiation*

The bivariate analysis examined the differences in the proportions engaging in early sex across the various categories of the selected background characteristics. The following multivariate analysis using binomial logistic regression, on the other hand, identifies significant factors that are likely to predict the probability that an individual will engage in early sexual initiation, holding the influence of other background characteristics constant.

Table 7 presents the summary of the binomial logistic regression results. As mentioned earlier, two models each were estimated for males and females. In the first model, only the main independent variable (i.e., exposure to pornographic materials before first sex) was included as a predictor. The second model examines the association between exposure to pornography and early sex, controlling for the other independent variables.

The results show that male youth who have been exposed to pornography through videos only or through both print and video materials are twice as likely to engage in early sexual initiation than those who have no exposure to pornographic materials. However, exposure to print media only is not significantly associated with early sexual debut. These patterns persist even after controlling for the effect of other background characteristics. In Model 2, no other characteristics of the youth emerged as significant predictors of the onset of early sex.

Among females, exposure through pornographic videos only is significantly associated with early sexual initiation, with such females 2.24 times more likely to engage in early sex compared with female youth who have not been exposed to pornography. When other background characteristics are controlled, exposure to pornography is no longer a significant contributor to early sexual initiation. Instead, educational attainment emerges as a significant preventive factor of early sexual initiation. Female youth who have earned at least a high school diploma are 76 percent less likely to engage in early sex than those with lower education.

Main activity, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, and the influence of friends do not exert a statistically significant association with early initiation to sexual activity for both male and female youth.

Table 7. Logistic regression estimates predicting the likelihood of early sexual initiation for males and females  
(odds ratios, confidence intervals, and statistical significance)

Characteristics	Male			Female		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Constant</b>	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR
<b>Exposure to pornography before sexual initiation (ref. = no exposure)</b>	0.31**	0.15**	0.30**	0.33**		
Print only	2.41	2.27	0.52–11.27	0.48–10.83	0.35–2.78	1.27
Video only	2.41**	2.31**	1.23–4.74	1.16–4.58	1.12–4.46	1.86
Both print and videos	2.49**	2.56**	1.44–4.31	1.46–4.51	0.43–1.92	0.88
<b>Education (ref. = otherwise)</b>						
At least high school graduate		0.84	0.49–1.45			0.24**
<b>Main activity (ref. = otherwise)</b>						
Idle		0.60	0.33–1.11			1.39
<b>Socio-economic status (ref. = non-poor)</b>						
Poor		0.45	0.04–4.78			0.72
<b>Religion (ref. = non-Catholic)</b>						
Catholic		1.73	0.72–4.20			1.93
<b>Ethnicity (ref. = non-Tagalog)</b>						
Tagalog		1.52	0.75–3.06			1.41
<b>Encouraged/pressured by friends to have sex with anyone (ref. = neither encouraged nor pressured)</b>						
Encouraged		1.18	0.58–2.38			1.44
Pressu		1.40	0.74–2.65			1.24
$R^2$ (Nagelkerke)	0.06	0.09	0.02	0.13		

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## **Summary and recommendations**

This study examined the association between exposure to pornographic materials and sexual initiation, specifically whether pornography exposure is a significant determinant of early first sex among youth in Metro Manila. The study validated the predominance of males over females in both exposure to pornographic materials and early sexual initiation as found in the literature. The data also revealed that a substantial 28 percent of youth 18–24 years old in Metro Manila have engaged in sex before the age of 18 (early sex). A similar proportion of youth have also been exposed to pornographic printed materials and videos prior to their first sex.

The study further demonstrated that exposure to pornographic materials, particularly to X-rated videos, facilitates early first sex for both males and females. Exposure to pornographic print media only, relative to non-exposure to any type of pornographic media, is not significantly associated with early sexual debut. The study also underscored the importance of education as a deterring factor against early sexual activity, particularly among females. However, the youth's main activity, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, and experience of peer pressure with regard to sexual activity did not emerge as significant predictors of early first sex.

The strength of the present study lies in its consideration of the timing of first exposure to pornographic materials and sexual initiation, which was not taken into account by previous local studies. One of the limitations of the study, however, is that the analysis was restricted to exposure to print and video materials only. This is due to the absence of a question on the age at first exposure to websites with sexually explicit contents in the dataset employed in the study. Thus, it is recommended that proponents of the YAFS series include such a question in future rounds of the survey and that future studies address this emergent dimension of pornography consumption. Furthermore, as the variable used by the study to measure the influence of peers on the youth's sexual behavior did not yield a significant association with early sexual initiation, which is contrary to the findings of most studies, future research might consider employing a different peer-related variable. For instance, having friends with early sexual experience could provide a better measure of the influence of friends on young people's sexual engagement.

Understanding the sexual behavior of young people is crucial, particularly from the perspective of policy and program development. This study provided some critical insights into young people's sexual behaviors, specifically their sexual initiation and exposure to materials with sexually explicit contents, which could be considered by stakeholders in designing more effective interventions in promoting adolescent and youth health and development.



In accordance with the findings of the study, the following recommendations may be taken into consideration:

1. The substantial proportion of young people in Metro Manila who engage in early sexual activities calls for the full implementation and institutionalization of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) among young people, as provided for in the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law (RA 10354). The CSE aims to enable young people to exercise responsible sexuality and prevent early unintended pregnancy and STIs and HIV/AIDS. The design and implementation of CSE curriculum and resource materials may take into account empirical findings on the current sexual behaviors of young people (including this study) to make the contents and learning methodologies effective in generating positive behavior change among young people.
2. That a considerably high proportion of young people in NCR access pornography implies the inadequacy of information about human sexuality in school. Such inadequacy drives young people to search for other alternative sources, particularly the media. Since these sources are accessed privately, the processing of the information that the young people get is usually unguided. Thus, there is a need for CSE, which will help equip these young people with the necessary skills to properly and responsibly process the sexual information that they get from the media. The issue on pornography and its negative impact on young people's sexual development should be an integral part of CSE and other similar sessions for young people.
3. In designing specific preventive and communication strategies for promoting responsible sexuality, the following may be considered based on the findings of the study:
  - a. The significant gender differentials in the young people's exposure to pornography and sexual initiation are important and helpful considerations for developing core messages and contents of sexuality education among the youth. Such differentials underscore the need to ensure the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of core messages and contents in modules and materials for sexuality education. For example, key messages on preventing early sexual initiation may focus on the role of male youth's exposure to pornographic videos in initiating sexual activities.
  - b. The study emphasizes the important role of media in forming the sexual behaviors of young people in the region. The study reinforces the need to optimize the media for communication strategies to effectively reach out to young people. As can be gleaned from the study, more interactive media such as videos and the Internet (or web-based sources) have a greater influence in forming behaviors among young people. As videos demonstrate sexual acts more vividly, they directly hit the affective functions

of young people, narrowing the gap between knowledge and practice, as compared to printed materials, which are mostly processed cognitively. As such, young people tend to be more effective in practicing what they watch from videos than what they read in printed materials. This implies the need to adopt videos and other interactive media as tools for communicating core messages on responsible sexuality, particularly to urban youth.

- c. As the study shows that education serves as a deterring factor against early sexual activity, especially among females, the messaging framework for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health should be anchored on encouraging and enabling adolescents to pursue and complete their education. Adolescent sexuality and reproductive health core messages and interventions should be geared toward empowering young people to pursue their aspirations; this implies the need for them to avoid risky behaviors (e.g., early sexual involvement), which could deter them from achieving such aspirations.
4. Policies that regulate minors' access to materials with sexually explicit contents should be reviewed and strengthened in existing laws to reduce the exposure of young people to these contents. Partnership and collaboration with schools, media, churches, families, and other institutions should be established in the implementation of such regulatory measures against pornography and sexual exploitation in the media.
5. Parents, teachers, and other significant adults also need to be capacitated to guide young people in processing sexual contents that the youth get from various media. They should enable young people to understand and react responsibly to such contents to prevent early sex and other undesirable and unhealthy consequences such as teenage pregnancy.

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