

Consolidated Data on Children’s Online Experience related to Sexual and Intimate Contents (Sexting and Sextortion)

Introduction

As part of the local child protection project and partnership with local schools, a baseline survey was conducted with over 2,000 students from grades 7 to 12 from the four (4) public high schools in Puerto Galera to determine the online experience of children related to sharing of sexual and intimate contents online. The study examined the prevalence of sharing, exchanging and streaming of sexual contents online, gender differences in relation to sexting and sextortion prevalence, and whether or not these incidents were reported to trusted adults and/or authorized persons. This document serves as a local situationer to inform and raise awareness about the risks and harms of non-consensual online sharing of sexual and intimate images. The survey report is also an essential contribution to support Stairway’s most recent eLearning course on sexting and sextortion, “For your Eyes Only”.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on the online behaviors and activities of students in public high schools in Puerto Galera connected to the sharing of sexual and intimate contents via the Internet. Several of the items and indicators were from the Adolescent Sexting Scale (A-SextS), which assesses adolescents’ attitudes toward sexting. In the survey tool, sexting was defined as the *self-production of sexual images*, or as the *“exchange of sexual messages or images”* and *“the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and/or the internet”* derived from the terminology guidelines of ECPAT. The study also wants to determine the demographics of students who are likely to engage in sharing of sexual contents to inform decisions and policies, particularly in the school setting.

Given the nature of the survey and the fact that children are the study’s target participant, child safeguarding measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality and safety of the participating students. This includes the optional disclosure of personal information as well as the inclusion of a reporting mechanism. Child protection focal persons and teachers of the schools were given brief orientation on conducting the survey to communicate to the students the purpose of the study and instructions in completing the forms. The survey was self-administered, with the local language (Filipino) used for easier comprehension.

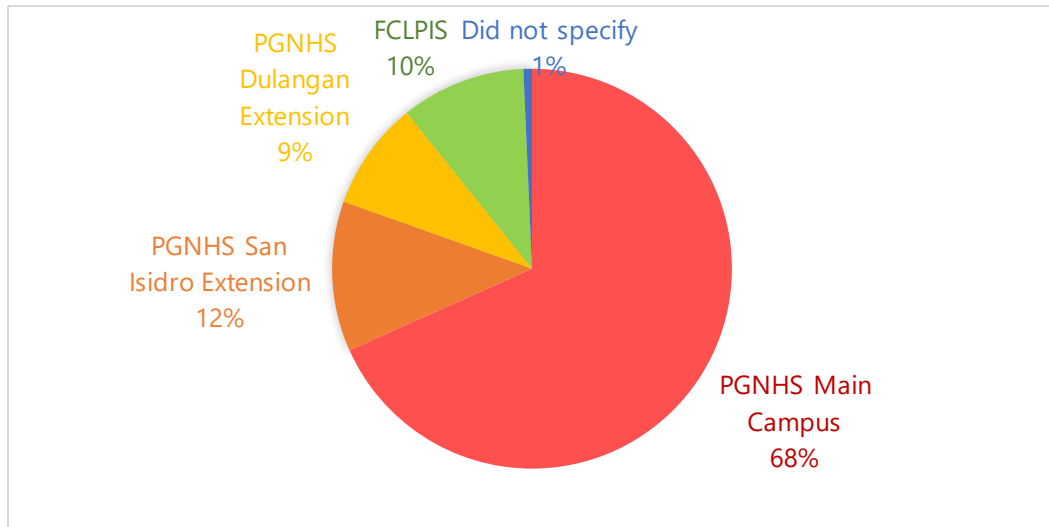
I. DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

General Population

The local study surveyed **2,480** students aged 11 to 21 from four public high schools: Puerto Galera National High School (PGNHS) Main Campus (68%), PGNHS San Isidro Extension (12%),

PGNHS Dulangan Extension (9%), and Facundo C. Lopez Palangan Integrated School (FCLPIS) (10%) as showed in Figure 1. The number of participants is proportional to the total school population of each school, with PGNHS Main Campus serving as the main school campus and the others serving as extension schools.

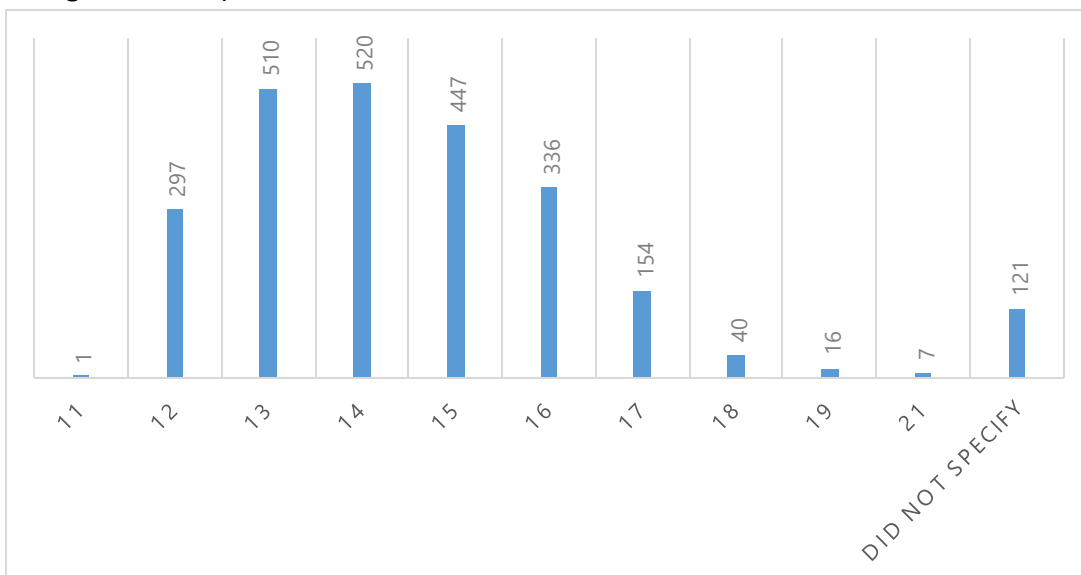
Figure 1. Schools of Students who participated in the survey



1.1 Age

The average age of those who took the survey was 14 years old. Figure 2 depicts the age distribution across the survey, with 13 - 15 year olds having the highest number of responses 510 (21%), 520 (21%), and 447 (18%), respectively.

Figure 2. Age of Participants



1.2 Sex

The survey participants are identified as females (49%), as males (46%) and are of those with diverse gender (0.4%).

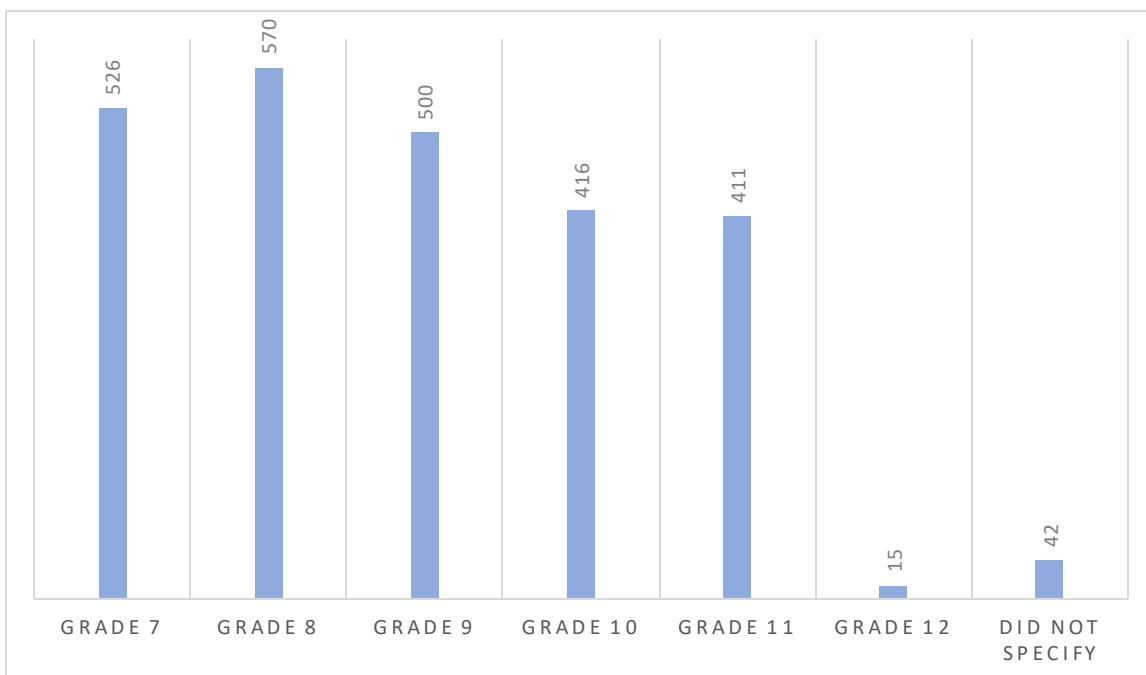
Table 1. Sex and Gender Identities of Participants

Sex/Gender	No. of Participating Students	% of Total
Female	1207	49%
Male	1140	46%
Diverse gender	9	0.4%
Did not specify	124	5%
Total	2480	100%

1.3 Grade Level

Most of the survey participants came from grade 8 (23%), followed by grade 7 (21%), and grade 9 (20%). Initially, grade 12 students were also targets of the study, but since during the period of data gathering, grade 12 students were taking their National Achievement Test (NAT), only a few of them were able to complete the survey.

Figure 3. Grade level of Participants



II. STUDENTS' ONLINE EXPERIENCES

2.1 Total Percentage of Students with Online experience related to Sexual Contents

Overall, 44 percent (1,081 out of 2,480) of students have had at least one online experience related to sexual contents (text/message, image/video, voice call, video call, and streaming of sexually explicit contents).

2.2 LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

The tables below show the level of participation of students who were categorized as active, passive, or both. Students in the active role are those who are involved in the sharing and streaming of sexual contents, while those in the passive role are those who are on the receiving end of these sexual contents.

- **29% (715 out of 2,480)** of students said that they have streamed sexually explicit contents (active role), with the majority (69%) being boys in grades 9 to 11.
- **7% (166 out of 2,480)** of students said they actively sent and posted sexual contents online and engaged in sexual voice and video conversations (active role), with the bulk of participants being boys (66%) and in Grade 9.
- **13% (314 out of 2,480)** of students reported receiving a sexual text or message or an image or video depicting private body parts, with the majority (61%) being females in Grades 9–11.
- **11% (267 out of 2,480)** of students demonstrated both active and passive involvement in the sharing and exchange of sexual content online, with close engagement observed to both male students (52%) and female students (41%). The majority of them are in Grade 11.

Table 2. Distribution of participants based on level of participation

Level of Participation	Participants	Percentage
Active Role Sent, posted sexual contents, engaged in sexual voice calls and video calls	166	7%
Active Role Streamed sexual contents	715	29%
Passive Role Received a sexual text/message or an image/video showing private body parts	314	13%

Both Active and Passive Roles Sent, posted sexual contents, engaged in sexual voice calls and video calls, received a sexual text/message or an image/video showing private body parts	267	11%
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Table 2.1 Breakdown by Sex

Type of Participation	Participants (Sex and Gender)				
	Male	Female	Diverse gender	Did not specify	Total
Active Role Sent, posted sexual contents, engaged in sexual voice calls and video calls	109	45	2	10	166
Active Role Streamed sexual contents	492	183	5	35	715
Passive Role Received a sexual text/message or an image/video showing private body parts	113	192	1	8	314
Both Active and Passive Roles Sent, posted sexual contents, engaged in sexual voice calls and video calls, received a sexual text/message or an image/video showing private body parts	138	109	1	19	267

Table 2.2 Breakdown by Grade Level

Type of Participation	Participants (Grade Level)							Total
	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Did not specify	
Active Role Sent, posted sexual contents, engaged in sexual voice calls and video calls	30	24	50	26	29	3	4	166
Active Role Streamed sexual contents	90	110	191	153	158	1	12	715
Passive Role	42	36	87	63	78	4	4	314

Received a sexual text/message or an image/video showing private body parts								
Both Active and Passive Roles	40	34	66	32	78	8	9	267

2.3 SHARING OF SEXUAL CONTENTS ONLINE

The overall number of replies from students per item on sharing sexual contents is shown in Table 3. Please keep in mind that some people have given more than one answer, which suggests that they shared sexual information online in different ways.

- **10% of the students (254 out of 2,480) claimed to have sent sexual messages online. The majority of them (59%) are male students and from Grade 11.**
- **5% of the students (125 out of 2,480) admitted to sending sexual images or videos of themselves online, with the majority (72%) being male students and from Grade 9.** Overall, 34 students (1%) shared them with their partners, while 69 students (3%) and 70 students (3%) forwarded them to someone they knew directly and someone they only knew through the Internet, respectively.
- **5% of the students (123 out of 2,480) claimed to be sending sexual images and videos of other people** to their partner (25), someone they know in person (94), and someone they only know on the Internet (73). The majority of those who engaged in this are male students, mostly from Grade 9.

Table 3. Breakdown of Responses of Students on Sending Sexual Contents Online

Statement	Participants	Percentage (total survey population)
I HAVE SENT		
a sexual text/message to a boyfriend/girlfriend	98	4%
a sexual text/message to someone I know in person	178	7%
a sexual text/message to someone I only know on the Internet	115	5%
SEXUAL IMAGES AND VIDEOS OF MYSELF		
a sexual image/video to a boyfriend/girlfriend	34	1%
a sexual image/video to someone I know in person	69	3%
a sexual image/video to someone I only know on the Internet	70	3%
SEXUAL IMAGES AND VIDEOS OF OTHER PEOPLE		
a sexual image/video of other people to a boyfriend/girlfriend	25	1%
a sexual image/video of other people to someone I know in person	94	4%

a sexual image/video of other people I only know on the Internet	73	3%
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2.4 POSTING AND STREAMING SEXUAL CONTENTS ONLINE AND ENGAGING IN SEXUAL ONLINE CONVERSATIONS

- **Among all poll items, individuals who streamed sexually explicit videos received the most responses (29%).** Out of 715 students who admitted to watching pornographic content, male students (69%) outnumbered female students (26%). The majority of them are between 14 and 16 years old.
- **6% of the students (156 out of 2,480) engaged in sexual voice and video calls.** Notably, the majority of these students engage in these activities with their boyfriends or girlfriends. 70% of the 156 pupils who engaged in these behaviors were male.

Table 4. Breakdown of responses of students on posting, streaming sexual contents and engaging in sexual online conversations

Statement	Participants	Percentage
I or I HAVE		
posted a sexual text/message	63	3%
posted a sexual image/video	72	3%
streamed sexually-explicit videos	715	29%
talked with my boyfriend/girlfriend in a sexual manner through voice call	85	3%
talked with someone I know in a sexual manner through voice call	65	3%
talked with someone I only know on the Internet in a sexual manner through voice call	62	3%
engaged in a naked video call with a boyfriend/girlfriend	28	1%
engaged in a naked video call with someone I know in person	22	1%
engaged in a naked video call with someone I only know on the Internet	21	1%

2.5 RECEIVING ONLINE SEXUAL CONTENTS

23% of the students (580 out of 2,480) reported receiving sexual messages, images, and videos from other persons while engaging in online activities. Female students account for 52% of those who received varied sexual content online, while male students account for 43%.

Furthermore, the majority of these contents come from people they only know online. This means that when it comes to sharing pornographic content online, girls and women are the ones who are being targeted.

Table 5. Breakdown of responses of students on posting, streaming sexual contents and engaging in sexual online conversations

Statement	Participants	Percentage
I or I HAVE		
received a sexual text/message from boyfriend/girlfriend	69	3%
received a sexual text/message from someone I know in person	240	10%
received a sexual text/message from someone I only know on the Internet	312	13%
received a sexual image/video from my boyfriend/girlfriend	44	2%
received a sexual image/video from someone I know	133	5%
received a sexual image/video from someone I only know on the Internet	222	9%

2.6 REASONS FOR POSTING, SENDING AND SHARING SEXUAL CONTENTS ONLINE

Most of the students who answered this section said they had accidentally shared sexual content online (4%). Assessing the top answers by sex as shown in Figure 4, male students explained that they did these behaviors 1) by accident, 2) for fun, and 3) because they are typical in dating relationships, whereas female students explained that they did them 1) for fun, 2) by accident, and 3) **because someone threatened or blackmailed them to do so.** This could imply that girls are more likely to be victims of coercion when it comes to sharing sexual content online.

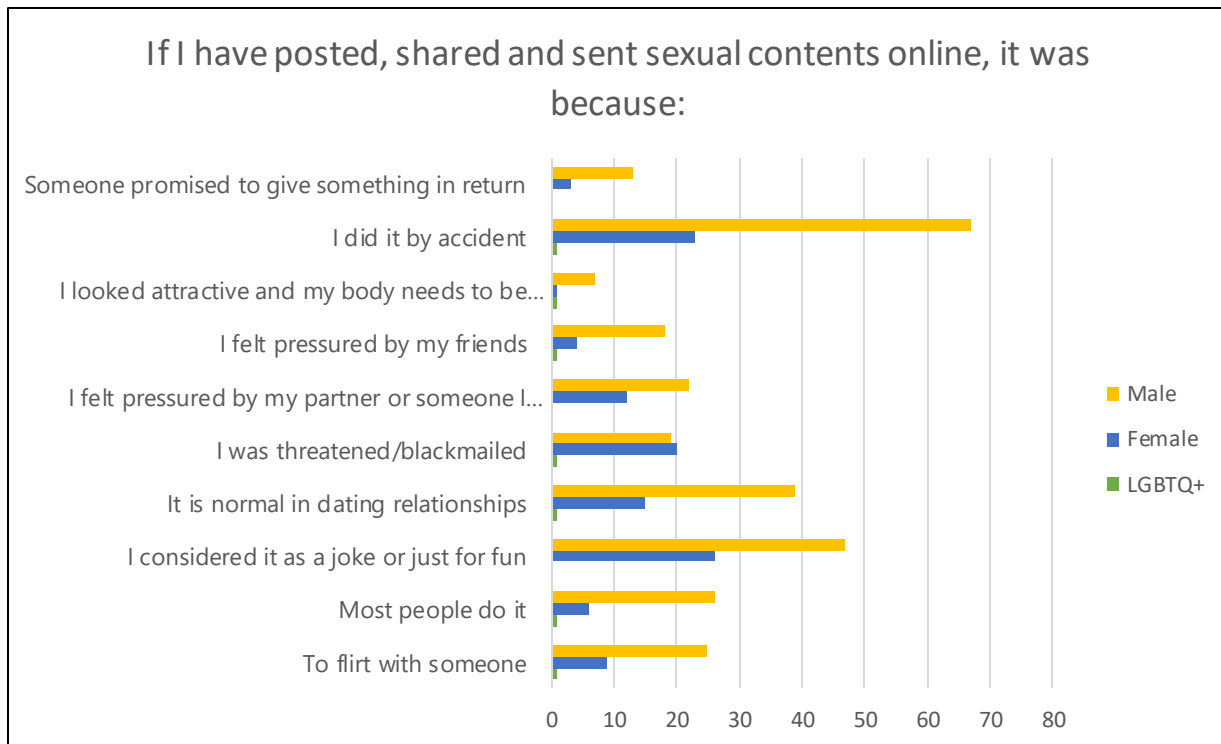
Also, these findings point to a concerning situation where children **casually** participate in the dissemination of sexual content online. Accepting these actions lightly and seeing them as something normal are harmful online behaviors of children that require attention.

Table 6. Reasons for Posting, Sending and Sharing Sexual Contents Online

STATEMENTS	Participants	Percentage
To flirt with someone	36	1%
Most people do it	36	1%
I considered it as a joke or just for fun	74	3%
It is normal in dating relationships	58	2%

I was threatened/blackmailed	43	2%
I felt pressured by my partner or someone I fancied	35	1%
I felt pressured by my friends	28	1%
I looked attractive and my body needs to be shown off	11	0.4%
I did it by accident	93	4%
Someone promised to give something in return	17	0.7%

Figure 4. Distribution of Responses by Sex



III. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OTHER CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION ON SEXTING

This section seeks to ascertain whether participants are aware of other children who have experienced or participated in the exchange of sexual content via the Internet, as shown in Table 7. **Overall, 19% of students (476 out of 2,480) reported knowing a child who engages in sexting.** Participants in the survey are aware that 42% of these students are sexting with their partners, with people they only know online (30%) and in person (27%).

Table 7. Participants' Awareness of Other Children's Participation in Sexting and Known Recipients of these Sexual Contents

School	No. of pax who know any child who participated in sexting	Recipients of sexual contents based from the survey pax		
		Bf/Gf	Someone known in person	Someone known only on the Internet
PGNHS Main Campus	334	149	80	93
PGNHS San Isidro Extension	49	14	19	18
PGNHS Dulangan Extension	27	13	7	11
FCLPIS	64	21	23	19
Did not specify name of school	2	2	0	0
Total	476	199	129	141
% of Total	100%	42%	27%	30%

IV. INCIDENTS OF SEXTORTION

4.1 VICTIMS OF SEXTORTION AND THEIR ONLINE OFFENDERS

As shown in Table 8, **there are 60 students (2.4%) who have been in a situation where someone threatened to make their online sexual contents public (sextortion)**. Out of the 60 students who have experienced sextortion, more than half are female (55%). Also, sextortion incidents occur in all participating schools.

According to Table 9, **the majority of those who experienced sextortion were victimized by someone they only knew online (35%)**, followed by someone they knew in person (27%), and by a boyfriend or girlfriend (20%).

Table 8. Distribution of Participants who are Victims of Sextortion

School of Survey Participants	Number of participants engaged in sharing sexting online who were threatened to make these contents public			
	Male	Female	Did not specify sex	Total
PGNHS Main Campus	23	23	1	47
PGNHS San Isidro Extension	0	2	0	2

PGNHS Dulangan Extension	1	3	0	4
FCLPIS	1	5	1	7
Total	25	33	2	60
% of Total (Out of 2480)	1%	1.3%	0.2%	2.4%

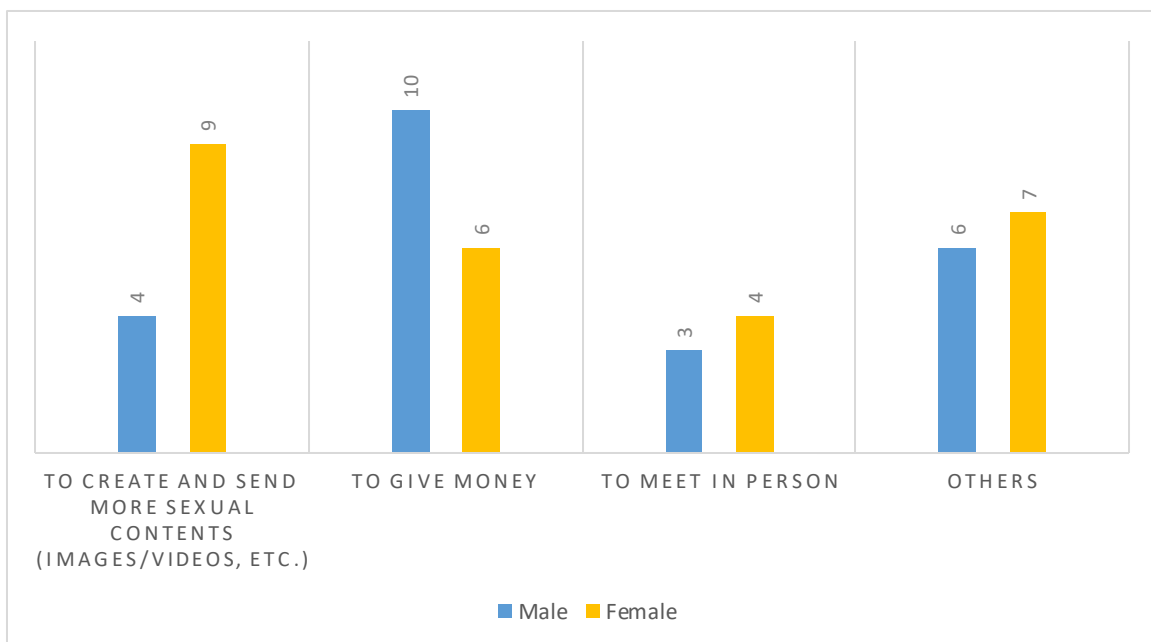
Table 9. Individuals who threatened to expose participants' sexual contents

Individuals who threatened to expose participant's sexual contents	Participants	Percentage
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	12	20%
Someone they know in person	16	27%
Someone they only know on the Internet	21	35%
Did not disclose	11	18%
Total	60	100%

4.2 DEMANDS OF ONLINE OFFENDERS TO VICTIMS

Figure 5 shows what students who have been victims of sextortion online have been asked to do by their attackers. Regarding those with the highest number of responses, for male students, most of them (10) were asked to give money, whereas female students were asked to create and send more of their sexual contents (9) as threats to expose their sexual contents in public.

Figure 5. Demands of Online Offenders to Victims of Sextortion*



*Please note that some participants have given multiple answers to this question.

4.3 ONLINE PERPETRATORS' HARMFUL BEHAVIOR TOWARDS VICTIMS

In addition to the demands they imposed on their victims, some of the online offenders continued to harm the students in various ways, as indicated in Table 10. **The most common harmful conduct done against the victims is hacking into their online accounts (34), both for female and male students, followed by sharing their sexual images and videos with others (16).**

Table 10. Online perpetrators' harmful behavior towards victims*

How did the person who was threatening to expose a sexual content of you harm you?	Participants	
	Female	Male
Repeated unwanted online/ or phone contact	8	4
Shared a sexual image of you to others	7	9
Hacked one of your online accounts	12	22
Posted a sexual image of you online	3	0
Stalked or harassed you	5	5
Others	3	4

**Please note that some participants have given multiple answers to this question.*

4.4 SELF-REPORTING OF CASES OF SEXTORTION

Only 13 of the 60 students (22%) who experienced sextortion managed to disclose it to a trusted person—parents and guardians (6), barangay officials (2), and friends or peers (5).

When asked what actions they took to prevent the incidence of sextortion, survey participants mentioned: **1) reporting the case to authorities; 2) limiting their use of social media; 3) ceasing communication with the online offender; 4) no longer posting sexy or sexual contents on the Internet; and 5) reporting and blocking the online offender's account, among other things.**

4.5 KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OTHER CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE ON SEXTORTION

Eighty-nine (89) of the survey participants disclosed having known a child who is a victim of sextortion online. For those students who knew the perpetrators of sextortion, accordingly, the majority of them were the victim's boyfriend or partner (13), someone s/he knows in person (12), and someone s/he only knows through the Internet (12). **One of the survey participants revealed that the child s/he knew who was a victim of sextortion eventually became a victim of sexual violence ("Nirape na nang tuluyan.").** **Of these students, only 1/3 (33) indicated (to their knowledge) the incident was reported to appropriate and trusted persons (e.g., parents, teachers, social workers, etc.).**

V. BRIEF ANALYSIS

The study validates the children's participation in the sharing and exchanging of sexual contents online, which has become the "norm" among adolescents, especially in connecting with online friends and engaging in online romantic relationships.

The study particularly targets the high school level, but based on the data, the onset of sexting may be younger than 12 years old. The study found that the prevalence of sexting increased proportionally with age, from Grade 7 to 9. However, there is a significant decline in grade 10, and the number rises again in grade 11. It will be fascinating to see if a similar trend can be established from other locations in order for this to be conclusive.

When it comes to sexting behavior and involvement, the findings clearly demonstrate a clear pattern that boys are more likely than girls to take an active role in sharing, posting, streaming, and engaging in sexual conversations. These sexting behaviors among boys may be associated with the conventional (but harmful) gender stereotype that males are sexually active and aggressive. As a result, actively exchanging sexual content online is becoming the "standard" and raising their sexual reputation among boys. The common reasons for participating in sexting further validate these occurrences, as most adolescents perceive these as norms and do it for fun.

Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to be recipients of these sexual materials. One of the stated reasons for girls engaging in sexting is that they are intimidated or blackmailed, implying that girls are more prone to becoming victims of coercion when it comes to sharing sexual content online. This is corroborated by the demographics of the students who claimed to be victims of sextortion - female (33), male (25). Alarmingly, the majority of them were victimized by someone they only knew through the Internet, implying the huge presence of online predators preying on children online.

Considering the prevalence of sextortion for both boys and girls, as well as the threats and destructive behaviors they received from these online offenders, only a small percentage reported it to trusted adults and proper authorities. These may be attributed to various factors, such as the shame of being victimized by sextortion, a lack of awareness of the reporting mechanisms, and a lack of understanding of the gravity of sharing non-consensual sexual messages and images online, among others.

These findings have implications for 1) institutionalizing online safety lessons in schools, 2) integrating gender in promoting online safety, and 3) establishing reporting and referral mechanisms for online concerns for inclusion in the school's child protection policy.