

Perceptions of the Role of Internet Use on Sexual Health among Young People in Kathmandu, Nepal

Surendra Kumar Bohara¹, Raj Kumar Subedi², Tikeshwori Bohara³ and Kanchan Karki⁴

¹Graduated in Masters in International Cooperation and Development, NEPAL

²Works as Research and Evaluation Consultant at Bhaskar Tejshree memorial Foundation, Kathmandu, NEPAL

³Works at Bhatta Psycho-therapy and Counseling Center, Kathmandu, NEPAL

⁴Works at Patan Hospital, Kathmandu, NEPAL

¹Corresponding Author: awish.suren@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The reorganization of sexuality and sexual interests among young people have largely been shaped by changing communication media, particularly, Internet. This article aimed to describe sexual behaviors and the perceived role of internet use on such sexual behaviors among young people in Kathmandu. Study was undertaken using mixed method with cross-sectional descriptive design among randomly selected 423 young people (age: 15-24 years) from 42 different colleges in Kathmandu. Self-administered questionnaire was employed for data collection. Chi-square test was carried in SPSS v.22. Internet accessibility was found among 92.3% of respondents with the mean \pm SD of 19.44 \pm 2.29 years. Sexual behaviors, undertaken in this study, were revealed mostly by male respondents, increasing proportion with higher education level. The porn videos, followed by social media were found the main sources in such sexual behaviors. The interaction between internet access and sexual intercourse was found insignificant ($p=0.534$); however, various statements related to attitudes towards negative role of internet were responded in higher proportion. Role of Internet use was found significantly changing the perceptions towards sexual behaviors of young people. Around 42.14% youths agreed with the negative effects of internet use in their sexual matters; thereby, feel vulnerable to its use. Internet has become platform for misguiding sexual behaviors of youths at large. Thus, to encourage the young people's internet safety and sexual well-being, there is a need to have proper guidance through complex analytical and experimental modules.

Keywords- Interneting behavior; internet and pornography; Sexual behavior; Social media; Young people.

I. INTRODUCTION

The reorganization of sexuality and sexual interest among young people alters the individual orientation, sexual display, interaction, and reproduction.[1] Sexual Health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality[2][3], to have responsible, safe, and satisfying sex life. The behavior through abstinence, masturbation, and partnered sexual activities are determined through their new insight[1]; and their interactions with the

environment, including technology.[4] Internet has changed conservative societies into the more liberal, basically in relation to sexual health.[5] Internet use is growing culture among the young people[6]: Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) regarding sexual health have been altered[7][8][9]; has become a primary source of sexual socialization[10]; and, thereby the greatest danger/risk.[11] Literature shows the increasing online sexual vulnerability among 33 percent youths.[12] This article aims to describe sexual behaviors and the perceived role of internet use on such sexual behaviors among young people in Kathmandu.

II. METHODOLOGY

Mixed method (Qualitative and Quantitative) in the study has used cross-sectional descriptive types of study design. Kathmandu was chosen as the study site among young people of 15-24 years age[13], within 6 months (July-December 2014) period. 'Students' were reached based on Simple random sampling, at selection of study areas, and Systematic Random Sampling (SRS), at unit of study selection. From the sampling frame of colleges, including: HSEB, Tribhuvan University, Pokhara University, Purbanchal University, and Kathmandu University- 42 (intermediate, Bachelor, and Master level) colleges were randomly selected, with random number generation using STATS 1.1. Inclusion criteria for the study participants were: studying in selected Colleges; the age group of 15-24 years; in case of no response from the corresponding College, consecutive Colleges from the sampling frame were included in the study. Sample size of 440 was calculated by the formula of qualitative study with prevalence of sexual behavior among youth as 50 percent, and allowable error of ± 0.05 at 95 percent confidence level. 10 percent non-response rate was taken as per the assumption based on non-response error in filling self-administered questionnaire.

Interview as technique and Self-administered questionnaires as tool was employed. Pre-testing of tool was carried out among the college students. Thus, collected data were entered on MS-Excel and imported to SPSS version 22 software for analysis. Measures of

central tendency, the association testing techniques (Chi-square), were used for analysis, and presented. Ethical approval was taken from Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC).

III. RESULTS

Out of 423 young people, 46.34 percent and 53.66 percent were male and female, making sex ratio as 0.86. Mean age was found to be 19.44±2.29.

Research found accessibility of internet among the 92.3 percent respondents, followed by 88 percent access mobile phones, 70.8 percent TV, 65.6 percent personal computer, 61.5 percent newspaper, and 52.2 percent radio.

Sexual behaviors- such as watching porn, touching, hugging, masturbation, vaginal sex, oral sex,

and anal sex- are common sexual health issues among young people. 72.1 percent responds were found knowing about 'watching porn videos', while 42.8 percent youths practicing it as shown in table 1 below. Under the masturbation variable, 59.9 percent were found knowing it, and 34.5 percent were found masturbating for sexual satisfaction.

While asking on variables of vaginal sex, 56.1 percent were found knowing about vaginal sex, but only 19.3 percent were found practicing it. Male at all academic level were found disclosing in higher percentage than females. There was found statistically significant association (Chi-square) between gender and sexual behaviors among young people at 0.05 level of significance, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of Various Sexual Behaviors by Education Level and Gender

Sexual Behaviors	Education Level						Chi-square with gender df (p-value)
	Intermediate		Bachelor		Masters		
	Male (62)	Female (53)	Male (120)	Female (149)	Male (13)	Female (16)	
Do you know Watching porn videos?	53 (85.5%)	21 (39.6%)	113 (94.2%)	94 (63.1%)	13 (100%)	11 (73.3%)	1 (0.000)
Have you ever watched porn?	43 (69.4%)	10 (18.9%)	86 (71.7%)	24 (16.1%)	9 (69.2%)	9 (60%)	2 (0.000)
Do you know Masturbation?	45 (72.6%)	21 (39.6%)	100 (83.3%)	64 (43%)	13 (100%)	9 (60%)	1 (0.000)
Do you think Masturbation is common for people of your age?	41 (66.1%)	14 (26.4%)	94 (78.3%)	48 (32.2%)	13 (100%)	6 (40%)	2 (0.000)
Have you ever Masturbated for yourself?	34 (54.8%)	7 (13.2%)	82 (68.3%)	9 (6%)	10 (76.9%)	4 (26.7%)	2 (0.000)
Do you know Vaginal sexual intercourse?	39 (62.9%)	18 (34%)	87 (72.5%)	74 (49.7%)	11 (84.6%)	7 (46.7%)	1 (0.000)
Do you think Vaginal sex is common for people of your age?	29 (46.8%)	11 (20.8%)	74 (61.7%)	42 (28.2%)	11 (84.6%)	8 (53.3%)	2 (0.000)
Have you ever had vaginal sex for yourself?	13 (21%)	3 (5.7%)	39 (32.5%)	14 (9.4%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (0.000)

[Note: Numbers in the table above represents for participant's responses with 'Yes'] Source: Study findings, 2014

The sources of information for all above listed sexual behavior has been presented in the table 2 below. Almost over all gender, education level, and age group variables, porn videos were most prominent source. For

instance, porn videos were found for 27.7 percent for male and 15.4 percent for female, followed by social media for 21.3 percent young people, particularly for most of the females (16.1 percent).

Table 2: Distribution of Sources of above Sexual Behavior by Gender and Education

Sources of information for Sexual Behavior	Gender		Education Level		
	Male	Female	Intermediate	Bachelor	Masters
Books/scholarly	1.9%	3.3%	1.7%	3.3%	0.2%
Social media	5.2%	16.1%	5.7%	14.7%	0.9%
Porn videos	27.7%	15.4%	13.7%	25.9%	3.6%

Friend's circle	8.5%	12.8%	6.2%	13.6%	1.7%
Newspaper	1.7%	0.2%	0.5%	1.4%	0.0%
Radio/television	1.4%	5.2%	1.4%	4.7%	0.5%
Parents	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
P-value (gender)				At 6 df	0.000

Source: Study findings, 2014

From the table 3 below, the mean with standard deviation (SD) for internet using behavior (in months) as 36.1±27.5; and hours in a day spend on internet as 3.2±3.

Also, age (in years) at first sex was found as 18±2.56 years old; age of exposure to porn videos was found to be 15.44±2.69.

Table 3: Frequency of Internet Use and Sexual Practices

	Internet using (in month(s))	Hours in day spend on internet	Age at first sexual intercourse	Age at first watched porn videos
Mean	36.1	3.2	18.03	15.44
Median	30	2	18	16
Mode	36	2	20	16
Std. Dev.	27.5	3	2.56	2.69
Minimum	1	0	10	7
Maximum	240	30	24	22

Source: Study findings, 2014

While assessing the influence of internet use on sexual behavior, 42.14 percent responded negative effects on sexual behavior, 47.86 percent said normal effects and 10 percent said positive effects. 54.74 percent found preferring internet for the information on sexual behavior. Most sex proposal were found occurring through face to face (45.05 percent) followed by 29.73 percent through cell phone (calling/texting). Internet, basically Facebook, was also found to be accounting for 23.42 percent for sex proposal.

Various attitudes, related to the internet use and sexual behaviors, were accessed as shown in the table 4

below. 29.3 percent and 25.1 percent male and female respectively, responded that they think they could have boyfriend/girlfriend through Facebook. Although, the relationship between gender and youth's perception on vulnerability in internet was not statistically significant, more female (44.5percent) than male (36.4 percent) think that young people are vulnerable to internet use. 27.2 percent responded they love to have sexual chatting on Social Networking Sites (SNS) like, Facebook. 60.7 percent thought it was easy to access X-rated materials on internet. 51.5 percent revealed their sexual behaviors have been affected by porn videos.

Table 4: Distribution of Attitude towards Internet Use and Sexual Behaviors by Gender

Do you:		Gender				P-value At 1 df
		Male		Female		
		Count	%	Count	%	
Think you could have BF/GF through Facebook	No	72	17.0%	121	28.6%	0.001
	Yes	124	29.3%	106	25.1%	
Think you love to have sexual chatting via social media	No	112	26.5%	196	46.3%	0.000
	Yes	84	19.9%	31	7.3%	
Think young people are vulnerable to internet use	No	43	10.2%	37	8.8%	0.158
	Yes	153	36.4%	187	44.5%	
Think other comment with	No	159	37.7%	195	46.2%	

sexual intension on your post on social media	Yes	37	8.8%	31	7.3%	0.150
Think easy access to X-rated material on internet	No	52	12.3%	114	27.0%	
	Yes	144	34.0%	113	26.7%	0.000
Think Porn effect your sexual practices	No	64	15.2%	100	23.8%	
	Yes	131	31.1%	86	20.4%	0.000

Source: Study findings, 2014

Of total 92 percent having access to internet, 25.1 percent of respondents were found to have sexual intercourse. The association was found statistically insignificant with 0.534 p-value, as shown in figure 5 below. Those using

internet more than 3 times a day were found to have more sexual practices (12.6 percent) followed by those using once daily (6.6 percent).

Table 5: Distribution of Sexual Intercourse by Internet Use

Variables		Have sexual intercourse			
		No		Yes	
		Count	%	Count	%
Access to internet	No	23	5.6%	11	2.7%
	Yes	276	66.7%	104	25.1%
	Total	299	72.2%	115	27.8%
P-value	At 1 df				0.534
How often use internet	Once daily	62	14.9%	27	6.5%
	Twice daily	77	18.5%	22	5.3%
	More than 3 times a day	117	28.4%	52	12.6%
	Once in 2 days	17	4.1%	5	1.2%
	Once in 3 or more days	26	6.3%	9	2.2%
	Total	299	72.2%	115	27.8%
p-value	At 4 df				0.583

Source: Study findings, 2014

Table 6 shows on the cross-tabulation of various attitude related variables with the sexual behavior. Of those 64.5 percent agreeing on the statement “Social Media can increase in numbers of love and sex partners”, 19.8 percent were found to have sexual intercourse with statistically insignificant association at 0.05 level of

significance. Similarly, most respondents agreed with various attitude related variables: internet change attitude towards sexual behavior, unwanted sex can be fostered by Facebook, think that social media can increase sex partners, pre-marital sex, and sex materials can misguide young people can with statistically significant association.

Table 6: Distribution on Role of Internet Use on Attitude towards Sexual Behavior

Statement		Have sexual intercourse				P-value
		No		Yes		
		Count	%	Count	%	At 2 df
“Social Media can increase in numbers of love and sex partners”	Agree	185	44.7%	82	19.8%	
	Disagree	41	9.9%	16	3.9%	
	Don't know	73	17.6%	17	4.1%	0.096

“Unwanted sex relations can be fostered by Facebook use”	Agree	96	23.2%	49	11.8%	0.034
	Disagree	86	20.8%	36	8.7%	
	Don't know	117	28.3%	30	7.2%	
“Internet can change attitude towards Sexual behavior”	Agree	207	50.0%	99	23.9%	0.002
	Disagree	30	7.2%	7	1.7%	
	Don't know	62	15.0%	9	2.2%	
“Internet can influence on Pre-marital Sexual behavior among young people”	Agree	157	38.0%	79	19.1%	0.010
	Disagree	37	9.0%	12	2.9%	
	Don't know	105	25.2%	24	5.8%	
“Sex materials in internet are misguiding young people”	Agree	189	45.8%	70	16.9%	0.037
	Disagree	37	9.0%	25	6.1%	
	Don't know	72	17.4%	20	4.8%	
	Total	299	72.2 %	115	27.8%	

Source: Study findings, 2014

IV. DISCUSSIONS

Internet, as a means of worldwide communication for self-presentation and identity[4][8], has changed conservative societies into the more liberal one; in relation to sexual health, it has become an important factor for the behavioral alteration.[5] National average shows only 3.3 percent households (of total 5,423,297) have internet facility[14]; exposure among 2 percent population in Nepal.[15] This article revealed 92 percent of young people using internet. This can be explained by the liberal constitutional and legal provisions in Nepal, basically after 1990s.[16]

Sexual activities among young people are sporadic, but it is greater in developed countries than in developing world.[5] Mean age at first sexual intercourse for male and female at national level were 17.8 years and 16.9 years respectively.[17] Lancet shows age at first sexual intercourse for male and female in Nepal as 18.5 years and 16.5 years respectively.[5] A study in Pokhara concluded that boys were more liberal to talk on sexual issues than girls.[18]

Literatures talk about the online risks and opportunities, especially those of sexual self-exploration and unwanted sexual solicitation.[7][8][9] Internet based sexual contents and peer networking affects knowledge, attitude, and practices of young people.[19]

The younger decisions in activities on Social Networking Sites (SNS) such as upload post, like, comment, etc. are not the lightly behavior.[4] This study found 16.1 percent youths think that other comments with sexual intension on their post on social media. As many as 25% of the population admits to sharing "sexts" and other naughty pictures with their friends.[11] A study in Australia found that young people discuss sexual matters via. texting, calling, and images in the social media sites.[4] An association found between the Facebook and

the twitter use with sexual intercourse.[9] The Facebook is creating its own norm and values as culture of freedom.[20] This article revealed almost 23 percent youths having sex proposal through Facebook. Similarly, significant association (p-value 0.034) between sexual intercourse and statement on Facebook fostering for unwanted sex relations. Also, there were 54.4 percent young people, who think they could have boyfriend/girlfriend through Facebook.

Internet has been used to search for romantic partners.[21] The early exposure to media has been associated with sexual behavior, increased number of sex partners, more permissive norms for sexual behavior, and sexual harassment.[1] There is potential to alter youth's sexual behavior through platform of interactions provided by SNS.[4] Findings from this article suggests access to internet and internet using frequency have statistically insignificant association with sexual intercourse among youths with p-values 0.534 and 0.583 respectively. However, young people were found mostly agreed on the statement towards sexual behavior through internet. Significant association between sexual intercourse and attitude statement was found in this study. In North Carolina, statistically significant relationship was found between social media and sexual intercourse.[9] Also, teens, who were thinking for soon sex, also found using phone more frequently.

Youths knowing about masturbation were found 88 percent in Nepal.[15] Interestingly, the survey among 15-24 years found almost all sexual practices were known in similar proportion among: rural versus urban; Kathmandu valley or other city; and between all education level.[15] This research has found 34.5 percent youths reporting for gender wise differing rates of masturbation.

Porn watching among male was only 1.93 percent in urban and 2.79 percent in Rural Nepal, while in

female it was less.[15] Similar to this research, online porn watching was almost exclusively reported activity in the internet, especially among male.[22] Both, making blue film and watching together with partner is emerging in Nepal. This article suggests that 42.8 percent youths have porn watching behavior, and has affected sexual practices of 51.5 percent youths. Media has affected on early age for puberty and masturbation.[1] For various sexual behaviors- 27.7 percent male and 16.1 percent of female- porn videos and social media were found as key sources. However, the study conducted in Nigeria, found internet not as first choice to get information on sexual health.[20]

Online sexual harassments were found increasing due to rapid movement of youths from chat rooms to the Facebook.[6] Youth perception in this research have found 60.7 percent agreed on the statement that there is easy access to X-rated materials on internet; 61.8 percent agreed with the statement that “sex materials in internet are misleading youths”. The youth preferred private sites rather than social sites to share their sexual behaviors.[4]

Internet has both positive and negative roles played in life of young people.[8] On the one hand, the negative effects (among 42.14 %) of internet use found in this research as: increased sexual desires due to X-materials, youth vulnerability, masturbation frequency, pornography, and sex proposals. On the other, the positive effects (among 10 %) were found as: learning on safe sex, contraceptive devices, sex positions, and sexual liberalism. Online behavior can improve psychosocial development of youths, including enhancing self-esteem, and sexual self-exploration due to the internet accessibility.[8]

It is an unavoidable act to use social media, and almost difficult to break the attachment between teens and screens.[23] 80.9 percent young people in this research found thinking youths are at vulnerable to internet use. Also, 57.1 percent young people think on premarital sexual behavior among youths because of internet use.

This research found 74 percent youths getting sexual proposals on such social media. In the research by Wolak and Mitchell (2000), there were 19 percent adolescents aged 10-17, out of 1501 children reporting sexual approaches by the offenders in internet.[19]

Use of social media is favorite site and frequent behavior among youths.[24][25] While doing so, major challenges for prevention of online sexual crimes and adolescents problems is that young people are addicted to media[8], and they voluntarily wants to have sexual relationship.[19]

V. CONCLUSIONS

Research has found important aspects in internet using behavior and its connections with the sexual matters among 423 young people in Kathmandu. Sexual

practices at early age- using internet for sexual insight, using media as platforms of sexual proposals, and watching porn- are now almost unavoidable for young people. Sexual permissiveness on various sexual practices was found quite expressing among males than females; increasing over education level. Almost half of respondents revealed Porn videos as sources of sexual information, followed by one fifth as social media. Age at first sexual intercourse was found as 18 years old, and exposure to pornography at the early age of 15 years. 14 percent and 10 percent respondents were found for negative and positive role of internet in their sexual matter respectively. The attitudes related to negative roles of internet in sexual matters of young people were found agreed by large proportion, with gender wise statistically significant association. There was insignificant association between internet access and it's using frequency with sexual intercourse at 0.05 level of significance. However, almost all the attitude related statements were agreed by the respondents. It is the time to act and prove that ‘internet’ is more than just a ‘sexually explicit media’; it is ‘tool’ to ‘youth civilization’. More analytical studies are needed to support the correlation between internet use and sexual health among young people.

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