Ascending Trend Online: Situation of Sexting and Sextortion among Children in the Philippines

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Rationale

<u>Definition and Status of Sexting and Sextortion</u>

An online survey of Thorn: Digital Defenders of Children and the University of New Hampshire-Crimes Against Children Research Center,[1] of 1,631 persons, aged 18 to 25 years old, who had been targets of sextortion, found out that **sextortion** is strongly associated with dating violence and stalking. In this survey, sextortion happened more often in face-to-face relationships than among respondents who only knew the perpetrators online.

In the wake of face-to-face romantic or sexual relationships, an aggrieved partner threatened to disseminate images, either to force reconciliation or to humiliate the victim. But in the case of perpetrators whom the victims only knew online, they used sexual images of the victims to demand more images or sexual interactions. Many perpetrators, either those the victims knew face-to-face or online, also stalked the respondents, both online and in person, to deliberately cause harm.

In the same survey, it was highlighted that almost half of the respondents (46%) were aged 17 years old or younger when the sextortion began. This may mean that minors are greatly targeted in conducting sextortion activities. Moreover, although most of the respondents who were victims of sextortion were female (1,352), there is notably a portion who were male (234). This shows that both females and males are being victimized by sextortion. Also, a small number of the female respondents disclosed that they were victimized by sextortion because of being caught up in scams, by perpetrators pretending to work for modeling agencies.

Sextortion is defined by the Philippine Department of Justice (DOJ) as "a crime committed in cyberspace where the offender obtains nude pictures or videos from victims, and then blackmails them for money to avoid the publication of the nude material."[2]

The Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP-ACG) defines sextortion as a form of blackmailing in which sexual content is used to extort money from individuals.[3] One of the *modus operandi* of the offenders in the case of sextortion in the Philippines has been revealed by the DOJ, in which offenders assume fake identities before engaging a victim. Upon gaining the victim's trust, the offender then lures the victim to perform a sexual act while the offender records a copy of it, which gives the offender the confidence to threaten the victim of circulating the material, unless the victim gives what the offender demands. The same observation is true with the online

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[1]University of New Hampshire-Crimes Against Children Research Center and Thorn: Digital Defenders of Children (June 2016). *Sextortion: Findings from a Survey of 1,631 Victims.* Retrieved from https://www.thorn.org/sextortion/ on December 2023.
[2]Department of Justice-Office of Cybercrime (March 2015). *Advisory Opinion No. 01.* Retrieved from https://www.doj.gov.ph
[3]Philippine National Police. *Understanding cyber sextortion.* Retrieved from https://acg.gov.ph/main/cyber-security-bulletin/191-acg-cyber-security-bulletin-nr-86-understanding-cyber-sextortion.html

survey result of Thorn and the University of New Hampshire[4], from which 16% of the respondents in face-to-face relationships disclosed that their perpetrators created fake online accounts or mobile phone numbers, from which they hid in anonymity while interacting with their victims. The PNP-ACG[5] claims that offenders are either sophisticated organized criminal networks that often conduct sextortion through operating in business-like locations like call centers, or they are private individuals who have monetary motives.

The PNP-ACG further added that it is through websites, including social media, dating sites, webcams or pornography sites, that many victims are targeted.

Further findings of the online survey by Thorn and the University of New Hampshire state that there is a great number of respondents who knowingly provided their sexual images to perpetrators because they thought they were in a wanted romantic or sexual relationship. But half of them were also pressured by the perpetrators to provide images or were made to feel bad. Some respondents were tricked into thinking that the images would be used for the entertainment business, such as modeling or acting, and expected to be paid, or they were threatened by the perpetrators.

In sexting, however, Lebedikova et al.[6] deduced that peer support might seem to be a factor in adolescents' engagement in sexting. They quoted qualitative and quantitative cross-sectional researches, which found out that adolescents engaged in sexting to gain approval, acceptance, and status among peers, or they were subject to peer pressure. It is also interesting that they noted that boys who have had an experience with cyberbullying had higher engagement in sexting, which was attributed to wanting to gain status among peers. Moreover, Lebedikova et al. cited qualitative research from the United Kingdom, which claims that boys are rewarded for engaging in sexting and are actually led to circulation of nude bodies of girls, in order to gain approval of their peers. In the research of Ojeda et al.[7], with focus groups conducted on 57 adolescents aged 15 to 19 years old in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, participating adolescents pointed to sexual gratification and pressure as some of the primary reasons for sending erotic-sexual content. But in forwarding sexts without consent, they claimed that it was due to wanting to harm another person in an ending relationship. It is important to note that the same research highlighted that teenagers send sexual content to flirt, initiate or maintain intimate contact, attract attention, and other reasons, such as being a part of a romantic relationship, since most people do it, to do it as a joke, and because of pressure or blackmail.

Ojeda et al. quoted in the same research that Barrense-Dias et al. distinguished sexting in two ways: active and passive. *Active sexting* includes sending one's own sexual content and forwarding sexual content from third parties, without consent, while *passive sexting* is the receipt of sexual content, either directly from the sender or as forwarded by others. Content of sexts also differs, as it may be in the form of text messages, images or videos. It was further noted that consent plays a role in sexting. The lack of consent can be from being pressured or forced into sending sexual content, stealing sexual content, sharing sexual content without the permission of

[4]ibid (pg. 1)
[5]ibid (pg. 1)
[6]Lebedikova et al. *The reciprocal relationship between consensual sexting and peer support among adolescents: A three-wave longitudinal study.* Retrieved from https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0747563223003990
[7]Ojeda et al. *"Some voluntarily and some under pressure": Conceptualization, reasons, attitudes, and consequences of sexting among adolescents.* Retrieved from https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0736585322001241

the person appearing on the content or receiving unwanted sexual content.

Moreover, it was cited in the same research by Ojeda et al.[8] that a meta-analysis of studies from Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East, South America, and Africa found out that 19.3% of young people send sexual content, 34.8% receive it, and 14.5% forward it without consent.

Doyle et al.,[9] in their systematic review of literature, cited from another meta-analysis of 39 studies that engagement in sexting has become more prevalent in recent years with the behavior of sending sexts at 14.8% while, on receiving sexts, it is at 27.4%. Although sending sexts, as an active role in sexting, has a lower prevalence in this meta-analysis than the passive role of receiving sexts, both posit risky effects to those involved, due to potential for public exposure. But there is also another standpoint on sexting that suggests that it is a normal behavior within the context of contemporary romantic and sexual relationships.

Doyle et al. further cited from different researches that technological advancements played a crucial role in facilitating the emergence of new ways of connecting with others romantically and sexually, including sexting. This is encouraged by the "unrestricted, immediate and seemingly secure nature of digital communication," coupled with developmental stages of youth on identity formation and sexuality exploration. The same systematic review of literature quoted **sexting** as the "use of digital devices such as computers or mobile phones to create and exchange sexually explicit content," and is bound to "sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually explicit messages or nude, partially nude, or sexually suggestive digital images of oneself or others via a cell phone, e-mail, internet or social networking service." This is supported by the research of Ouytsel et al.,[10] conducted on 11 same-sex focus groups among 57 adolescents between 15 and 18 years old in Belgium. The analysis found out that sexting is mostly conducted through digital applications such as Snapchat, rather than other social networking sites, as it is perceived to be a more intimate form of communication. In this research, respondents mentioned ways in which sexting could be abused, such as using sexting photographs to coerce or blackmail the victim, in this case, leading to sextortion. It could also be distributed, out of revenge, after a breakup of a romantic relationship, or forwarded to peers to boast about having received such sexts.

An online study by Delevi and Weisskirch[11], with 304 undergraduate participants, claimed that teenagers and young adults have readily integrated the use of technology into romantic relationships through various digital platforms, including emails, mobile phones, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), and videoconferencing (e.g., Skype and Facetime).

Delevi and Weisskirch further quoted in their research that another study of over 1,500 youths, aged 10 to 17 years old, found out that 9.6% had created nude or nearly nude images, or received such images, in 2012. Moreover, they found another study of over 600 high school students, which

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[8]ibid (pg. 2)
[9]Doyle et al. *The outcomes of sexting for children and adolescents: A systematic review of the literature.*
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0140197121001111
[10]Ouytsel et al. *Sexting: adolescents' perceptions of the applications used for, motives for, and consequences of sexting.*
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13676261.2016.1241865
[11]Delevi, R. and Weisskirch, R. *Personality factors as predictors of sexting.* https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0747563213001957

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revealed that between 9% and 27% had sent a sexually explicit photo through mobile phone, and between 24% and 65% had received sexually explicit photos through mobile phone. They further highlighted that 17% of their middle school and high school respondents had engaged in sexting. Furthermore, Delevi and Weisskirch[12] quoted another study as early as 2008 that found out that 20% of teenagers, 13 to 19 years old, in their sample, sent nude or semi-nude photos or videos of themselves, and 38% posted sexually suggestive messages. Another study of 827 respondents,18 to 24yearsold, was highlighted, which reported 28.2% who engaged in sexting by sending and receiving a sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photo or video of themselves or someone else.

According to the research of Livingstone and Gorzig[13], from which 25,000 internet-using European children aged 9 to 16 years old were surveyed, adolescents are more likely to receive sexual messages online when they are: higher in psychological difficulties, higher in sensation seeking level, and engaged more in risky offline and online activities.

Perpetrator Identity

When it comes to perpetrator identity in sextortion, the PNP-ACG[14] specifies that the offender usually assumes the identity of an attractive person to entice the potential victim and gain the potential victim's trust through constant communication, and eventually lures the victim to send sexual materials or perform sexual acts on camera, without the victim knowing that the victim is being recorded. Sextortion aggravates from there, as the cybercriminal threatens the victim that the nude materials will be circulated unless the offender's demands are met.

In the online survey of Thorn and the University of New Hampshire[15], almost all (89%) of the cases of sextortion were perpetrated by men and targeted against women. But there were a few cases (9%) wherein the perpetrators were female, and their victims were male. Moreover, 64% of the respondents were victimized by their current or former intimate partners, including boyfriends/girlfriends, **dating** partners, spouses or live-in partners. There were also some who described their perpetrators as potential partners, rejected suitors, or sexual harassers. A few also identified their perpetrators as current/former friends, acquaintances, or persons known from school or work.

For sexting, Mori et al.[16] conducted a meta-analysis of 39 studies from 2009 to 2015, of which results pointed to older youth as the more likely senders of sexts. Moreover, it revealed that females receive sexts at a higher rate than males. Delevi and Weisskirch's study revealed that men and those in romantic relationships are more likely to engage in sexting[17]. In this online study, they had predicted that extraversion, neuroticism, and low agreeableness lead greater to sexting through sending a sexually suggestive or nude photo.

[12]ibid (pg. 3)
[13]Livingstone, S. and Gorzig, A. *When adolescents receive sexual messages on the internet: Explaining experiences of risk and harm.* Retrieved from https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563213004743
[14]ibid (pg. 1)
[15]ibid (pg. 1)
[16]Mori et al. *Are Youth Sexting Rates Still on the Rise? A Meta-analytic Update.* Retrieved from https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1054139X21005589
[17]ibid (pg. 3)

Philippine Laws Covering Sexting and Sextortion

In the Philippines, laws have been enacted to protect individuals from sextortion. Republic Act 11930[18], otherwise known as the "Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Material (CSAEM) Act of 2022," and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), provide that, regardless of the consent of the child, it shall be unlawful for a person to commit acts that constitute OSAEC and CSAEM, through online or offline means or a combination of both. It also establishes the tagging of activities of child pornography as OSAEC and CSAEM. It also covers production of CSAEM and penalizes offenders.

Republic Act 10175[19], otherwise known as the "Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012," defines **Cybersex** as the "willful engagement, maintenance, control, or operation, directly or indirectly, of any lascivious exhibition of sexual organs or sexual activity, with the aid of a computer system, for favor or consideration." **Sexting** was defined earlier as the "use of digital devices such as computers or mobile phones to create and exchange sexually explicit content" and is bound to "sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually explicit messages or nude, partially nude, or sexually suggestive digital images of oneself or others via a cell phone, e-mail, internet or social networking service." These definitions then qualify sexting to be considered as cybersex, and sexting is therefore covered by Republic Act 10175. This law further covers the conduct of the crime of "grave threats" through the use of information and communications technology, which is penalized by Section 6 stating that if it is committed by, through and with the use of information and communications technologies, it is penalized one degree higher than the penalty imposed by the Revised Penal Code. Since the offender in sextortion conducts the crime of "grave threats" using information and communications technology, Republic Act 10175 penalizes these acts.

Sextortion also falls under Republic Act 9995[20] or the "Anti-Photo and Video Voyeurism Act of 2009." This law states that *consent* is irrelevant as the offender takes photos or videos of a person or a group of persons while doing a sexual act, or even the capturing of an image of a person's private area. These are punishable acts by virtue of Republic Act 9995.

Consequences of Sexting and Sextortion to Victims

The online survey of Thorn and the University of New Hampshire[21] notes that the *sextortion* had an intense toll on their respondents' personal and psychological health, with some of them (24%) starting to see a medical or mental health practitioner. These respondents also felt ashamed, embarrassed, and self-blame, which kept them from seeking help from friends and family or from reporting to technology companies that ran websites or apps used for sextortion. Moreover, almost half of the respondents lost a relationship with a friend, family member or partner because of the sextortion incident. Some had to move to a new place of residence or change schools or had other school-related problems. Others changed jobs or had other job-related problems arising from being victimized by sextortion.

[18]Philippine Government. *Official Gazette*. Retrieved from https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph
[19]ibid (pg. 5)
[20]ibid (pg. 5)
[21]ibid (pg. 1)

In addition to these, Thorn and the University of New Hampshire[22] also found out that perpetrators usually demanded additional sexual photos or videos from the respondent, so as not to leak the victim's identity or sexual materials. There were also those perpetrators who were former partners of the victim that demand for the victim to return to their sexual/romantic relationship. Some other demands of the perpetrators of sextortion, in exchange for not leaking the victim's identity or sexual materials, included in-person meet-ups, online sexual activity with the victim, forcing victims to do self-harm, and money.

Sexting, on the other hand, had psychological, behavioral, relational and systems-level outcomes, according to Doyle et al.[23] *Psychological outcomes* come in victimization, sexual abuse, and effects on mental health and quality of life. *Behavioral outcomes* of sexting point to more sexual activities, risky behaviors and perpetration of abuse and harassment. *Relational outcomes* are the effects on personal connection with other people, and reputational effects. Lastly, *systems-level outcomes* pertain to distribution or public exposure of sexting content.

Delevi and Weisskirch[24] also claimed in their research that adolescents who had engaged in sexting also reported a tendency to engage in high-risk activities, such as engaging in anal or oral sex, having four (4) or more sexual partners, and not using contraceptives. Their study further asserted that the following are associated with sexting among adolescents: using marijuana, smoking cigarettes in the last 30 days, binge drinking, suicidal ideation and depressive symptoms. These are all unhealthy and risky behaviors and tendencies associated with sexting.

Why Conduct the Research

The consequence of sextortion and sexting to the victims, boosted by the rapidly evolving technology and digital world, is one of the reasons this research is being conducted. Knowing the nature and prevalence of sexting and sextortion among children will increase the capacity of parents, relevant professionals and duty bearers to protect children from potential stigma, trauma, abuse and other harm that these phenomena bring.

Another local baseline survey initially conducted in the municipality of Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines, by Stairway Foundation, Inc. (SFI) yielded significant figures of the involvement of children aged 13 to 15 years old in sexting and sextortion cases. The local survey showed that, in Puerto Galera alone, children are highly vulnerable to be victims of sexual offense, intimidation, blackmailing and coercion.

Due to the alarming concern involving children's rights and welfare being violated by sexting and sextortion, SFI and the Break the Silence National Network Inc. (BTSNN) embraced the urgent need for a survey that will look deeper into the prevalence and nature of sexting and sextortion, expanding its scope to several regions in the Philippines. This inter-regional survey on sexting and sextortion among children, being led by Talikala Inc., aims to fill in the lack of existing studies and literature in the Philippines that discuss sexting and sextortion issues affecting children,

[22]ibid (pg.1)
[23]ibid (pg.3)
[24]ibid (pg.3)

through understanding the extent and nature of sexting and sextortion at the national level. Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to SFI's e-learning course on sexting and sextortion entitled "For Your Eyes Only."

Objectives of the Study

As mentioned above, this study is an inter-regional survey that aims to understand the extent and nature of sexting and sextortion in the Philippines to fill in the lack of existing studies and literature in the Philippines that discuss sexting and sextortion issues affecting children.

Specifically, the researchers aim to:

1) Capture national trends on sexting and sextortion among children;
2) Identify the factors that lead children to engage in production of self-generated Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Material;
3) Determine the protective behavior patterns that child victims employ upon sexting and sextortion encounters; and
4) Determine the various modus operandi of perpetrators of sextortion.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on the online behaviors and activities of children, aged 10 to 16 years old, living in different regions in the Philippines where the participating Break the Silence National Network (BTSNN) member organizations operate. These regions only include Region 4A (CALABARZON), Region 4B (MIMAROPA), Region 6 (Western Visayas), Region 7 (Central Visayas), Region 11 (Davao Region), Region 12 (SOCCSKSARGEN), and Region 13 (Caraga). The distribution of the number of respondents, per region, is presented in the demographics of the research population below, which show that there is an unequal number of respondents among the regions, leading the researchers to interpret the data based on the total respondent population rather than investigate regional differentiation. Moreover, this research looked into the data in terms of sectors of children. However, the number of respondents, per sector, is skewed, so the analysis was inclined to looking at the data per sector, rather than comparing each sector with other sectors. Also, the survey tool used was the same survey tool developed by SFI in its local baseline study in Puerto Galera. SFI got the survey items from the Adolescent Sexting Scale (A-SextS), which assesses adolescents' attitudes toward sexting.

In the survey tool, the term **sexting** is defined as the production, sending and dissemination of messages, photos or videos which are sexually suggestive, nearly nude or nude, through mobile phones or the internet. On the other hand, the term **sextortion** is defined in the survey as a form of grooming of a person, to lure the person to share a nearly nude/nude photo or video, which leads to further demands of sharing more sexual photos or videos, sending money, or in-person meet-ups in exchange for not disseminating the sexual photos and videos initially sent by the victim.

Given the nature of the survey, and that children are the study's subject, the researchers ensured that a child safeguarding protocol was in place, which included ensuring the safety of the

respondents and the confidentiality of their answers. The safeguarding protocol also included a feedback and reporting mechanism. Personal information, specifically the name and address of the respondent, was not collected and was, instead, replaced by a respondent number that served as data identification. The BTSNN members served as the facilitators of the survey, and they were provided with an orientation, either through an online meeting or through recorded demo videos. A guidance document also stated the step-by-step guide in facilitating the survey, including the safeguarding protocol. To further maintain the confidentiality of the respondents' identity, the researchers did not have access to the actual attendance information of the participants, which contains their personal identifiers. Rather, the researchers only accessed the data accorded with respondent numbers.

Methodology

This research conducted a survey that is self-administered, either through a paper-based tool or an online tool, but with the supervision of representatives of the BTSNN member organizations, who served as survey facilitators. The survey contained 40 items pertaining to sexting, and 13 items about sextortion. Google Form was used as the online tool, so the answers of those who used the online tool were automatically encoded into the database. On the other hand, the answers of respondents from the paper-based tool were uploaded into the database by the facilitators through inputting them to the Google Form or Datascope Form, to minimize human error in the encoding of data.

After the initial data analysis, online data validation sessions were conducted with selected respondents from all participating regions, except for Region 11, which was not able to join due to unavailability of target participants. The confidentiality of the participants' identity was maintained all throughout the validation session by requiring off-cam participation, renaming their usernames with their respondent numbers, and participating only through chat.

During the online data validation sessions, initial data results were presented, and participants were asked to rate how accurate they thought the data results were, based on what they saw was happening among their peers, related to sexting and sextortion. The rating consisted of a 5-point Likert scale, corresponding to 5 being "strongly agree" that the data result is accurate, and 1 being "strongly disagree" on the data's accuracy. The mean of ratings per data result presented was computed to capture the participants' overall perception of each data result.

II. DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

A. Regional Disaggregation of Respondents

Figure 1 shows that the total population of 8,133 respondents came from seven (7) regions in the Philippines. The biggest portion (24%) came from Region 4A CALABARZON, followed by Region 4B MIMAROPA (21%), and then Region 7 Central Visayas (17%). Region 12 SOCCSKSARGEN and Region 6 Western Visayas contribute 12% and 11% of the research population, respectively. Lowest portions of the population come from Region 11 Davao Region (9%) and Region 13 Caraga (6%). These regions were where the members of the Break the Silence National Network (BTSNN), who served as facilitators of data gathering, are operating.


FIGURE 1. REGIONAL DISAGREGGATION OF RESPONDENTS
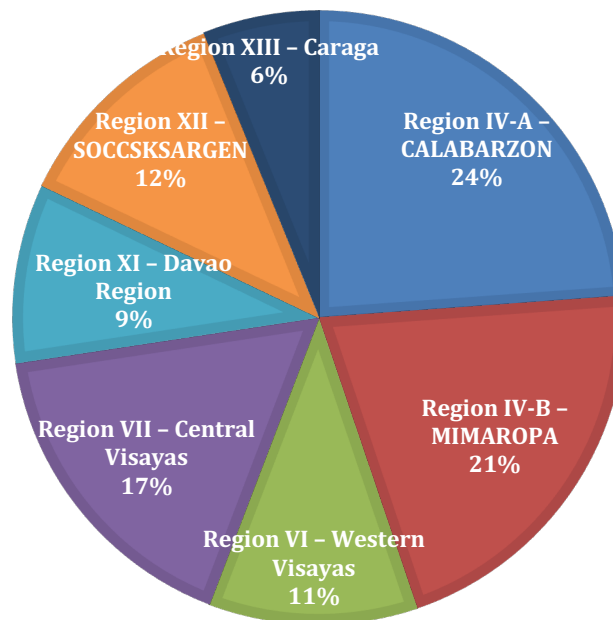
B. Gender Disaggregation per Sector

From the total number of respondents (n = 8,133), almost all were in-school children (6,949), while the remaining population came from sectors such as children at-risk (1,130), child laborers (49), and prostituted children (5). This shows the effort of the study to get perspectives from other children's sectors in which children faced intersectional vulnerabilities, which may have been caused by their gender and status in life, among others. However, as mentioned in this study's scope and limitation, since the number of respondents, per sector, was skewed, the researchers analyzed the data per sector, rather than analyzing sector differentiation.

In Figure 2, more than half (3,646) of the in-school children identified as female, while the other half identified as male (2,731). Although a minority, this study is still

represented by in-school respondents identifying as LGBTQIA+ (299), while a few in-school respondents (273) preferred not to state their gender. On the other hand, more than half (598) of children at-risk who became respondents of this research identified as female, while the other half identified as either male (500), LGBTQIA+ (29), or did not prefer to state their gender (3). Respondents who were child laborers mostly identified as female (38), and the remaining portion of this sector identified as male (11). Lastly, all five (5) respondents belonging to the prostituted children sector identified as female.

Figure 2. Gender disaggregation per sector
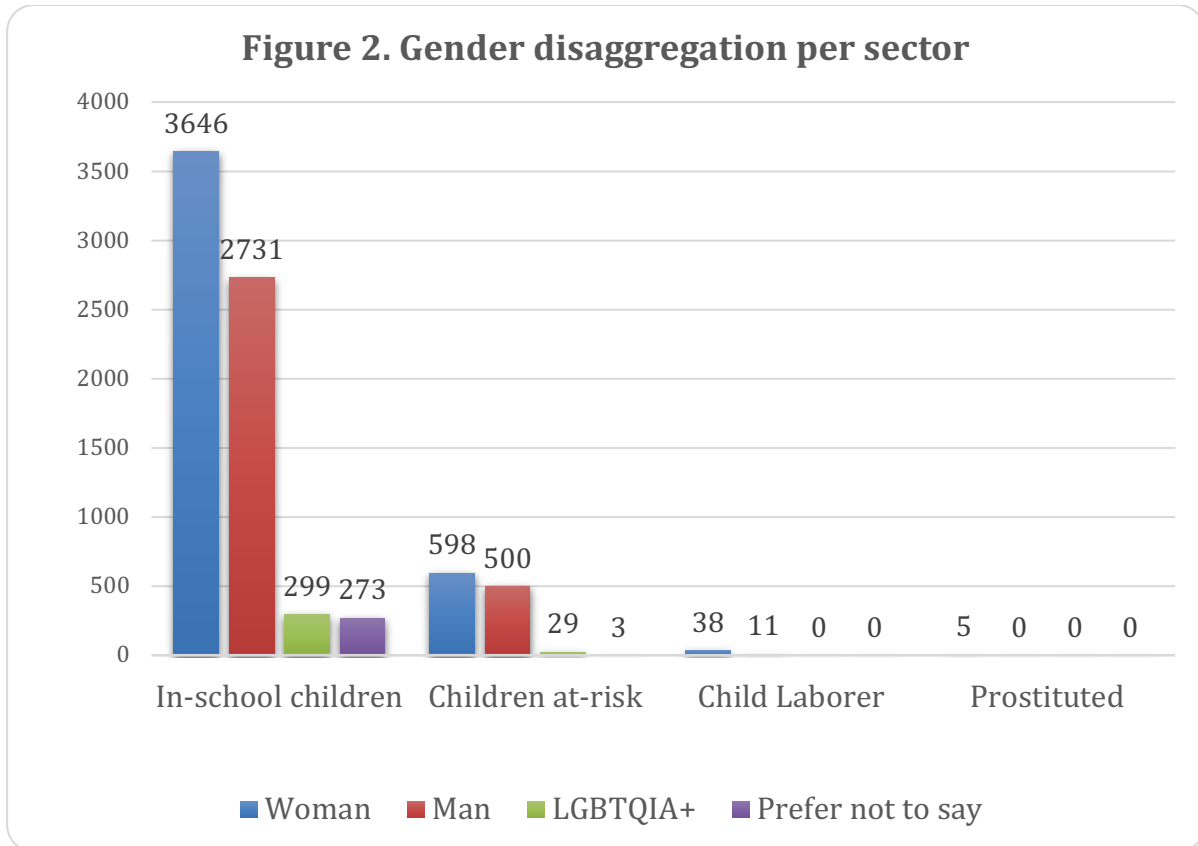
C. Gender Disaggregation per Age

In terms of age of the respondents, Figure 3 shows that the greatest portion (2,069) of the respondents were aged 15 years old, from which majority were females (1,079). The next huge number of the respondents were 14-year-olds (1,484), followed by 13-year-olds (1,370), 16-year-olds (1,191), and then 12-year-olds (1,063). Across these ages, more than half always came from females. Only relatively few respondents from the ages of 10 to 11 years old joined the survey, which are at 429 and 527, respectively. Even with these ages, there was a greater number of females than other gender groups. It can also be noticed that, in all age levels, there was a representation of all three (3) gender groups including, LGBTQIA+.

Figure 3. Gender disaggregation per age
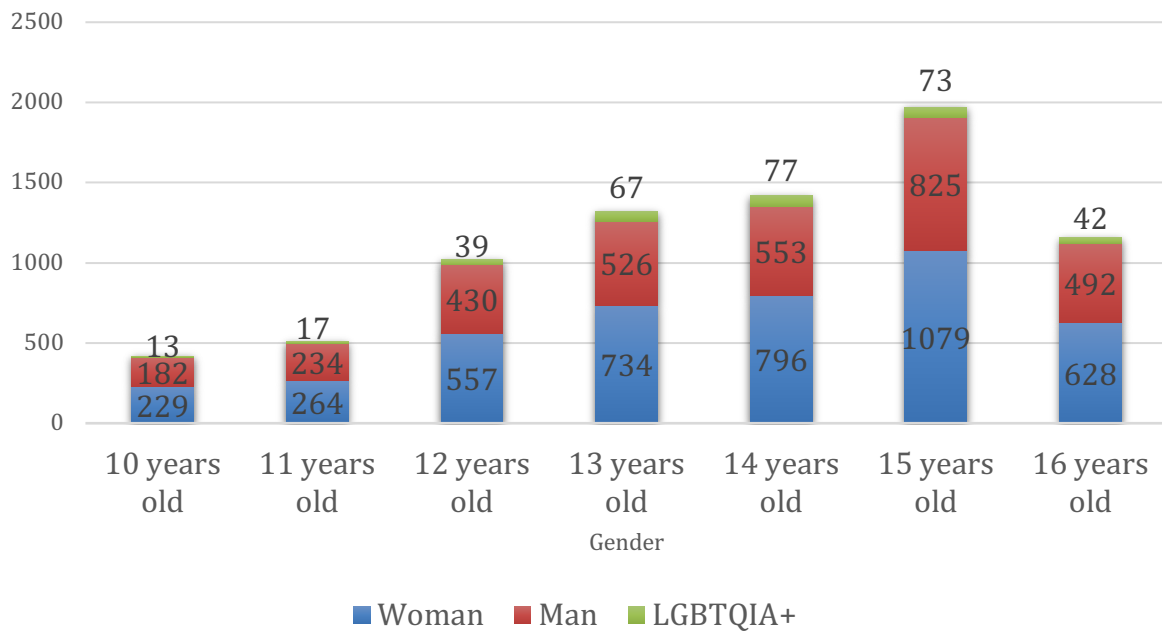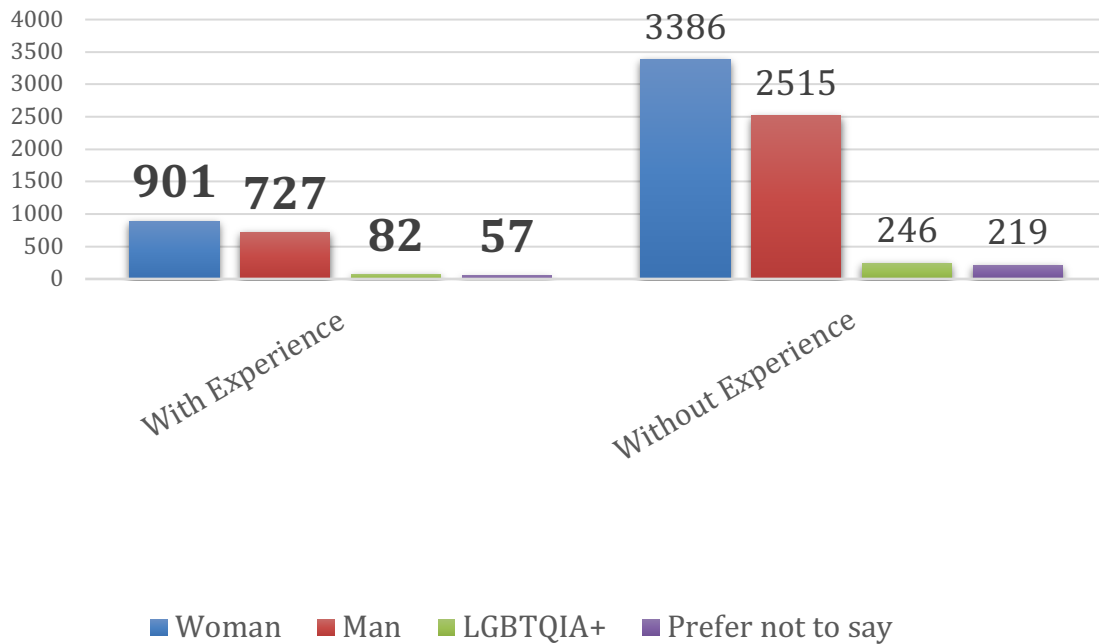
III. SURVEY RESULTS ANALYSIS

A. Respondent's Personal Experience on Sexting

Number of Respondents with Experience on Sexting

This research defines **sexting** as the production, sending and dissemination of messages, photos or videos which are sexually suggestive, nearly nude or nude, through mobile phones or the Internet. Of the total population of 8,133 respondents, 22% or 1,767 respondents revealed that they have had at least one (1) experience related to sending or receiving sexual content online or offline. This number entails that **approximately 1 in 5 children has had an experience in sexting.**

Figure 4 shows the distribution of respondents in terms of having had an experience in sexting. Half of the 22% identified as female (901), while the other half identified as male (727). With this, it can be said that 1 in 2 children who have experienced sexting is a girl, and approximately 2 in 5 children who have experienced sexting is a boy. Although a minority, there were LGBTQIA+ (82) who admitted having had at least one (1) experience related to sending or receiving sexual content online or offline. This data shows that sexting happens among all three (3) gender groups (female, male, LGBTQIA+) being considered in this research.

Figure 4. Number of respondents with experience on sexting

The values shown in the chart:

|	With Experience	Without Experience
Woman	901	3386
Man	727	2515
LGBTQIA+	82	246
Prefer not to say	57	219

The validation session results obtained a mean score of 3.5 in terms of the accuracy of Figure 4, based on the validation participants' perception on what was happening among their peers. This mean score concludes that they were inclined to neither agree nor disagree that these numbers accurately represented the rate of incidence of sexting among their peers. When asked for the reason of their rating, almost all mentioned that there are more children who experience extinguish are afraid to disclose it.

Level of Participation in Sexting

To have a better understanding of the type of sexting happening in the participating regions, this research adopted the classification of sexting by Barrense-Dias et al., as quoted by Ojeda et al. According to Barrense-Dias et al., there are two distinctions of sexting, namely, *active* and *passive*. *Active sexting* is basically when one is sending sexual content, while *passive sexting* is when one is on the receiving end of the sexual content. Therefore, this research looked into the disaggregation of the level of participation of the respondents in sexting, may it be *active only*, *passive only*, or *both active and passive*. These data were further cross-referenced with age disaggregation of respondents who have had experience in sexting.

The research found out that sexting incidences spiked in 15-year-olds. Figure 5A shows that the greatest portion of the respondents who admitted to having had an experience in sexting were from those aged 15 years old (27%). From this number, there was almost an equal distribution of

respondents who had experienced active sexting only (160), passive sexting only (156), and those who had experienced both active and passive sexting (155). Quite far a gap, 13-year-olds comprised the second largest percentage (18%) of respondents who have had experience in sexting. Half of this percentage (165) had experienced passive sexting only, while those who had experienced active sexting only were 91 respondents. There were also 60 respondents, aged 13 years old, who had experienced both active and passive sexting. The percentage of 14-year-olds and 16-year-olds who had experienced sexting were equal (17%) and, similarly, the greater portion of each percentage experienced passive sexting only. There were also a number of 12-year-olds (13%) who had experienced sexting, and most (88) of them were involved in active sexting. Unfortunately, data results show that there were respondents as young as 10 years old (4%) and 11 years old (5%) who had been involved in sexting, either active, passive or both. This goes to show that children as young as 10 years old are exposed to sending or receiving sexual content online or offline. But overall, the data confirmed that sexting is not just being received by children but is also being actively sent by them from ages 10 up until 16 years old.

Figure 5A. Level of participation to sexting in terms of age
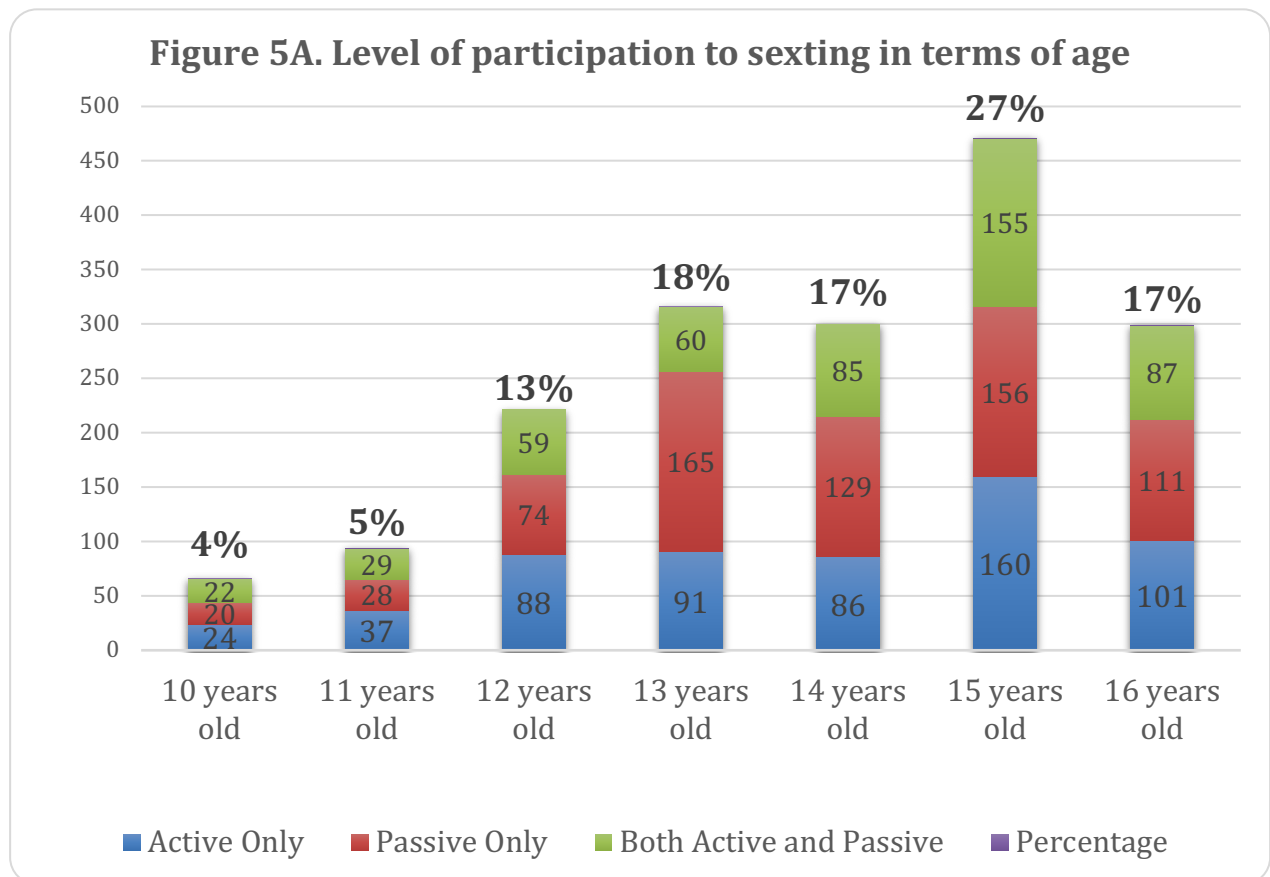
Meanwhile, contrary to what was expected, females (306) dominated the distribution of those who did active sexting. This is shown in Figure 5B. Females (253) also dominated those who experienced both active and passive sexting. There is also a greater number of females who were at the receiving end of sexting (342).

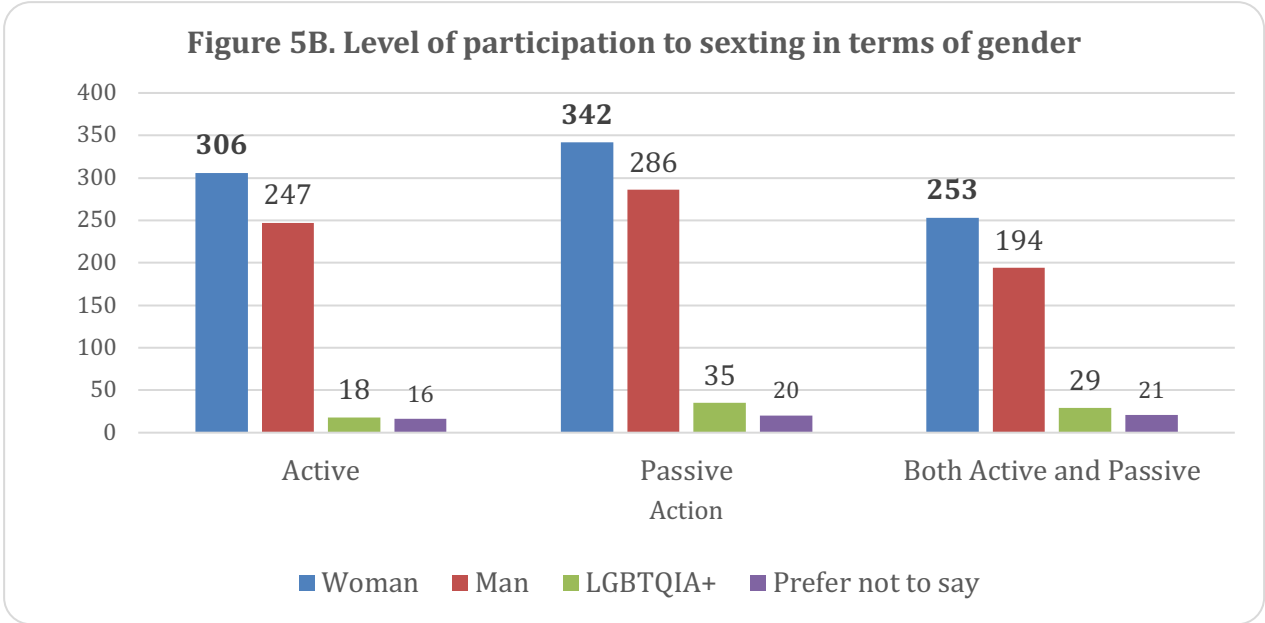**Figure 5B. Level of participation to sexting in terms of gender**

Figure 5C shows that among in-school children who admitted having experienced sexting, more than a third (582) received sexual content (passive only) and another third (505) sent sexual content (active only). Not far from these numbers, 422 in-school children had both actively and passively engaged in sexting.

Meanwhile, the largest portion (100) of children at-risk who had experienced sexting were also on the receiving end (passive only), while 72 of them had both actively and passively engaged in sexting. Only 58 children at-risk had engaged in sexting actively.

On the other hand, among 24 respondents who were child laborers, no one was on the passive end, but almost all (23) were in the active role in sexting. Moreover, four (4) prostituted children admitted to having had an experience on sexting, either active (1), passive (1), or both (2).

These data show that, in all the children's sectors considered by the research, participation in sexting was visible.

**Figure 5C. Level of participation to sexting in terms of sector**
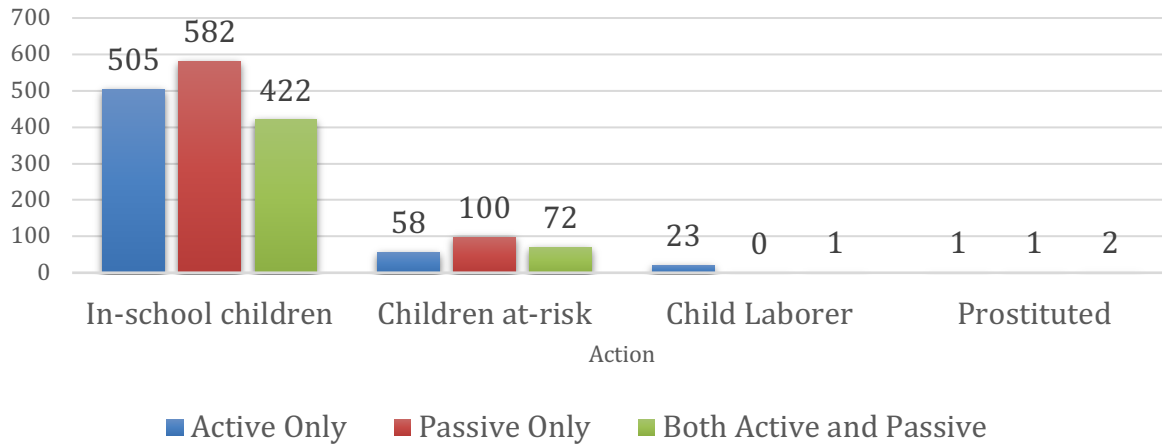
Experience in Sexting through Sharing of Sexual Content Online/Offline

Among those who had engaged in active sexting or had sent sexual content, the research further investigated the incidence of active sexting through three (3) ways: by sharing of sexual content online/offline, by posting online or streaming of sexual content, and by engaging in sexual conversations.

Figure 6A shows that from those who had engaged in sexting by sharing sexual content online/offline, 15-year-olds still topped the chart (218), with females comprising most of this number (121). The number of 14-year-olds (148) is the second largest in terms of active sexting, with majority (72) identifying as males. Immediately following this portion are the 16-year-olds (138) from which half (69) were females. Respondents from 10 to 13 years old also admitted to having engaged in sexting through sharing of sexual content online/offline, in which gender disaggregation was topped by either males or females. However, across 10- up to 16-year-olds who admitted to having had an experience in sexting through sharing of sexual content online/offline, there were a few who identified as LGBTQIA+.

Overall, this data goes to show that active sexting, through sharing of sexual content online/offline, is being done by children aged 10 up to 16 years old but is more often amongst 15-year-olds. Moreover, male, female and LGBTQIA+ children all have incidences of engaging in sharing sexual content online/offline, and sexting is not concentrated on one gender alone.

Figure 6A. Experience in sexting through sharing of sexual contents online/offline in view of age
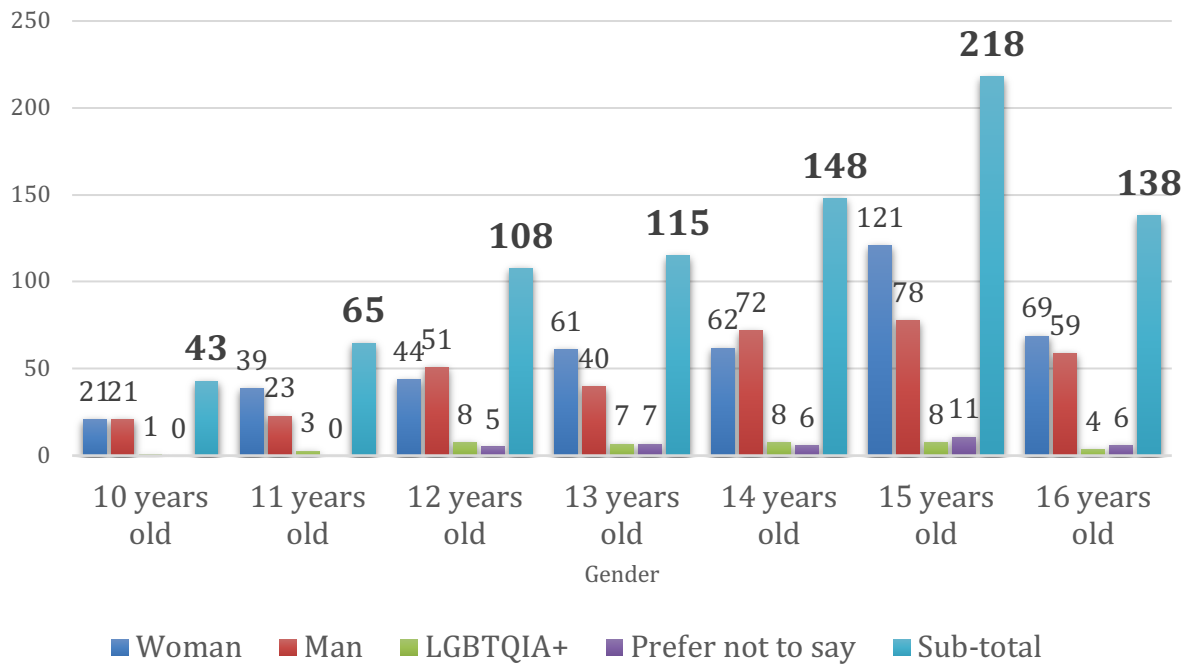
In terms of sector, Figure 6B shows that most of the 15-year-olds (181) and 14-year-olds (119) topped the numbers of in-school children who had engaged in active sexting through sharing of sexual content online/offline. The same trend can be observed for children at-risk, in which 26 respondents who were 14 years old and 25 respondents who were 15 years old had experienced sharing sexual content. Among child laborer respondents, 15-year-olds still shared a great number (10), but there were more 16-year-olds (12) who admitted to having had an experience of sharing sexual content. Majority of prostituted child respondents, who were either 14-year-olds (1) or 15-year-olds (2), also claimed that they had experienced this way of sexting. These data show that all four (4) sectors contributed to the number of respondents who had experienced sexting through sharing of sexual content online/offline, regardless of whether they may be in-school children, or those children considered in need of special protection, such as children at-risk, child laborers, children in prostitution. Being in-school does not excuse a child from doing active sexting.

**Figure 6B. Experience in sexting through sharing of sexual contents online/offline in view of sector**
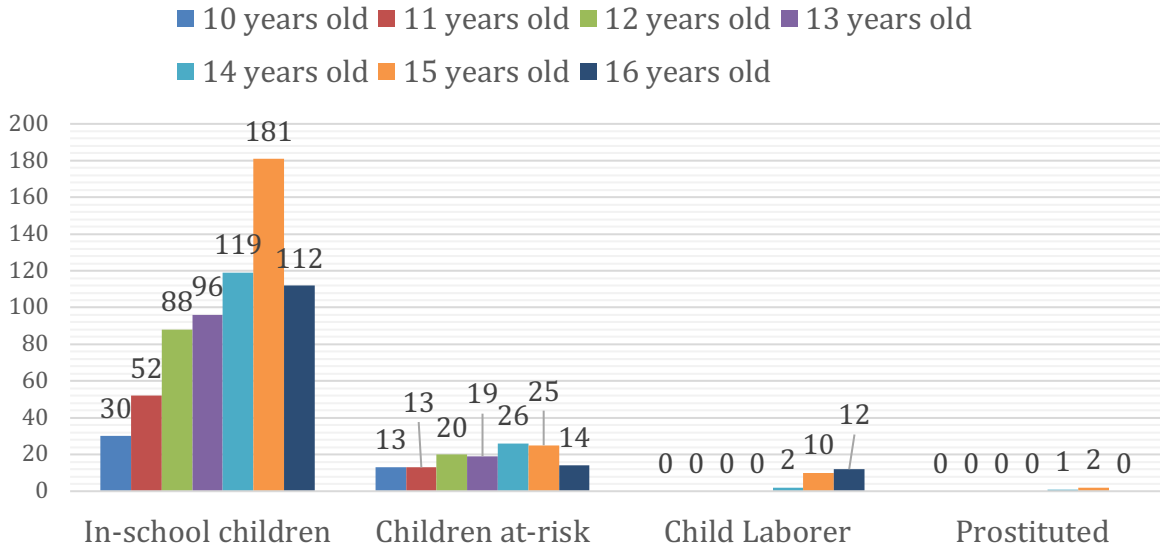
Experience in Sexting through Online Posting and Streaming of Sexual Content

Figure 7A shows that across ages 10 up to 16 years old, sexting through online posting and streaming of sexual content is being done.

As emphasized earlier, 15-year-olds still topped the chart (125) in this type of sexting, of which majority were females (64). Quite a far gap next to it, the number of 16-year-olds (59) followed, and still majority of these were females. Many (41) of those who had done sexting through online posting and streaming of sexual content also came from the 12-year-olds, of which most were still females (25). Next to this was the number of 13-year-olds (37) and 14-year-olds (30), but between them, there were more males than females from the 14-year-olds.

To note, across ages 10 to 16 years old, there was only one (1), two (2), or three (3) respondents who came from LGBTQIA+ that had engaged in this type of active sexting. But to emphasize further, the number of respondents who had experienced active sexting, through online posting and streaming of sexual content, is dominated by female.

Figure 7A. Experience in sexting through online posting/streaming of sexual contents in view of age

Legend: ■ Woman ■ Man ■ LGBTQIA+ ■ Prefer not to say ■ Sub-total
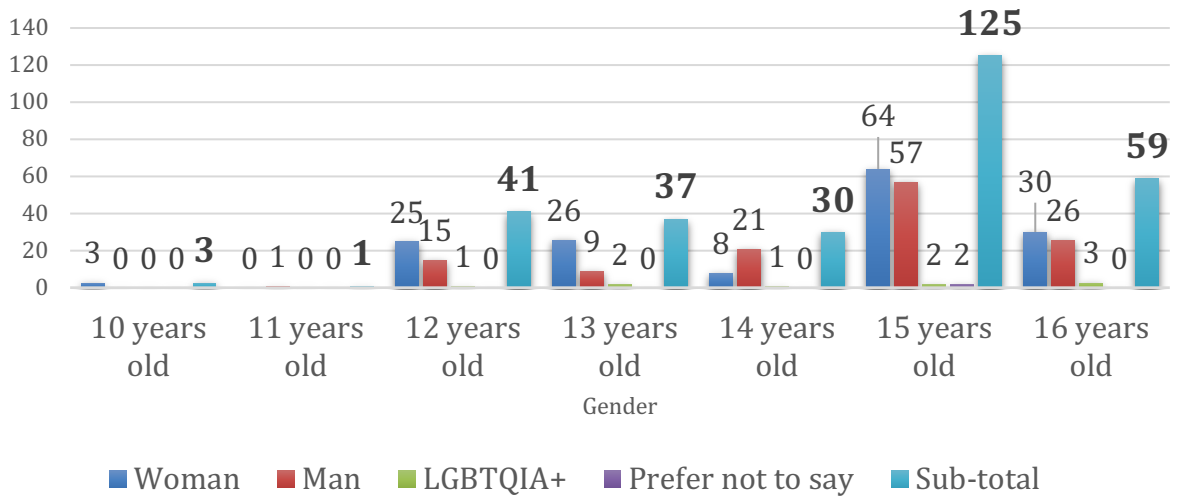
Of all sectors covered by this research, only the in-school children (296) have had an experience on online posting or streaming of sexual content. Nearly half (125) of this number were 15-year-olds. The other half was distributed among all the other age groups: 16 years old (59), 12 years old (41), 13 years old (37), and 14 years old (30). Only a few came from the 10-year-olds (3) and 11-year-olds (1). This may imply that sexting through online posting or streaming of sexual content is more rampant or accessible to in-school children compared to other sectors. One factor that may be assumed to have contributed to this is the greater access to internet amongst in-school children who, nowadays, need internet for schooling. But the level of access to internet amongst the respondents of this research was not established.

Figure 7B. Experience in sexting through online posting/streaming of sexual contents in view of sector

Legend: ■ 10 years old ■ 11 years old ■ 12 years old ■ 13 years old ■ 14 years old ■ 15 years old ■ 16 years old
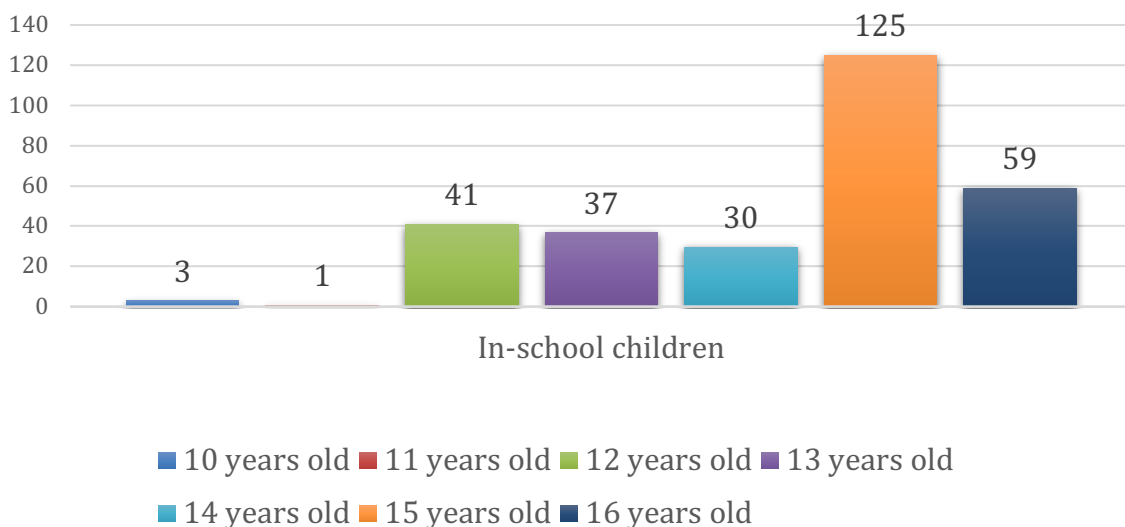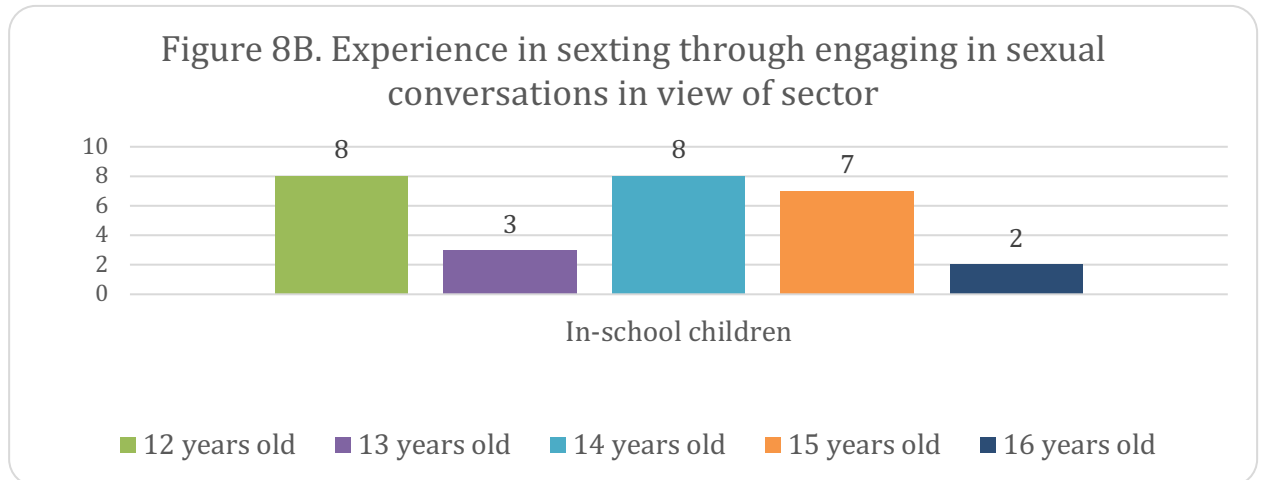
Experience in Sexting through engaging in sexual conversations

Another type of sexting, which is the more common connotation for the term, is engaging in sexual conversations. Figure 8A shows that only a few children had engaged in this type of active sexting, coming from the 14-year-olds (8), 12-year-olds (8), 15-year-olds (7), 13-year-olds (3), and the 16-year-olds (2). Most of them were males and the rest were females.

Figure 8A. Experience in sexting through engaging in sexual conversations in view of age
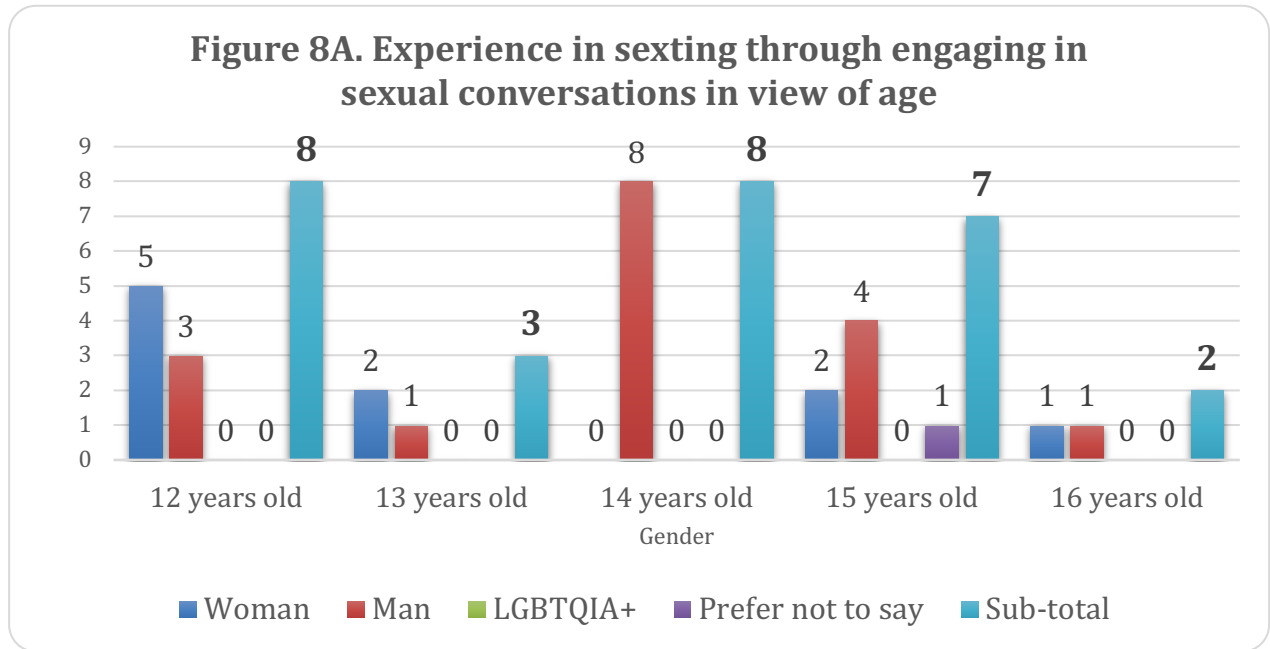
Amongst the sectors, again, only in-school children (28) admitted to having had an experience in sexting through engaging in sexual conversations, as shown in Figure 8B. But it is noticeable that 12-year-olds (8) topped the chart, along with the 14-year-olds (8). Fifteen-year-olds contributed seven (7) to the total number of respondents who admitted to having had an experience in this type of sexting. Meanwhile, there were three (3) respondents aged 13 years old, and two (2) respondents aged 16 years old, who admitted to having engaged in sexual conversations.

Figure 8B. Experience in sexting through engaging in sexual conversations in view of sector

Experience in Sexting through Receiving Sexual Contents

Figure 9A shows the incidences of passive sexting, through receiving of sexual content. The figure emphasizes that as 15-year-olds were the ones with the greatest number in terms of active sexting, they were also the age level with the greatest number of respondents (311) who had experienced passive sexting or being on the receiving end.

The second greatest number of respondents who had experienced passive sexting were from the 13-year-olds (225). Fourteen-year-olds shared almost the same number of respondents who had received sexual content, which is at 214, while 16-year-olds contributed 198 respondents. Also, 133 respondents aged 12 years old admitted to having experienced this type of sexting. From ages 12 to 16 years old, majority of each age group identified as female. This may imply that there are more females who are usually on the receiving end of sexting. However, Figure 9A also highlights that even males experience receiving sexual content. Moreover, in the data for 10-year-olds and 11-year-olds, there were more males who had experienced passive sexting than females. Across all age groups, there were a few LGBTQIA+ respondents who also admitted to having received sexual content.

Figure 9A. Experience in sexting through receiving sexual contents in view of age
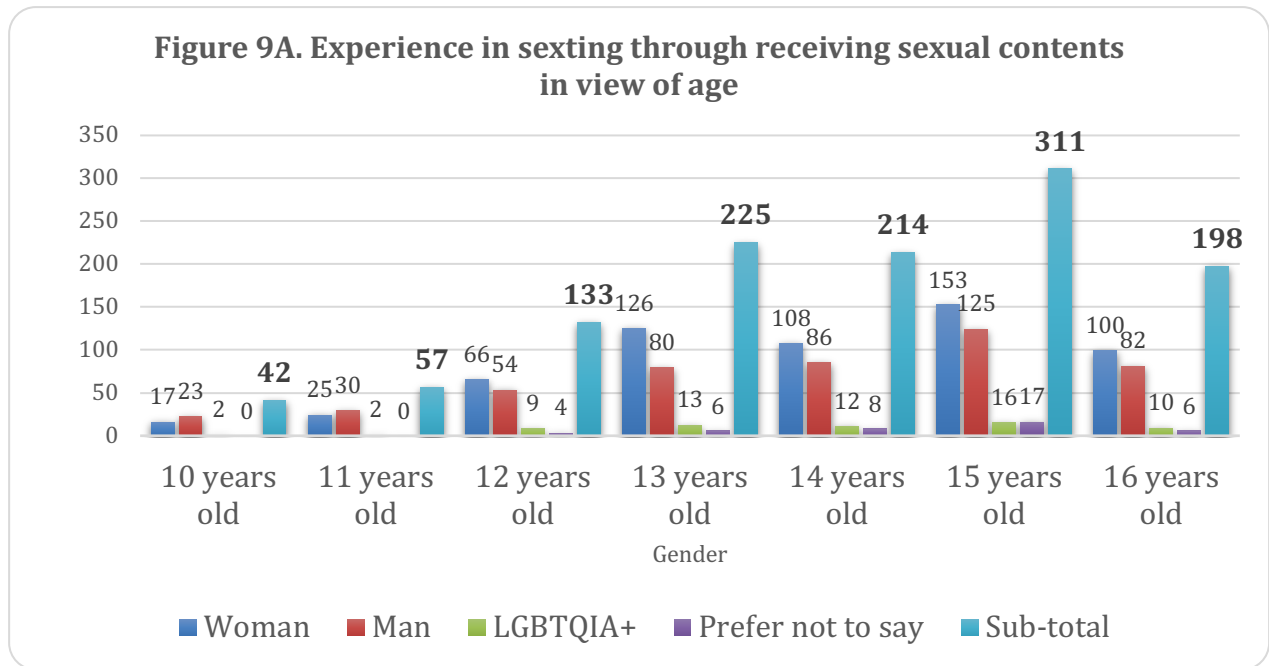
In all four sectors, a number of respondents admitted having experienced sexting through receiving sexual content, but there was only one (1) out of 49 respondent child laborers who did so. Figure 9B shows that among in-school children, 15-year-olds (285) comprised the greatest number of those who had experienced this passive sexting, followed by the 13-year-olds and 14-year-olds. On the other hand, among children at-risk, 13-year-olds contributed the greatest number among the number of respondents who had experienced receiving sexual content. This was followed by 14-year-olds (28) and 15-year-olds (24). In both these sectors, children as young as 10 and 11 years old had experienced being on the receiving end of sexting. Meanwhile, half (3) of the prostituted children had experienced receiving sexual content.

Figure 9B. Experience in sexting through receiving sexual contents in view of sector
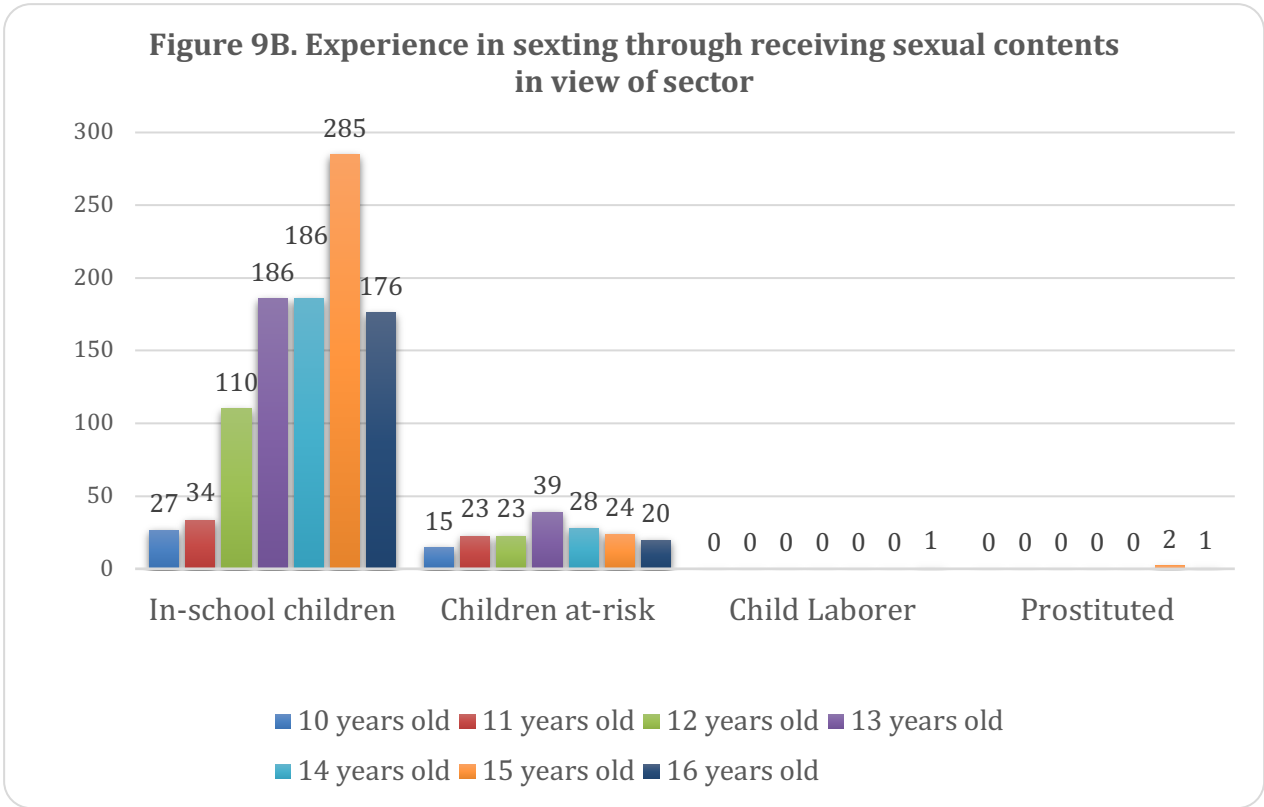
Reasons for Posting, Sending or Sharing Sexual Content

This research looked into the reasons of active sexters on posting, sending, or sharing of sexual content, through a pre-list of possible answers.

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents based on the following reasons: a) to flirt with someone online, b) many people do it, c) I consider it as a joke/just for fun, d) to prove that I love my partner, e) I was threatened/blackmailed, f) I was forced by the person I'm conversing with, g) I was forced by my friends, h) I felt attractive and my body needs to be shown off, i) I did it by accident, j) someone promised to give something in return, and k) because I'll receive cash or material things in return.

Among 10-year-olds, the reasons with greatest numbers were, "many people do it" and "I consider it as a joke/just for fun." For 11-year-olds, same reasons topped the chart, along with "I was threatened/blackmailed." On the other hand, "Many people do it" was still the top reason for 12-year-olds for posting, sending, sharing of sexual content, but the second top reason was "I was forced by my friends." Among respondents aged 13 years old, the major reasons were "I consider it as a joke/just for fun," "I did it by accident," and "I was threatened or blackmailed." The 14-year-olds' main reasons for actively sexting were "I consider it as a joke/just for fun" and "many people do it," but there were also those who did it by accident and were forced by their friends. The same is true among 15-year-olds, except for being forced by their friends. Among 16-year-olds who had experienced sexting through posting, sending, and sharing sexual content, it was the only age group in which the reason "to flirt with someone online" got the highest incidence, along with "I consider it as a joke/just for fun" and "I did it by accident."

These results show that many children engage in sexting because of risky behaviors such as doing it for fun/considering it as a joke, since many people do it, or because they want to flirt with someone online. These are reasons that they themselves could have easily avoided because there was no external pressure that pushed them to engage in sexting, unlike those whose reasons were, "I was threatened/blackmailed" or "I was forced by my friends."

Nevertheless, all these reasons, including "doing it by accident," can have serious repercussions and damage to the children who engage in sexting. As noted in the introduction of this research, sexting has psychological, behavioral, relational and systems-level outcomes, according to Doyle et al. The sexting may progress to more sexual activities, other risky behaviors, and perpetration of abuse and harassment. What can be worse is that the sexts, or sexual content sent through sexting, may be distributed publicly, with personal identifiers exposing who owned the sexual content. Same with what Delevi and Weisskirch claimed in their research among adolescents who engaged in sexting, the respondents who had engaged in sexting could tend to also engage in high-risk activities, such as engaging in anal or oral sex, having four (4) or more sexual partners, and not using contraceptives.

Table 1. Reasons of Respondents for Posting, Sending and Sharing Sexual Content Online

Age	10 years old	11 years old	12 years old	13 years old	14 years old	15 years old	16 years old
To flirt with someone online	2	3	9	10	13	24	**28**
Many people do it	**8**	**8**	**26**	14	**26**	**28**	16
I consider it as a joke/just for fun	**8**	**9**	15	**24**	**31**	**32**	**29**
To prove that I love my partner	1	2	7	7	13	16	8
I was threatened/blackmailed	2	**9**	12	**21**	12	8	13
I was forced by the person I'm conversing with	1	6	16	17	16	9	15
I was forced by my friends	2	6	**19**	14	**22**	14	12
I felt attractive and my body needs to be shown off	3	3	8	4	7	7	3
I did it by accident	4	4	12	**23**	**22**	**32**	**23**
Someone promised to give something in return	2	2	6	6	4	6	4
Because I'll receive cash or material thing in return	1	5	11	3	6	6	6
Not mentioned in the choices	2	2	8	3	10	4	5
Sub-total	**36**	**59**	**149**	**146**	**182**	**186**	**162**
Grand-total	**920**						

Meanwhile, the validation resulted in a mean score of 3.1, which means that the validation participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the results on the research respondents' reasons for engaging in sexting. Many of the validation participants disagreed that sexting can be done by accident, which pulled the mean score down. But there were also those who believed that the main reason for those who experienced sexting is because they were forced or threatened.

Some of them also agreed that some children engage in sexting just for fun or to prove that they love their partner.

B. Other Children's Experience on Sexting

Respondents' Awareness of Other Children's Participation in Sexting and Known Recipients of the Sexual Content

A total of 594 respondents claimed that they knew of another child who had experienced sexting, as shown in Figure 10. This figure also shows that most of them were females (327), but some were males (200) and LGBTQIA+ (34). One of the assumptions on this could be that children more often disclose to females, rather to other genders, their participation in sexting. In the meantime, Table 2 shows that, based on the respondents' knowledge, it is mostly the boyfriend or girlfriend who receives the sexual content in those sexting incidences of other children. On the other hand, some respondents answered that sexual content is also sent by those children to someone known only on the internet, or someone known in person.
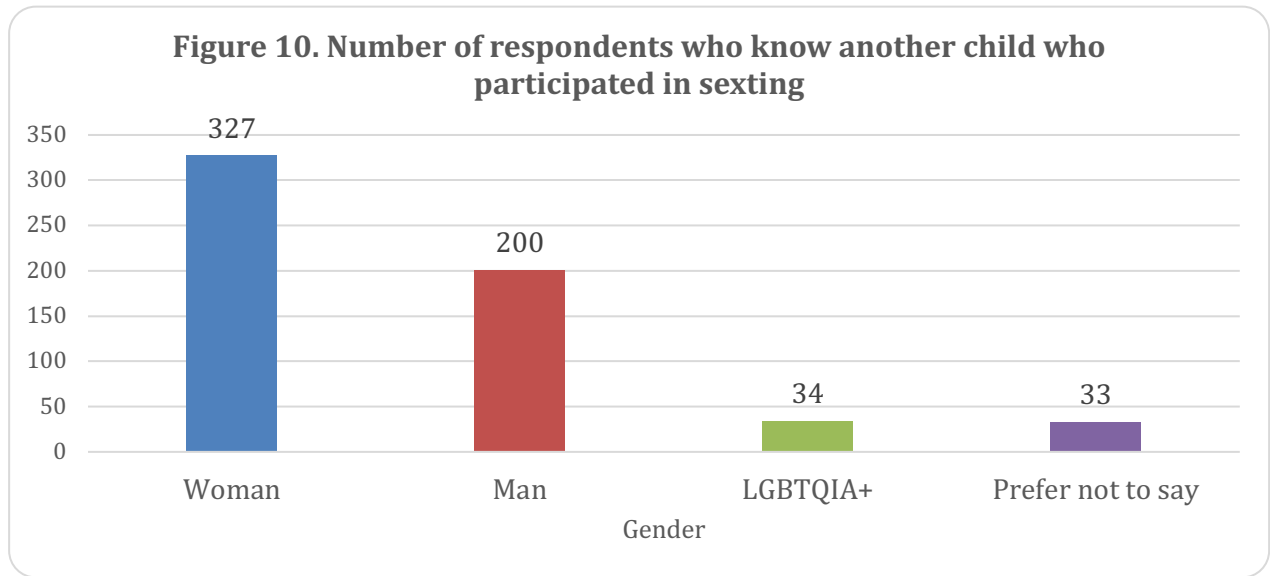

Figure 10. Number of respondents who know another child who participated in sexting

Table 2. Recipient of the Sexual Content in Another Child's Experience of Sexting

Recipient of the sexual content in another child's experience of sexting based on the knowledge of the respondents (with possible multiple answers per respondent)	boyfriend/ girlfriend	someone known in person	someone known only on the internet
Total Count	**162**	87	125

C. Respondent's Personal Experience on Sextortion

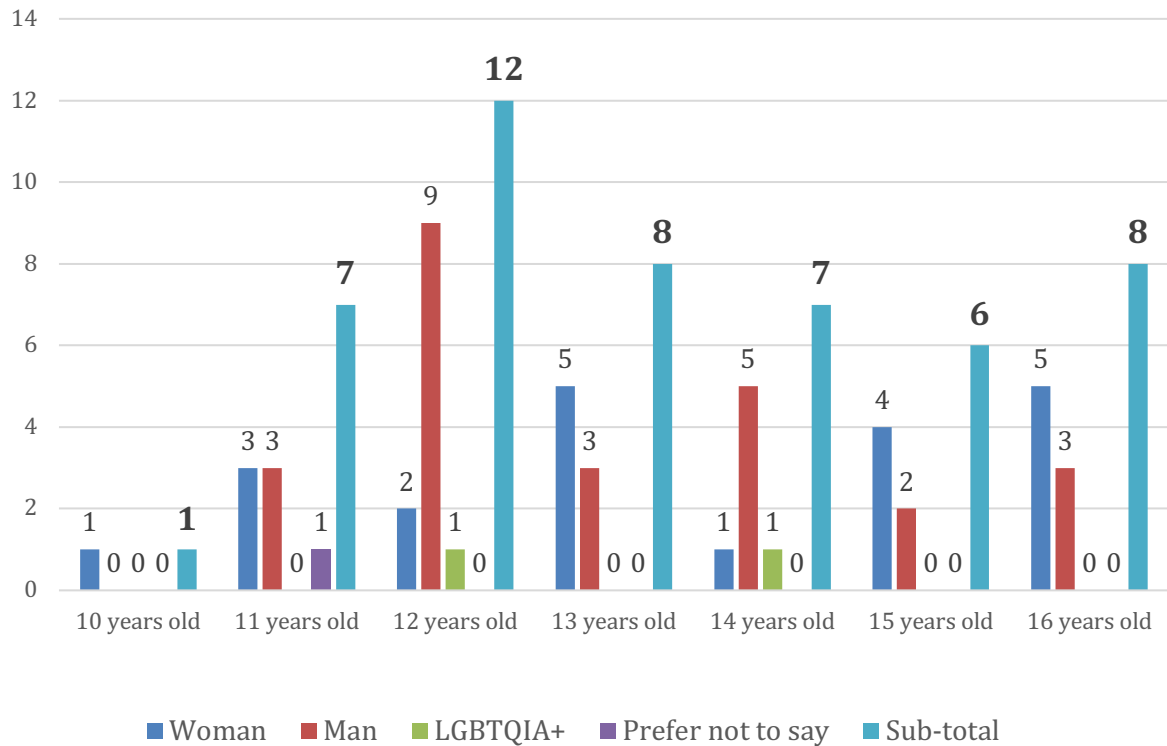### Experience of Being a Victim of Sextortion

This research defines **sextortion** as a form of grooming of a person, to lure the person to share a nearly nude/nude photo or video, which leads to further demands of sharing more sexual photos or videos, sending money, or in-person meet-ups, in exchange of not disseminating the sexual videos or photos initially sent by the victim.

Figure 11A shows that, out of the total research population (n=8,133), there were only 49 respondents who admitted to having had an experience of being a victim of sextortion. There were more 12-year-olds comprising this number (12), and majority of them identified as males. But for 13-year-olds and 16-year-olds, who had the same number of respondents (8) who admitted to having had an experience of being a victim of sextortion, majority for each were females. On the other hand, there was an equal number of males and females for the seven (7) 11-year-old victims of sextortion. With the same number of respondents who admitted to being threatened to have their sexual images exposed, there were more males among 14-year-old victims. There were more females in the six (6) victims aged 15 years old. There was also one (1) 10-year-old female respondent who admitted to having had an experience of being a victim of sextortion. There were only two (2) out of 49 victims of sextortion who identified as LGBTQIA+.

There is no significant trend that can be deduced on which age level sextortion incidences happen more often to, but data shows that sextortion is possible to happen across ages 10 to 16 years old, and to any gender – male, female, and LGBTQIA+.

Furthermore, the number of respondents who admitted to having had an experience in being a victim of sextortion was less than 1% of the total research population. Although this implies that sextortion is not rampant among children 10 to 16 years old, there is a possibility that the victims are ashamed of disclosing their experience. Moreover, there is a possibility that the children do not consider the incidence as sextortion when it was perpetrated by their own boyfriend/girlfriend. This assumption can be supported by Figure 12, below, which shows that it is mainly the boyfriend/girlfriend who threatened to expose the respondents' sexual content.

Figure 11A. Experience on being a victim of sextortion in view of age

Legend: Woman | Man | LGBTQIA+ | Prefer not to say | Sub-total

Meanwhile, there were no child laborers from the respondents who admitted to having had an experience in being a victim of sextortion. However, almost all prostituted child respondents admitted to having had an experience of it. This is illustrated in Figure 11B. On the other hand, 35 out of the 49 respondents who admitted to having been threatened of exposing their sexual content were in-school children. Among them, there were more 12-year-olds (9) followed by 11-year-olds (7) and then 16-year-olds (6). Children at-risk also have their own share of those who admitted to having had an experience of being a victim of sextortion. From this sector, there were three (3) respondents, each aged 12 years old and 13 years old. There were two (2) 14-year-olds, and one (1) each from 15-year-olds and 16-year-olds. With these data, although minimal, it can be shown that even in-school children, not just children at-risk or prostituted children, experience sextortion.

Figure 11B. Experience on being a victim of sextortion in view of sector

Legend: 10 years old | 11 years old | 12 years old | 13 years old | 14 years old | 15 years old | 16 years old
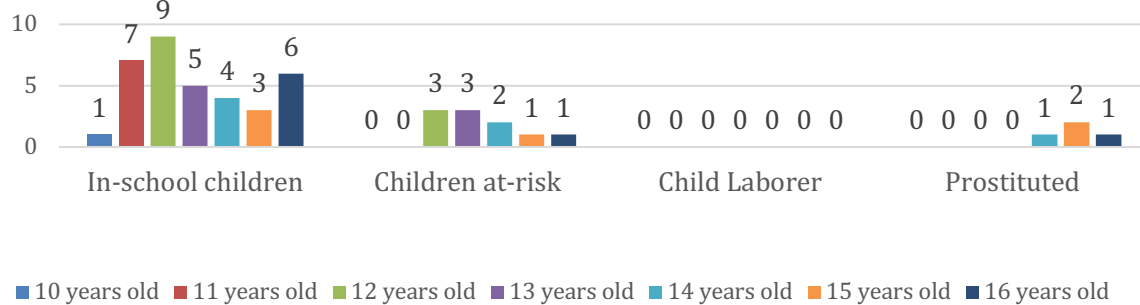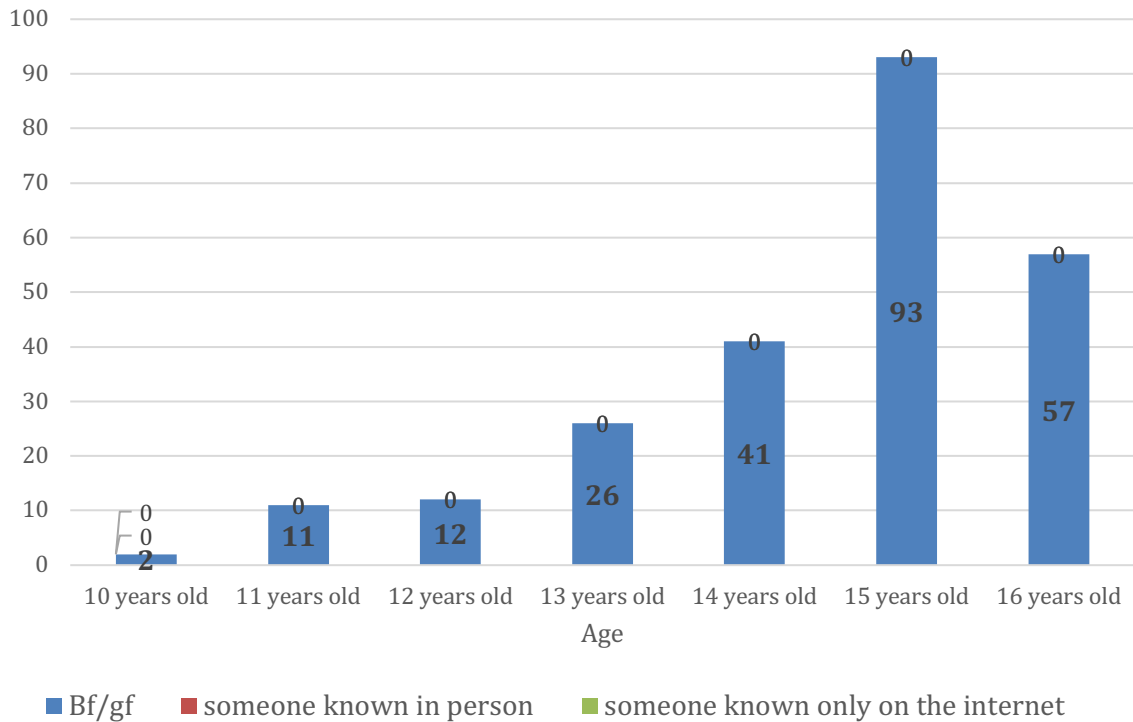
Figure 12. Individuals who threatened to expose respondents' sexual content

In the meantime, validation results in accuracy of data on the rate of sextortion incidence among 10- to 16-year-old children gained a mean score of 2.3, entailing that the validation participants mainly disagreed with the low incidence of sextortion among children, as shown in Figures 11A and 11B. Most of the validation participants reasoned that they disagree with the low incidence of sextortion among children because, based on their knowledge, there are more sextortion victims, but they are just ashamed or afraid to let others know about it. On the other hand, the mean score for data results on the individuals who threatened to expose respondents' sexual content, as shown in Figure 12, is 2.8. This means that validation participants were inclined to neither agree nor disagree that only boyfriends or girlfriends of the victims were threatening to expose respondents' sexual content. Some of them mentioned that some sextortion offenders are strangers, or those persons known only on the internet.

Demands of Sextortion Offenders to Victim

It can be seen in Figure 13A that, among 11-year-olds who had experienced being victims of sextortion, they had been demanded by the sextortion offenders to meet in person, or to give money to prevent the respondents' sexual content from being exposed. These are the same demands on 12-year-old victims, but adding to these are the demands to send more sexual content, or to create more sexual content online. The same demands were true for 13-year-old respondents, except for sending money, while for 14-year-old respondents, it is the same except for creating more sexual content online. For 15-year-olds, there were only two (2) identified demands by sextortion offenders to prevent the exposure of the victim's sexual content, which were to send more sexual content or to give money. Meanwhile, what was being demanded from 16-year-olds were to send more sexual content, to give money, or to meet in person.

To see a more significant trend across all ages, Figure 13B shows that the following are the more rampant demands of sextortion offenders on their victims: to send more sexual content, to give money, and to meet in person.

Figure 13A. Demands of sextortion offenders on victim in view of age

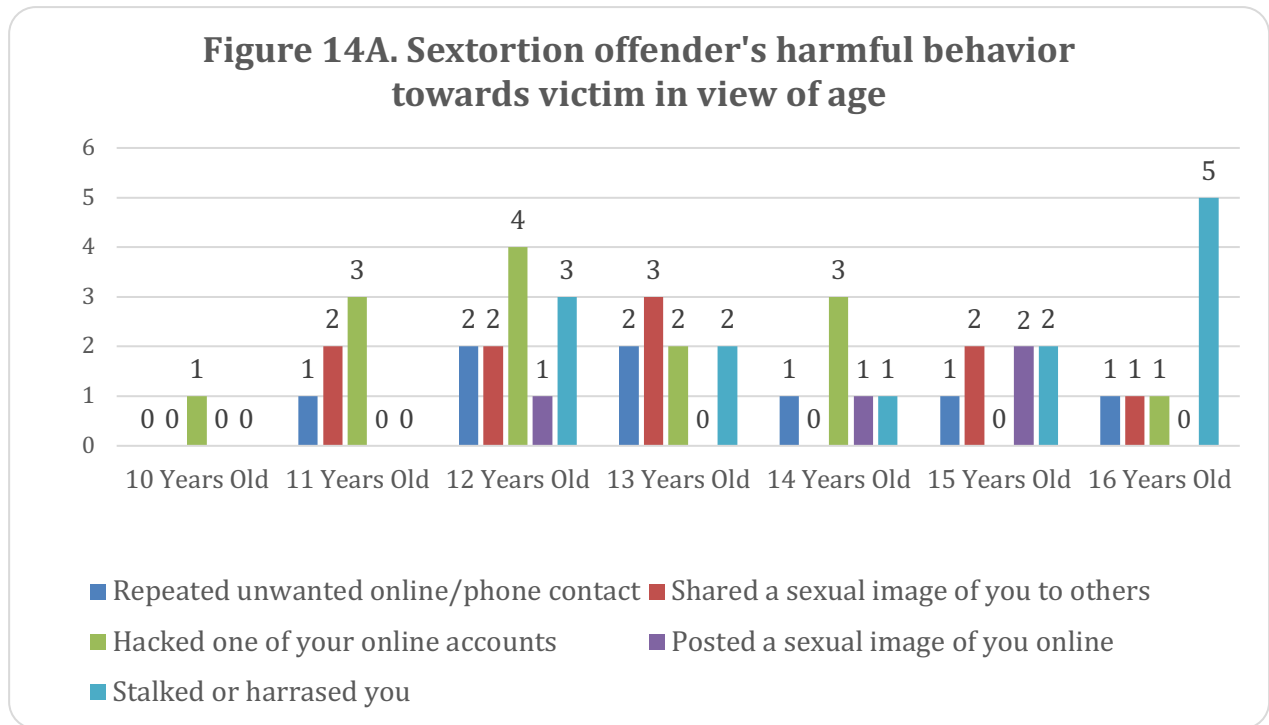## Figure 13B. Demands of sextortion offenders on victim
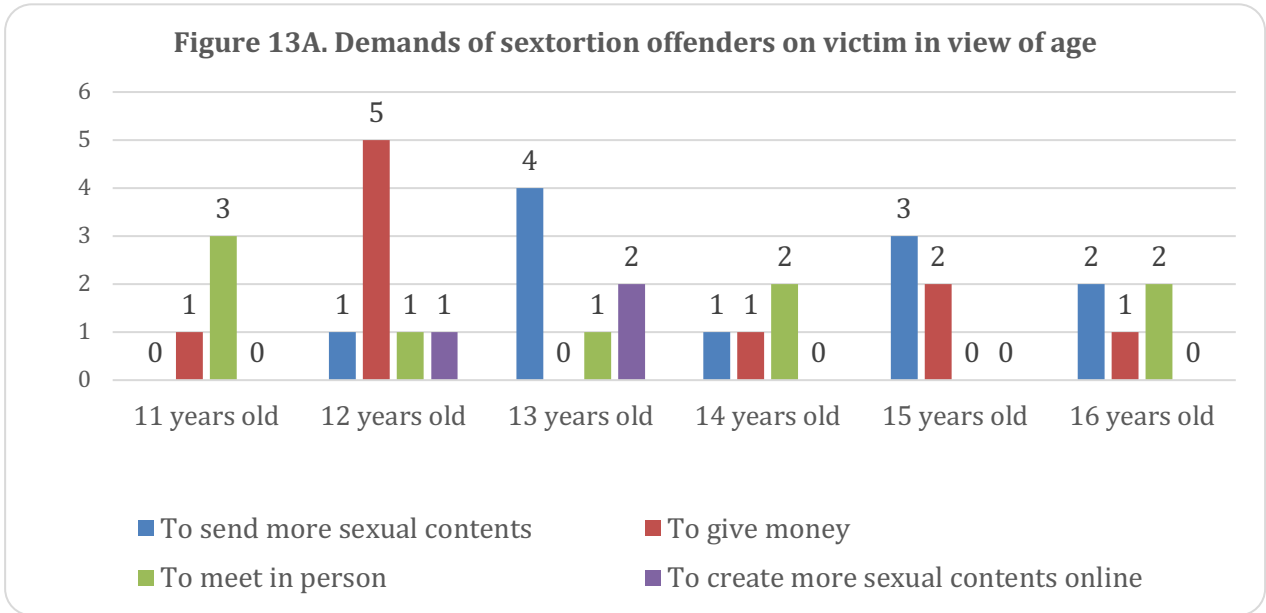
Meanwhile, the validation resulted in a mean score of 3.3 in terms of validation participants' perception of the accuracy of results about the demands of sextortion offenders on victims. Most of them think that there are more demands being asked by sextortion offenders, but they were not able to identify what those other demands may be.

Sextortion Offenders' Harmful Behavior towards Victims

In addition to the demands of the sextortion offenders towards the victims, offenders do more

harmful acts towards the victims, as shown in Figure 14A. The 10-year-old victim's online account was also hacked by the sextortion offender, besides the demand made by the offender, to prevent the exposure of the sexual images. For 11-year-olds, besides hacking their online account, the sextortion offender also tried to contact them online, or through phone, repeatedly, or the offender shared the sexual images with others. The same harmful behaviors were done to 12-year-old victims, in addition to the act of stalking or harassing the victim and posting the victim's sexual image online, exposing it to a wider network of people.

Exposing of sexual images online was not identified by 13-year-olds as one of the harmful behaviors of sextortion offenders towards them, but their sexual images were shared with others in another way. Also, sextortion offenders did the following to 13-year-old victims: repeated unwanted online/phone contact, hacking of online account, and stalking/harassing. These same things happened to the 14-year-old victims. In addition, their sexual images were posted online. The 15-year-old victims experienced all types of harmful behavior by the sextortion offender, except for hacking their online accounts. For 16-year-old victims, it was the same except for having their sexual image posted online by the sextortion offender.

Figure 14A. Sextortion offender's harmful behavior towards victim in view of age

Legend:
- Repeated unwanted online/phone contact
- Shared a sexual image of you to others
- Hacked one of your online accounts
- Posted a sexual image of you online
- Stalked or harrased you

In terms of the harmful behaviors of sextortion offenders on victims with different genders, the two (2) sextortion victims in Figure 11A who identified as LGBTQIA+ did not state that more harmful behaviors had been done to them. But for those who identified as female and male, they confirmed that all five (5) harmful behaviors had been done to them, but it was mostly the hacking of the victim's online account and stalking/harassing the victim, as shown in Figure 14B.

Figure 14B. Sextortion offender's harmful behavior towards victim in view of gender
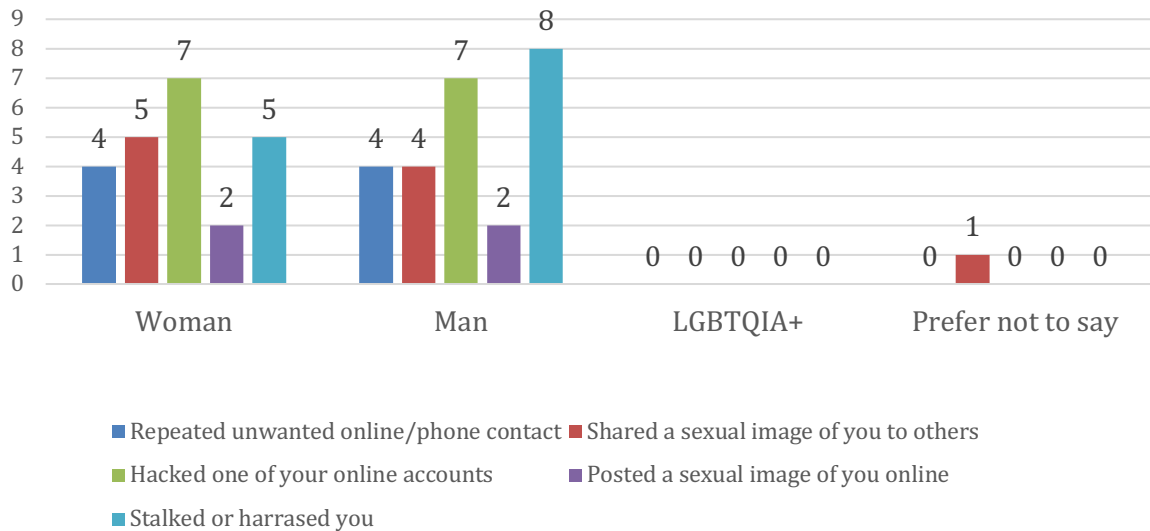
In the meantime, the mean score of rating during the validation on the accuracy of data about the harmful behavior of sextortion offenders on victims is 4. This means that validation participants were inclined to agree that the data results are accurate, specifically the hacking of the victim's account. But someone also added that sextortion offenders shared the sexual image of the victim specifically with the victim's family members to shame them.

With both the demands of the sextortion offenders, and the harmful behavior towards the victims, and bearing in mind that Figure 12 above shows that all the sextortion offenders of the victims in this research were their own boyfriends/girlfriends, it points out that it is crucial *not* to share sexual content with anyone, even with persons who one is in a romantic relationship with.

Incidence of Reporting the Sextortion and to Whom they Reported it

Out of the 49 respondents who admitted to having been victimized by sextortion, Figure 15A shows that only 23 of them were able to report to trusted persons. Six (6) respondents from the 23 came from 12-year-olds, while five (5) were 14-year-olds. All the rest of the 23 came from all other age levels, including 10 years old. It therefore shows that, regardless of the age, between 10 to 16 years old, children have the capacity to report the sextortion incidence to their trusted persons. However, the low incidence of reporting, in general, says that their capacity to report is not being maximized, and that something is hindering them from reporting.

Figure 15A. Number of respondents who were able to report the sextortion incidence to a trusted person (in view of age)
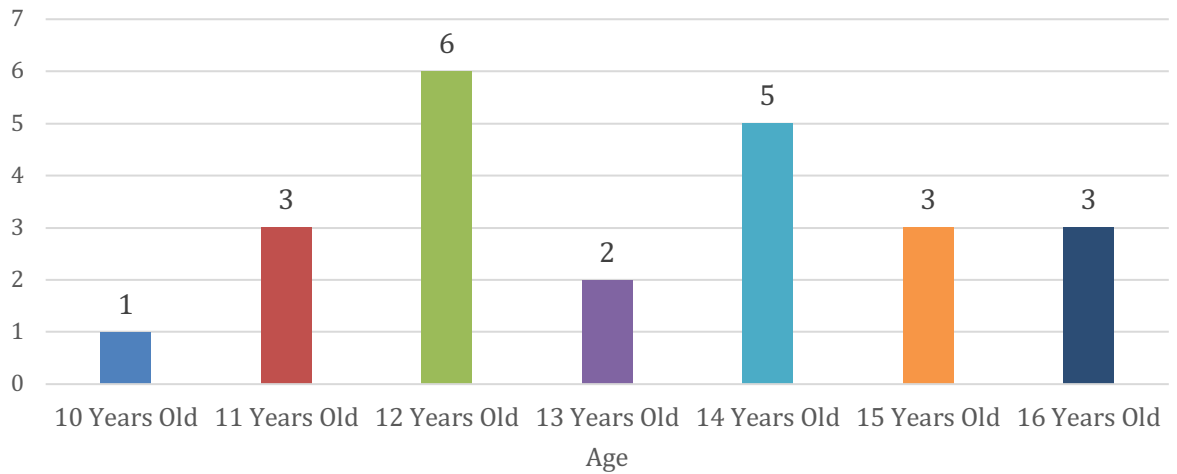
In terms of sector, Figure 15B shows that all four (4) prostituted children who had experienced sextortion were able to report the incidence to trusted persons. On the other hand, not even half of the 35 sextortion victims who were in-school, shown in Figure 11B, were able to report the sextortion incidence to trusted persons. Moreover, only half of the sextortion victims who were children at-risk were able to report the incidence. These support the finding that there is a low incidence of reporting among the research respondents who had become victims of sextortion.

Figure 15B. Number of respondents who was able to report the sextortion incidence to a trusted person (in view of sector)
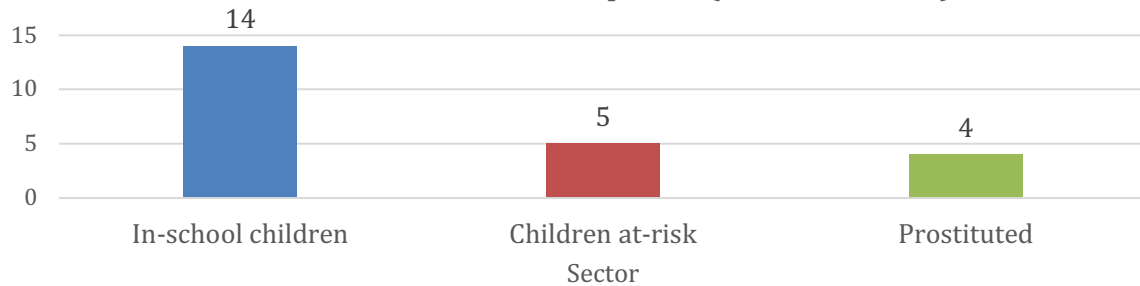
Table 3 shows that, of the 23 respondents who reported the sextortion incidence to trusted persons, there was almost an equal number of females (11) and males (12). Most of them had reported to their parents, and only one (1) respondent was able to report to the police. This further strengthens the finding that there is a low reporting incidence among sextortion victims, especially reporting to the authorities. Respondents were asked about their reason for not reporting the sextortion incidence, and the results are shown in Table 4. Most of them were afraid, but other reasons include they did not want to get involved, they did not want to get embarrassed or bullied, they were blackmailed or threatened not to report, they did not want to remember the incident, or they were thinking they might not be believed.

Table 3 Number of Respondents Who were Able to Report the Sextortion Incidence to a Trusted person (in View of Gender) and to whom They Reported it

Gender	Number of respondents who were able to report the sextortion incidence to a trusted person	To whom the respondents reported	
		Parents	Police
Woman	11	4	0
Man	12	4	1
LGBTQIA+	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0	0

Table 4. Reasons for Not Reporting Sextortion

Reasons	Count
I'm afraid	9
I did not want to get involved	1
I did not want to get embarrassed or bullied	1
I was blackmailed	1
I was threatened	1
I did not want to remember what happened	1
They might not believe the reason why I did it	1

Meanwhile, the validation resulted in a mean score of 3.4, entailing that the validation participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the accuracy of data on the number of respondents who were able to report the sextortion incidence to a trusted person.

Many pointed out that victims do not report because of shame or fear of being judged. They also believed that victims are being threatened by the sextortion offenders to not report the incidence. This is in line with the validation result on the accuracy of data, in terms of the reason of victims for not reporting, which gained a 4.1 mean score. Many validation participants mentioned that victims are being blackmailed or threatened by the sextortion offender, so as not to report the sextortion incidence. They also thought that victims are just afraid for other people to know that they fell victim to sextortion, or they are afraid of what will happen to their families after reporting.

Actions Respondents Took to Prevent Sextortion

Some of the respondents took measures to prevent the sextortion incidence from progressing, which is consolidated in Table 5. The action that was taken most often was to stop chatting or going online, and then blocking the sextortion offender. Some also either *unfriended* the offender or avoided the offender. Other actions include having the offender imprisoned, telling everyone that boys are liars, doing what is right, stop chatting with strangers, reporting to someone, not agreeing with the offender, reporting the offender to their parents, breaking up with the offender, and reporting to the police. It shows that some of the victims knew of actions to prevent sextortion, but this did not decrease the need to educate them on never engaging with anyone to share sexual

content and on protecting themselves from sextortion.

Table 5. Actions Respondents Took to Prevent Sextortion

Actions	Count
Stopped chatting/going online	9
I blocked them	5
Unfriended them	2
I avoided them	2
Get them imprisoned	1
Told everyone that boys are liars	1
Do what is right	1
Stopped chatting with strangers	1
I reported to someone	1
I did not agree	1
Reported them to their parents	1
Broke up with him/her	1
Reported to the police	1

Meanwhile, the validation resulted in a mean score of 4 for the perception of validation participants on the accuracy of data, in terms of the actions respondents took to prevent sextortion. In addition to this, the validation participants thought that the following were the data results most necessary for the government or authorities to know, to help them act against sexting and sextortion: reasons for engaging in sexting, number of sextortion victims, who the sextortion offender/s is/are according to the victims, and the victims' reasons for not reporting.

D. Other Children's Experience on Sextortion

Knowledge of a Child Being a Victim of Sextortion

The respondents were also asked whether they knew of another child who was a victim of

sextortion. Out of the total research population (n=8,133), there were 157 respondents who claimed to know of another child as a victim of sextortion (see Table 6). This may entail that, beyond the coverage of this research, there is a possibility that sextortion is happening among the peers of the respondents.

Table 6. Respondents' Knowledge of Another Child Being a Victim of Sextortion

With or Without Knowledge of a Child Victim	Count
With knowledge of a child victim	157
Without knowledge of a child victim	7976
Total	**8133**

Individuals who Threatened to Expose Another Child Victim's Sexual Content

Unlike in Figure 12, which shows that it was mainly the boyfriend/girlfriend of the respondent who threatened to expose his/her sexual content, Figure 16 documents that, for other victims, the one who mainly threatened to expose sexual content of the victim was someone they knew in person, other than their boyfriend/girlfriend.

There were also respondents who answered that the individuals who threatened to expose another child victim's sexual content were only known by the victim on the internet. This poses a greater risk for the victims, since they are unaware of the real identity of the other person, which makes it more difficult to apprehend or penalize them, or even prevent them from sharing the sexual content of the child. This is especially because   the sextortion offenders demand from the victims that the victims send more sexual content, give money, meet in person, or create more sexual content online, as consolidated in Table 7.

Furthermore, respondents revealed that, based on their knowledge, the sextortion offenders did further harmful actions towards the child victims, such as repeated unwanted online/phone contact with the child, sharing of sexual image of the child with others, hacking the child's online accounts, posting the sexual images of the child online, and stalking/harassing the child (see Table 8).

Although half of the sextortion incidences against another child known to the respondents were reported, there was still quite a number of incidences which were not reported (see Table 9). This again supports the data above that there is a low reporting incidence among sextortion victims. This needs to be addressed.

Table 7. Demands of Sextortion Offenders on Another Child Victim Known to the Respondents

Demands	Count
To send more sexual content	16
To give money	21
To meet in person	16
To create more sexual content online	4
Nothing	54
Other	0

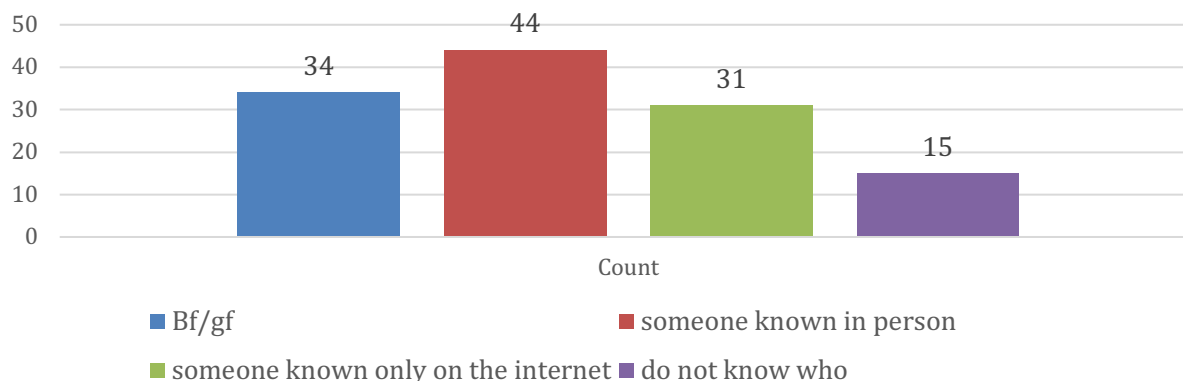Figure 16. Individuals who Threatened to Expose Another Child Victim's Sexual Content

Legend:
- Bf/gf
- someone known in person
- someone known only on the internet
- do not know who

Table 8. Sextortion Offenders' Harmful Behavior towards Another Child Victim Known to the Respondents

Harmful Behavior	Count
Repeated unwanted online/phone contact	33
Shared a sexual image of the child with others	22
Hacked the child's online accounts	20
Posted a sexual image of the child online	13
Stalked or harassed the child	23

Table 9. Reporting of the Incidence of Sextortion against a Child Victim Known to the Respondents

Action	Count
Reported	75
Not Reported	67

IV. SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

This research found out that there is approximately 1 in 5 children in the Philippines who has experienced sexting. Moreover, results suggest that 1 in 2 children who has experienced sexting is a girl, while approximately 2 in 5 children who have experienced sexting is a boy.

But it is important to highlight that the research results also show that sexting happens among females, males, and even LGBTQIA+. This calls for intervention against sexting for all children, regardless of gender.

Furthermore, the validation results with selected respondents conclude that there are more children who experience sexting than what the research was able to capture, but the children are just afraid to disclose it.

In view of age, sexting incidences spike in 15-year-olds, may it be active or passive sexting. But data shows that children as young as 10 years old are exposed to sending or receiving sexual content, online or offline.

Furthermore, it needs to be emphasized that children aged 10 years old and up, until 16 years old, are not just on the receiving end of sexting, but are also actively sending sexts. This further emphasizes the need to educate children as young as 10 years old on the negative effects of sexting, for both the receivers and the senders.

In addition to these, this research found out that in all four (4) sectors, active sexting incidence, through sharing of sexual content online/offline, is visible among children considered in need of special protection, and among in-school children. Data suggests that being in-school does not excuse a child from doing active sexting, so interventions should not only concentrate on community children, and the sector of children considered to be more vulnerable but should also consider collaborating with schools to prevent incidences of sexting. This is most especially because, in the research, only in-school respondents had an experience on sexting through online posting or streaming of sexual content.

Although the level of access to the internet, amongst the respondents, was not established in this research, one factor that is assumed to have contributed to this is the greater access to internet amongst in-school children who are now required to surf the internet for schooling purposes. Future researchers may look into the relationship of *sexting incidence* with *access to internet*.

Contrary to what is expected, more females are doing active sexting than males. This means that females are sending sexts more than males. But more females are also at the receiving end of sexting. However, this does not undermine that this research collected data that shows that males and LGBTQIA+ also experience being at the receiving end of sexual content. It is encouraged that all children, regardless of whether they identify as male, female or LGBTQIA+, be educated on how to protect themselves against sexting.

Educating all children on how to protect themselves against sexting is deemed crucial. In addition, educating all children on the repercussions of sexting, is also crucial, especially since research results found out that children engage in sexting because of reasons that they themselves can easily avoid, such as doing sexting for fun or considering it as a joke, doing it since many people

do it too or doing it to flirt with someone online. These are not forced by an external pressure to engage in sexting and are therefore deemed as risky behaviors.

However, there are also respondents who engaged in sexting because they were threatened or blackmailed by someone, or because they were forced by their friends. Some also did it by accident. But all these can have serious repercussions and damage to children who engage in sexting, such as progressing to more sexual activities or risky behaviors, perpetration of abuse and harassment, and negative public exposure further leading to psychological, behavioral, and relational negative impacts.

Meanwhile, this research found no significant trend that can be deduced about which age level sextortion incidences happen more often in, but data shows that sextortion is possible to happen across ages 10 to 16 years old, and to any gender – male, female, or LGBTQIA+. Thus, protection of children against sextortion should cover children as young as 10 years old, regardless of gender or even sector.

Although the research results on sextortion incidences are minimal, the results emphasize that in-school children, children at-risk, and prostituted children are all targeted by sextortion offenders.

Moreover, even though the research results implied that sextortion is not rampant among children 10 to 16 years old, there is a possibility that the victims are ashamed of disclosing their experience or are not considering the incidence as sextortion when it was perpetrated by their own boyfriend or girlfriend. This is supported by the validation results that point to a greater incidence of sextortion among children, but that children are just ashamed or afraid to let others know about it.

Further research can look into this deeper, but these initial findings entail that children should be educated on the importance of reporting the sextortion incidence to trusted persons or to the authorities, in order to put a stop to it. Furthermore, the stigma and discrimination against the victims of sextortion should be addressed to free the victims from feeling ashamed, thus, encouraging greater reporting.

Sextortion offenders demand more things from their victims, in exchange for not exposing the sexual content of the victim that they have managed to get hold of. These additional demands are the following: to send more sexual content, to give money, and to meet in person. This modus operandi of the sextortion offender traps the victim in a cycle of giving in to whatever the offender wants, for the offender not to expose the sexual content of the victim. To add to this, all sextortion offenders of the victims in this research were their own boyfriends/girlfriends. However, validation results point that, beyond romantic partners, sextortion offenders also include strangers, or those only known on the internet. This further emphasizes the need to educate all children on how crucial it is to not share sexual content to anyone, even to persons that they are in a romantic relationship with, most especially because sextortion offenders are found to do further harmful behaviors against the victims, such as hacking their online accounts or stalking/harassing them.

To emphasize further, it is crucial to educate children on the importance of reporting the sextortion incidence. Research results show that less than half of the victims were able to report to trusted persons about the sextortion incidence. All prostituted children were able to report it to trusted persons, but there is a low incidence of reporting among in-school children and children at-risk.

It is good for future research to dig deeper into the factors that affect the high reporting incidence among prostituted children, and the low-level reporting among in-school and children at-risk. On the other hand, data also points out that whatever their age is, between 10 to 16 years old, children have the capacity to report the sextortion incidence, but it is not being maximized, or something is hindering them from reporting.

Answers of respondents, on their reason for not reporting, showed that most of them were afraid to report. Some did not want to get more involved, did not want to get embarrassed or bullied, or did not want to remember the incident. Some also thought they might not be believed when they report, but some were threatened not to report. Some of these reasons point out to a perceived unsafe space for reporting, since victims fear disclosing it, and they think they might get bullied or discriminated. This calls for establishing a safe space for children to report, and breaking the stigma towards children who fall victim to sextortion. It emphasizes the need to shift the blame from the victim to the offender. It needs to be inculcated, both in the parents/caregivers/duty bearers and the children, that the children are not to be blamed for what happened. But, at the same time, children should be educated that they need to practice more caution when interacting with people, even with their significant others, to avoid falling victim to sextortion. Moreover, it is crucial to increase help-seeking behavior in children, while increasing the trustworthiness of service providers/duty bearers in apprehending and penalizing offenders.

On the other hand, some of the victims did some actions to prevent the sextortion from progressing, such as stopping from chatting or from going online, blocking the sextortion offender, *unfriending* or avoiding the offender, having the offender imprisoned, stopping from chatting with strangers, and reporting to someone, such as the offender's parents or the police.

The importance of these actions needs to be stressed, but prevention is most effective when potential sextortion offenders are not given the upper hand of getting hold of a child's sexual content. This can be done by reinforcing the knowledge of children regarding the vital practice of *never* engaging with anyone to share sexual content, no matter what their relationship is.

In addition to this, the validation participants thought that the following are the data results most necessary for the government or authorities to know, to help them act against sexting and sextortion: reasons for engaging in sexting, number of sextortion victims, who the sextortion offenders is/are according to the victims, and the victims' reasons for not reporting.

Overall, these findings have implications for 1) improving the quality of service on receiving reports from children, and the apprehension of offenders, 2) establishing a safe space for children to report sexting and sextortion concerns, and breaking the stigma towards the victims, 3) increasing the knowledge and behavior of children on help-seeking and self-protection, 4) working with different stakeholders, like schools and the community, to increase awareness on sexting and sextortion, its effects, and the available reporting mechanisms, and 5) building on these data for future researches.