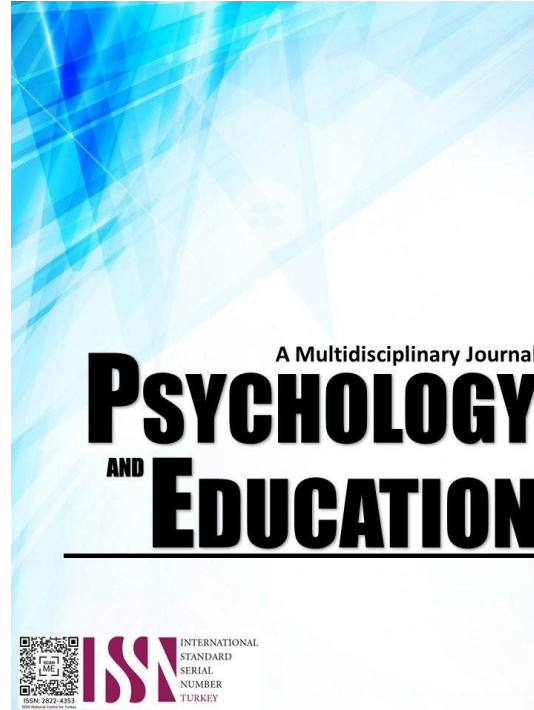


# TRIGGERS OF EARLY SEXUAL INITIATION AMONG ADOLESCENTS



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## Triggers of Early Sexual Initiation Among Adolescents

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### Abstract

This study utilized the phenomenological research design to understand the triggers of early sexual initiation among adolescents. Results of this study could have schools and other agencies make and carry out policies to gradually reduce the unfavorable consequences of early sexual initiation. The participants purposefully selected for this study were six Male/Female, aged 18-21 years old, adolescents who have had their first sexual experience below age 18, and currently enrolled in School 1, JHS of SY 2022-2023. Colaizzi's seven steps of phenomenological approach were utilized. Findings conclude that the triggers of the participants to engage in early sexual initiation are Broken/Dysfunctional Family, Poor Parental Monitoring/ Lack of Parental Support, Lack of Sex Education, Exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials in social media, Peer Pressure, Alcohol Consumption, Smoking and use of Illicit Substances, High Level of Intimacy and Satisfy Curiosity. Early sexual initiation is more likely to occur in adolescents who come from broken or dysfunctional families, who are not well-monitored by their parents, and who lack parental support. Male adolescents are more likely to experience an intense peer pressure, while females have a strong feeling of trust and love for one's partner as the reason for their early sexual initiation. Exposure to sexually explicit materials and alcohol consumption, smoking, and use of illicit substances also increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging early in sex. On top of these, having the urgent need to satisfy their curiosity may also lead them to engage early in sex. Messages of these participants to their peers on taking care of their well-being are Live a Happy Life, Break Bad Habits, Finish School, and Be Sexually Responsible. This suggests the importance of teaching positive emotions, which help adolescents to think and solve problems better, reducing their risks of being involved in risky sexual behaviors. Thinking and solving problems better, would more likely break bad habits of adolescents, finish school and be sexually responsible.

**Keywords:** *sexual triggers, adolescents, sexually responsible, lack parental support, curiosity*

### Introduction

Early sexual initiation leads adolescents to many health problems and psychosocial problems. It exposes them to unwanted pregnancy and risky sexual behaviors such as having multiple sexual partners, which might also place them at increased risk of having sexually-transmitted diseases (STIs) and HIV/AIDS and psychosocial problems later on.

The investigator is a nurse and teacher in the Public School, specifically in the Junior High School, working for almost six years, have been exposed to diverse groups of adolescents with different ages, gender, and family backgrounds. Since the investigator spends most of her time in school, the investigator has observed that some students are sexually preoccupied. When students see objects presented during the lessons resembling sexual organs or sexual activities, the students would start to giggle. And because teachers and their students could use the social media platform strictly for school-related matters only through creating group chats, which also led them to be friends on social media (Malipot, 2022), the teachers couldn't avoid but have a glimpse of their students' current status in life. The investigator has a few of her students whom she no longer handled, as the students were promoted already to the next grade level, are now

teenage mothers. The investigator also heard few have dropped out of school because of unwanted pregnancies. These problems put the adolescents' health and well-being at stake.

One notable research identified that peer pressure, not attending religious gatherings smoking cigarettes, being exposed to pornography, and poor parental monitoring were significantly linked with early sexual initiation (Kassahun et al., 2019). Another study also identified that belonging to a broken family, a high level of love/intimacy and trust in one's partner, peer pressure, neglected religious norms/rituals, detrimental effects of pornography, and availability of space were the common causes of sexual engagement (Cordero, 2018). But to understand why adolescents engage in early sexual initiation, whether to accept or reject their claims, let these judgments be set aside and explore further into the personal experiences of these adolescents. Knowing their testimonies will help determine the root causes of their early sexual initiation. Whatever the adolescents' choices and decisions are can impact what they could be in the future.

Unfortunately, there has been only limited data on the triggers of early sexual initiation among adolescents,



particularly in Cagayan de Oro City. Therefore, this study would help in identifying and understanding the triggers of early sexual initiation among adolescents. Schools and other agencies can make and carry out policies to gradually reduce the unfavorable consequences of early sexual initiation.

### Research Questions

This study aims to determine the Triggers of Early Sexual Initiation among adolescents in the Junior High School of School 1 (S.Y. 2022-2023), Cagayan de Oro City. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the triggers of the participants to engage in early sexual initiation?
2. What is your message to your peers on taking care of their well-being?

### Methodology

This section presents the methods used in the study. It also describes the study's participants, the instruments used, and the data collection process.

This study identified the triggers of Early Sexual Initiation among adolescents in the Junior High School of School 1 (S.Y. 2022-2023), Cagayan de Oro City.

### Research Setting

School 1 is a public school run by the Cagayan de Oro City Department of Education Division located in Cagayan de Oro City. The school has 3,881 enrolled learners in the Junior High School for S.Y.: 2022-2023.

School 1 has a guidance counselor who offers some services, such as counseling and referrals, that assist students' academic and personal needs. One of its services is to conduct individual and group counseling. In individual counseling, a student is assessed based on its academic achievement and personal, mental, and psychosocial aspects, while in group counseling, it deals with groups of students who have the same problem and who require the same interventions. The guidance counselor also has a referral system. If students experience problems, they are assessed thoroughly at the school and then referred to other agencies. For instance, if students experience psychosocial problems such as depression and may exhibit suicidal tendencies, they are referred to the city

psychosocial division of the City Social Welfare and Development, and if students get pregnant, they are assessed in the school and referred to the nearest barangay health center for further assessment and guidance. The school is part of the barangay child protection committee, and whatever problems the students have, the school and the barangay work hand in hand to ensure the students' welfare.

Every academic school year, all students are required to answer a health assessment tool named HEEADSSS, which aims to assess adolescents in the aspects of home, education, eating, activities, drugs and depression, sexuality, suicide, and safety. Those students who answered that they are pregnant and are sexually active are being confirmed by the guidance counselor, and actions are being taken based on their situation.

The school also has a functional school-based teen center, where students who are assessed to have psychosocial problems are referred. Students who have psychosocial problems undergo art therapy, and the results of such therapies are assessed again by the guidance counselor. Students who are pregnant are also referred to the teen center, assessed by the teacher-in-charge, and then referred to the barangay health center.

A symposium on adolescent reproductive health was conducted for parents during the General Parents-Teachers Association Assembly, and the same symposium was also conducted for all students by grade level from Grades 7-10 during the first few weeks of class.

### Research Design

This study utilized the phenomenological research design to learn more about people's lived experiences. Phenomenological research, also known as the study of phenomena, is a qualitative research approach that investigates the everyday experiences of human beings ("What is Phenomenological Research?", 2022). Investigation was done by exploring the individual narratives of people's experiences, feelings, and perceptions and producing in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon while setting aside the preconceived assumptions of the investigator to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon (Ho & Limpaecher, 2022; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Because experiences are subjective and unique to each adolescent, their experiences essentially contribute to the descriptions of the phenomenon.

According to Hycner (1985, p. 294), as cited by

Johnson (2020), “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants.” Therefore, participants were selected based on the purposive sampling method and were identified based on the investigator’s judgment and the purpose of the research.

The investigator coordinated with the designated school head and the teachers for the data gathering of the potential participants. Consent of the participant was obtained before the endorsement, and the informed consent form was signed by the participant and the participant’s parent, legal guardian, or any other person validly exercising parental authority before the interview. The informed consent has emphasized the purpose of the research, voluntary participation, procedure, duration, risks, benefits, reimbursements, confidentiality, sharing of the results, right to refuse or withdraw, and whom to contact in case of adverse effects experienced as a result of participating in the study.

The investigator sought to develop a deep understanding of the poorly understood phenomenon as the participants experienced the phenomenon (Cypress, 2019, as cited by Johnson, 2020). Thus, the investigator collected the data using the face-to-face, in-depth interview technique among adolescents (18-21 years old) from Grades 7-10 in the Junior High School to unearth the triggers of early sexual initiation. The investigator used a set of open-ended questions to guide the interview sessions. The interview lasted about 30-45 minutes, but participants were welcome to take rest breaks. It started with six (6) participants until the data necessary was saturated.

The interview was recorded and stored securely, used only by the investigator, and was erased after two months. Participants’ answers to questions during the interview were transcribed into the Visayan dialect and were then translated into the English language.

Phenomenology as a methodology requires that the investigator align the methods of data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings with phenomenological assumptions (Matua, 2015, as cited by Straughn, 2017). Exploring a human phenomenon also required the suspension of all preconceived judgments to allow the phenomenon to emerge (Husserl, 1913/1982, as cited by Straughn, 2017).

Descriptive phenomenology has four (4) steps such as bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing. Bracketing required the suspension of preconceived beliefs and opinions of the phenomena. Intuiting was when the investigator was open to the meanings

associated with the phenomena by those who had experienced it. Analysis was done by extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, and organizing formulated meanings into clusters and themes by utilizing the steps of Colaizzi’s Phenomenological Data Analysis. Lastly, the investigator came to understand and describe the phenomenon (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2022). In doing so, the investigator sought to identify and understand the triggers of early sexual initiation among adolescents.

### Participants and Sampling Procedure

The stratified population of enrolled learners from Grades 7-10 in School 1 is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *The stratified population of enrolled learners for S.Y.: 2022-2023*

Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Male: 486	Male: 534	Male: 528	Male: 470
Female: 421	Female: 469	Female: 476	Female: 497
Total: 907	Total: 1003	Total: 1004	Total: 967

This study’s target population was adolescents aged 18-21 from Grades 7-10 in the Junior High School of School 1 School Year 2022-2023. A sample is a finite part or subset of participants drawn from the target population (Mesa et al., 2016). Participants were selected based on the purposive sampling method and were identified based on the investigator’s judgment and the purpose of the research. Purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups that were knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Clark, 2018, as cited by Meyers, 2019).

The participants who were purposefully selected for this study were recruited based on the following set of criteria: Male/Female, aged 18-21 years old, adolescents who have had their first sexual experience under the age of 18, and currently enrolled in the Junior High School of School 1 School Year: 2022-2023.

Moreover, participants were selected for this study because participants had experienced that gave information-rich answers to the phenomenon of interest. To achieve credibility, the study had sufficient participants to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Several sources suggest different sample sizes for phenomenological research, but in reality, a sample of



between 6 and 20 individuals was sufficient (Ellis, 2016a, as cited by Ellis, 2016b). The investigator began with six (6) participants until data or saturation was achieved. Data saturation was the study's point when it became apparent that no new themes emerged (Saunders et al., 2017, as cited by Johnson, 2020).

### Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

In qualitative research, credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and (d) confirmability (objectivity) were the four general criteria in the approach to trustworthiness of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited by Stumpfeffer, 2017).

Credibility refers to the truth in research findings with reality. A few of the methods to ensure the credibility of the study were triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Specifically, theoretical triangulation used multiple theoretical perspectives to analyze the data. Member checking, on the other hand, where results and findings were returned to the participants for consistency and accuracy and reviewed if the participants' information was understood clearly by the investigator to ensure the validity of the findings. Peer debriefing was also utilized by using a peer who had no personal interest in the study but who was knowledgeable in research and had conducted qualitative research to review and examine the results and findings (Stahl & King, 2020). Credibility is also the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Interview questions were meticulously examined by the investigator and were then evaluated by the experts. The gathered data were checked and verified by the research adviser of the study.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research findings apply from one context to another. Transferability also corresponds to external validity. It was enhanced when there was a thick description that included contextual information on the topic under study (Stahl & King, 2020).

Lincoln & Guba (1985), as cited by Stahl & King (2020), defined dependability as the trust in trustworthiness. Peer debriefing was one of the ways to create trust. Thus, the investigator utilized this through using a peer who was outside of the study to examine and evaluate the results and findings. According to, Stumpfeffer (2017), dependability aimed to replace reliability, which required that when replicating experiments, the same results should be achieved.

Confirmability refers to the aspect of neutrality. Specifically, in establishing that data and interpretations of the findings were free of bias and were accurately derived from the data. One of the ways to do this was to conduct an audit trail. The investigator utilized the audit trail through transparency of the research process from the research development through reporting of the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

### Data Gathering Procedure

The investigator sought approval from the thesis adviser and the dean of the University for the proposal of the study and accomplished the Research Ethics Form to ensure that the study supported values such as mutual respect and fairness. The investigator sent a letter to the Schools Division Superintendent through the School's Principal to ask permission to conduct the study.

The semi-structured interview guide questions were reviewed by a research expert. They were validated and certified by a registered guidance counselor and registered psychometrician to ensure the appropriateness of the tool used in the study. The investigator was also reoriented by a registered guidance counselor and registered psychometrician on the proper conduct of the in-depth interview to retrieve genuine answers from the participants. Once approval to begin the study was granted, the investigator then sought help from the teachers to identify potential participants for the study, rest assured that whatever information collected during the data gathering and endorsement was held confidential.

Participants were then recruited based on criteria such as male/female, aged 18-21 years old, and adolescents who have had their first sexual experience under the age of 18 and are currently enrolled in the Junior High School of School 1 School Year: 2022-2023. While ineligible participants were those in the same-sex relationship, aged below 18 years old and aged above 21 years old, who had their first sexual experience at the age of 18 years old and above, those who were in Senior High School and those who were no longer in school or have dropped out of school. It started with six (6) participants until the data necessary was saturated.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from this study at any time for any reason without penalty. However, if the interview had already taken place, they may request that the information they provided may not be



used in the study.

Participants were scheduled for interviews based on their free time to avoid interruption of classes. Participants were asked to answer questions regarding the age at that they had their first sexual relationship, the relationship they had with their parents, if they had in any way tried drinking alcoholic beverages, smoking cigarettes, and using illicit substances, the role of the media on their sexual behavior and the influences of their peers and other factors on their early sexual engagement. They were also free to decline to answer any particular question they did not wish to answer for any reason. They were given the right to review their answers during the interview and erase any part of the recording that they may find uncomfortable sharing.

The interview was conducted in a private, quiet, enclosed room free of noise or any distractions no one else but the interviewer was present unless they requested someone else to be there. However, they were free to choose anywhere in the public place they were comfortable with, such as a café, where privacy was the utmost priority. The interview lasted about 30-45 minutes, but they could take rest breaks as needed. However, follow-up questions may be necessary during the whole period of the study between March to April 2023. After data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews, the responses of the participants were recorded through audio recording. They were later transcribed verbatim and afterward translated into the English language.

There were no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Since sexual experience was sensitive, the participants might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed with the questions that were too personal. However, they were free to decline to answer any question they didn't wish to answer for any reason.

Their participation in this study helped in identifying and understanding the triggers of early sexual initiation. Schools and other agencies can make and carry out policies to gradually reduce the unfavorable consequences of early sexual initiation. No further benefits had been made to encourage them to participate.

This study was funded solely by the investigator and had no known conflict of interest to any individuals or anyone in institutions on the study's outcome.

The participants' participation in this study was

completely voluntary, and they would not receive any payments for expenses incurred as a result of their involvement. Any information collected from the participants during the interview was held anonymous and confidential. Codes were also assigned to maintain their privacy. The interview was recorded and stored securely, used only by the investigator, and was erased after two months. Results of this study would be shared through conferences and publications; rest assured that whatever information collected during the participation was anonymous and confidential.

The investigator continually sought help from the thesis adviser throughout the study to ensure the appropriateness of the methods being conducted. The data gathered were checked for completeness, and responses were then thematically presented. These themes were then grouped according to their frequency and similarity. And an extensive discussion of the responses was made to provide assumptions on the triggers of early sexual initiation. Data and interpretations of the findings were also reviewed by a peer debriefer to ensure that they were free of bias and were accurately derived from the data. The investigator underwent the final presentation of the study and integrated corrections and suggestions from the panel of experts.

The investigator then submitted the corrected paper to the Research and Publication Office for further evaluation and presented the final form to the adviser and panel of experts for signature.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis is clarifying and interpreting information collected in research and establishing meaning from the input (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, as cited by Meyers, 2019). This study sought to determine the triggers of early sexual initiation among adolescents through face-to-face, in-depth interview techniques, which lasted about 30-45 minutes. Each participant's responses were audio recorded and were later transcribed verbatim and afterward translated into the English Language. The data were organized manually or through software such as NVivo and then analyzed. However, this study focused on theme deduction through manual coding only and then analyzing.

Descriptive phenomenology has four (4) steps, namely bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing. Bracketing required the suspension of preconceived beliefs and opinions of the phenomena. Intuiting was when the investigator was open to the meanings associated with the phenomena by those who have

experienced it. Analysis was done by extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, and organizing formulated meanings into clusters and themes by utilizing the steps of Colaizzi's Phenomenological Data Analysis. Lastly, the investigator came to understand and describe the phenomenon (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2022). The investigator began with six (6) participants until data or saturation was achieved. Data saturation was the study's point when it became apparent that no new themes emerged (Saunders et al., 2017, as cited by Johnson, 2020).

This study included the following seven vital steps for any phenomenological approach. Colaizzi's phenomenological methodology was used reliably to understand people's experiences. The purpose of the phenomenological method was to uncover the genuine experiences of the phenomenon under investigation.

The following were the seven steps of Colaizzi's phenomenological approach (Colaizzi, 1978, as cited in Praveena & Sasikumar, 2022):

1. Each of the transcripts was read and re-read, to obtain a general sense of the whole content.
2. Significant statements that relate to the phenomenon under study were extracted from transcripts.
3. Formulated meanings were derived from significant statements.
4. Organization of formulated meanings into clusters of themes and themes.
5. Integration of the findings into an exhaustive description.
6. Description of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon.
7. Validation of the findings from the study participants.

First, the audio records were played back several times until a sense of understanding of the participants' responses was achieved. Second, significant statements were extracted from the transcript by re-reading transcripts several times. These statements were written separately based on the participants' assigned code number, transcript number, and line number. Third, a meaning was formulated for each significant statement. The formulated meanings were then coded and grouped into separate categories. Coding was identifying specific details and notations that might be relevant in answering identified research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, as cited by Meyers, 2019). Fourth, formulated meanings were arranged into clusters of themes and were reviewed and checked for accuracy. A cluster of themes was

then narrowed down to emergent themes that described the participants' triggers to early sexual initiation. These clusters of themes and the emergent themes were reviewed by a peer debriefer and a research expert for accuracy and consistency. Fifth, the investigator integrated all cluster of themes and emergent themes into exhaustive descriptions to complete the structure of the phenomenon. It was then reviewed by a peer debriefer and a research expert for accuracy and consistency. Sixth, produce a fundamental structure, where findings were reduced to avoid repetitions and overgeneralization in order to achieve a succinct description of the phenomenon. Lastly, findings were validated through member checking, where findings were returned to the participants for further review and validation. Participants agreed with the findings as these reflected their authentic experiences.

## Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the demographic information of the participants. It analyzes and interprets the data collected through the semi-structured in-depth interviews from participants, specifically to answer the research questions, "What are the triggers of the participants to engage in early sexual initiation?" and "What is your message to your peers on taking care of their well-being?" Data gathered were then thematically analyzed, and findings were presented based on Colaizzi's phenomenological approach (Colaizzi, 1978, as cited by Praveena & Sasikumar, 2022). Moreover, tables were also introduced to provide summary and transparency in the presentation of the analysis and findings of the study.

### Demographic Information of the Participants

All participants were students of the Junior High School of School 1 S.Y.: 2022-2023, aged 18-21 years old. Knowing the participants' backgrounds and exploring further into their personal experiences helped provide information-rich answers to the phenomenon of interest.

**Participant 1 (P1)** was a female, aged 18 years old, and an illegitimate child who was currently raised by her grandparents, who were both high school graduates. She claimed that she was an illegitimate child because her mother conceived as a result of rape by her mother's boss, who was at that time working in a country in West Asia. Her mother was a high school graduate living and working in Luzon. To make ends meet, her grandmother offers a part-time home service

massage. At the same time, her grandfather also does a part-time job covering parked motorcycles near a government office since her mother no longer supports them financially. She belonged to a family of poor socio-economic class because her family's monthly income was less than 10,000. Despite the challenges of being a teenage mother, she strived to continue and finish her studies.

**Participant (P2)** was a male, aged 18 years old and whose parents were still together but had been living separately since he was in Grade 5, because her mother had to watch over his grandmother, which also caused the participant to have an impaired relationship with his parents. His father didn't finish high school and was currently working on construction sites and could earn around P 600-700 per day. At the same time, his mother was a college graduate and now has no regular job but could earn extra as a caretaker in a lot of property owned by the participant's grandmother. Since his family's monthly income was around 20,000, he belonged to a low-income but not poor socio-economic class.

**Participant 3 (P3)** was a male, aged 20 years old, and a working student. His father was a high school graduate, as well as his mother, and both separated already at age 12 years old. His father had an extramarital affair and no longer supported him, while his mother was a domestic helper abroad who continually provided minimal amounts for his financial needs. The participant experienced a lack of parental support since both of his parents were not present and claimed to have just a conditional relationship with his aunt, who should have acted as the second parent to the participant. The participant said that his aunt would just send him to school, would lend him money, and then he would work to pay her back. In other words, he was living on his own, and because of that, he persevered to survive and used to work on and off in poultry, where he could get paid P 365 per day. The participant belonged to a poor socio-economic class because he had an unstable monthly income.

**Participant 4 (P4)** was a male aged 20 years old. His father was a high school graduate who lost his life in 2022, while his mother was also a high school graduate who strived to provide for her family and earned around P 5,000 monthly. Since the family's monthly income was less than 10,000, the participant belonged to a family of poor socio-economic class.

**Participant 5 (P5)** was a female aged 20 years old. His father lost his life when the participant was still five years old, while her mother, a high school

graduate, was the sole provider in the family while working as a cook in a cafeteria, where she could earn around P 8,000 a month. The participant had a stepfather, whom she didn't consider as a father, who was already sick and bedridden, and whom she had experienced some sort of sexual harassment. Since the family's monthly income was less than 10,000, the participant belonged to a family of poor socio-economic class. And despite the challenges of being a teenage mother, she perseveres to continue and finish her studies.

**Participant 6 (P6)** was a female aged 19 years old and whose parents had been separated already due to an extramarital affair which caused the participant to be left with a guardian. Her father didn't finish high school and was working as a farmer, while her mother was a high school graduate with no job. Her aunt, who raised her, used to sell beauty products and could earn around P 5,000 a month. Previously, since the family's monthly income was less than 10,000, the participant belonged to a family of poor socio-economic class. And because she's now a teenage mother who's currently living with his partner's family with an estimated family income of P 20,000 a month, now, the participant belongs to a low-income but not poor socio-economic class.

Below are the seven income classes according to monthly income, as determined by the data from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) (Peña-Reyes, 2022):

#### Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) Income Classes

Table 2

<i>Monthly income</i>	<i>Income classification</i>
less than P10,957	Poor
greater than or equal to P10,957 but less than P21,194	Low-income but not poor
greater than or equal to P21,194 but less than P43,828	Lower middle
greater than or equal to P43,828 but less than P76,669	Middle
greater than or equal to P76,669 but less than P131,484	Upper middle
greater than or equal to P131,484 but less than P219,140	High income (but not rich)
greater than or equal to P219,140	Rich

For the first research question, eight (8) emergent themes were identified, as shown in appendix 1.



**Problem 1. What are the triggers of the participants to engage in early sexual initiation?**

Table 3. *What are the triggers of the participants to engage in early sexual initiation? (see appendix 1)*

The Thematic Map of Clusters of Themes and Emergent Themes of Triggers of Early Sexual Initiation is shown in table 4 below.

**The Thematic Map of Clusters of Themes and Emergent Themes of Triggers of Early Sexual Initiation**

Table 4

No.	Clusters of Themes	Emergent Theme
1	Grandparent Family	Broken Family/ Dysfunctional Family
	Separated Family	
	Stepfamily	
2	Emotionally-detached Family	Poor Parental Monitoring/ Lack of Parental Support
	Neglectful parent/s	
	Permissive parent/s	
3	Uninvolved parent/s	Lack of Sex Education
	Ill-informed	
	Uninformed	
4	Direct Exposure	Sexually Explicit Materials in social media
	Indirect Exposure	
5	Direct Pressure	Peer Pressure
	Indirect Pressure	
6	Peer influence	Alcohol Consumption, Smoking and use of Illicit Substances
	Familial influence	
7	Emotional Intimacy	High Level of Intimacy
	Physical Intimacy	
8	Interest-driven Deprivation-driven	Satisfy Curiosity

A *Broken family* refers to a family that has split or separated due to a variety of reasons (“Broken Family,” 2020). While *dysfunctional family* refers to a family in which communications and relationships are impaired (“Dysfunctional family,” n.d.). It may be composed of one parent only or may have both of its parents present, but has a presence of conflict or a lack of structure within the family where the physical and emotional needs of the children cannot be met. (Li, 2023). Broken/ Dysfunctional Family was derived from different clusters of themes such as *Grandparent family, Separated family, Stepfamily, and Emotionally-detached family.*

Grandparent family refers to a family where there is a grandparent-grandchild relationship in a family and no parent-child relationship (“Grandparent families,” 2016). It is a type of family where children are brought up by their grandparents instead of their parents. For instance, being an illegitimate child caused the participant to be left with the grandparents, which also caused a feeling of envy towards those with an intact family unit. Separated family is a family where the husband or wife is no longer living with each other (“Separated,” n.d.). For instance, parents separated due to extramarital affairs typically leave some of the participants to the guardians. If a single parent chooses to remarry or to be in a romantic relationship again, children from their previous relationships are brought together under the same roof, and this type is called stepfamily.

Stepfamily sometimes caused family problems as some of them were not related by blood. For instance, one participant claimed to experience sexual harassment from her stepfather, which caused the participant to run away. When the participant came back to the family, the biological mother decided to let the participant lives in a nearby house to avoid the sexual harassment from happening. Another type is the emotionally-detached family, which refers to a family where parents are cold, distant, and emotionally unavailable (Li, 2023). For instance, one participant claimed that the father was a bit strict, and if given the chance, the participant would rather stay with the mother. It showed that when the father would become too rigid with the participant, no one would pacify him.

More often than not, participants who were in a broken/ dysfunctional family led participants to become mentally and emotionally unstable as they desired to have a complete and intact family unit.

Based on previous literature, one local news relevant to the study showed that there were 586 teenage students got pregnant between June to December 2019, according to the medical officer of DepEd Northern Mindanao (Region 10), Dr. Myra Yee and one of the other factors was, teens living in unsafe environment such as being in a broken family (Lagsa, 2020).

A study on Understanding the Broader Horizon of Sexual Encounter: A Case Study on Sexual Engagement Among Filipino Teens revealed that several themes showed as the common causes of the teens’ early sexual engagement, and one of those were belonging to a broken family, (Cordero, 2018). According to Cordero (2018), the moral development

of adolescents relies more on what the adolescents' family members can offer and also emphasized that the family is said to be a "major social institution and a locus of much of a person's social activity" (Nam, 2004, p. 1, as cited by Cordero, 2018).

Therefore, one of the significant roles of the parents is to train their children to socialize by imparting the appropriate knowledge, skills, and values deemed necessary for the children to survive. A family must be a unit where the children primarily receive the fundamental values of life. Otherwise, having a broken/dysfunctional family unit with the presence of impaired relationships and other forms of conflicts may alter the child's morality and also cause emotional instability. Thus, when adolescents are shaped well by their values, they are more likely to abstain from any forms of sexual activity.

Another theme that emerged was *Poor Parental Monitoring/ Lack of Parental Support*. Parental monitoring refers to the parent's knowledge of the participant's activities and whereabouts, while parental support refers to the emotional availability and presence of the parents toward the participant (Mills et al., 2021).

This theme has emerged from clusters of themes, namely *neglectful parent/s*, *permissive parent/s*, and *uninvolved parent/s*. Neglectful parents refer to having little control over their children and are disengaged, undemanding, and unsupportive ("Poor Parental Supervision Contribute Psychologically," 2019). For instance, one participant experienced a lack of parental support since the mother was not present to implement discipline and to provide support. The grandparents just left the participant to decide on her own. One participant also experienced a lack of parental support since both of his parents were not present and claimed to have just a conditional relationship with his aunt, who should have acted as the second parent to the participant. Another participant also had poor monitoring since the aunt, which served as the participant's guardian, just threw questions without asking for further understanding of the participant's whereabouts.

On the other hand, Permissive parent/s is/are more responsive but do not communicate their rules, which lead them to be easily manipulated by their children (Cherry, 2022). These parents are too lenient that they lack appropriate monitoring for their children. For instance, one participant claimed that the father monitored his activities and whereabouts, such as his vices, specifically smoking, and drinking. This just

showed that the father was permissive because he was aware of the participant's vices but didn't take immediate actions to correct such behavior.

Lastly, the uninvolved parent/s, this/these refer/s to parent/s who provide/s for basic needs such as food and shelter but is/are uninvolved in their children's lives (Cherry, 2023). For instance, one participant claimed to lack emotional support from her parent because her mother provided nothing else but just merely for her growth or her basic needs.

The majority of these participants experienced Poor Parental Monitoring/ Lack of Parental Support from their parents/guardians, which typically led them to become mentally and emotionally unstable, which often led them to become uncertain in making important decisions in life.

According to a study on factors linked to early sexual initiation among youths in preparatory and high schools in Woldia Town, northeastern Ethiopia, those with poor parental supervision were likelier to engage in early sexual activity (Kassahun et al., 2019). It is crucial that teenagers who had their activities and whereabouts poorly monitored were less likely to have their behavior and values corrected, which also had a significant impact on how they made decisions about their sexuality.

While a study on young people in Brazil also showed that parental control or knowing the adolescents' activities would decrease the likelihood of the adolescents engaging in early sexual engagement. (França & Frio, 2018). This means that those adolescents who had good parental monitoring were unlikely to start early with sexual engagement.

Another theme that emerged was the *Lack of Sex Education*. Sex education refers to high-quality instruction that provides skills required to properly handle personal relationships and protect one's sexual well-being with sex and sexuality (Callanga, 2023). This theme has emerged from clusters of themes, namely *Ill-informed* and *Uninformed*.

Ill-informed refers to lacking adequate knowledge or information on a particular subject, specifically sex ("Ill-informed," n.d.). For instance, few participants claimed that there was a lack of information because the participant was just told to avoid unwanted pregnancies but was not given further explanations on its consequences. Uninformed refers to not knowing sex. For instance, a participant claimed that there was no information given since the participant was not

allowed to hear topics related to sex, and others had never heard anything about sex within the family.

Over the years, it has been considered taboo for Filipinos to talk about sex within family members. Children are not allowed to hear any topics related to sex and sexuality within their homes. Oftentimes, adults used to cover children's ears or eyes when issues on sex and sexuality are overheard in casual family conversations or seen through other forms of media. Children were never given the appropriate information, which often left them to be confused and eventually get curious.

The participants claimed that there was either a lack of information or no information received about sex or any topics related to sex. Sexual initiation among males and young adults before the age of 13 years old in the United States found that the majority of males began having sex before receiving sex education and had poor quality sexual health care. This finding was consistent with the study's findings (Lindberg et al., 2019). In addition to providing services for contraceptives, STD/HIV testing, and treatments, sexual health care delivery also offers health advice and counseling to promote a healthier sexual life.

Both private and public secondary schools in Ido-Ekiti lacked guidance counselors. They did not include sex education in their curricula, according to a study on early sexual debut by Durowade et al., 2017. The study also found a high prevalence of early sexual exposure among the students.

A study on adolescent sexual initiation and pregnancy by Habito et al. (2019) revealed that an adolescent's risk of becoming pregnant begins with the initiation of sexual activity and lasts until the adolescent reaches the age of 20. Every adolescent was exposed to the risk of sexual initiation. Still, only those who had already engaged in sexual activity were exposed to the risk of pregnancy, according to the study. When there was limited access to supplies and information regarding family planning, contraception, and other related topics, the risk was even higher.

França & Frio (2018) conducted a gender analysis of adolescents from Brazil and showed that sex education workshops on teenage pregnancy were influential in the reduction of the risk of early sexual initiation for girls. However, orientation on where to get a condom conducted by the school had increased the chances of both boys and girls starting their sex engagements earlier.

The study's findings also ran counter to the study by

Furlanetto et al. (2019), which found that adolescents' lower participation in risky sexual behavior was not related to reasonable levels of access to information about sexuality. Although investigators acknowledged that this aspect was not fully assessed in the study.

Thus, the gaps between the study under investigation and other literature implied the need for further investigations regarding this matter, considering that adolescents in the studies conducted were diverse in culture.

Additionally, the Department of Education has already initiated to incorporate Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) into the basic education curriculum. According to the most recent report by Gregorio (2023) of Philstar, the Department has expressed support for the approval of the mandatory implementation of the CSE to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

*Exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials* in social media was another theme that emerged from the clusters of themes of *Direct Exposure* and *Indirect Exposure*. Sexually explicit materials refer to textual, visual, or audio materials that depict sexual activities that often arouse the viewers (Shallo & Mengesha, 2019), and it could be through various forms of media. Direct Exposure referred to the participant's exposure when they received the message first-hand while Indirect Exposure is when the participant received the message from someone who had watched, read, or listened to through a mass medium ("What is media exposure?", 2021).

In Direct Exposure, one participant claimed that before her first sexual initiation to her sexual partner, whom the participant considered a fling (relationship with no commitment), they first started exchanging messages on Facebook. Another participant claimed to have been unintentionally exposed to explicit materials while browsing Facebook. In contrast, others claimed to experience Indirect Exposure as they were exposed to sexually explicit materials through social media platforms that allowed adult content through friends in the internet shop. These participants also claimed that exposure to such materials influenced their sexual behaviors. A few participants claimed that exposure to such materials influenced them to engage in early sexual initiation. Upon seeing the sexually explicit materials through various forms of media, arose their curiosity and made them want to try sex.

This finding was consistent with other studies conducted. The investigator has also observed during

the interviews that the male adolescents were more expressive with their experience in online pornography and how such exposure affected their sexual behavior compared to females, since the female participants claimed that it's either they hadn't seen or viewed any sexually explicit materials, might have seen it in a glimpse or haven't viewed such material before the sexual initiation.

The Handbook of Adolescent Digital Media Use and Mental Health revealed that early concerns centered on risky behaviors related to visiting problematic content (e.g., pornography), having contact with strangers, inappropriate/unsafe interactions (e.g., sexual solicitation, threatening or harassing contact) (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2000; Stahl & Fritz, 2002 as cited by Nesi et al., 2022), and psychological well-being (Kraut et al., 1998; Sanders et al., 2000 as cited by Nesi et al., 2022). For instance, one participant claimed that before her first sexual initiation to her sexual partner, whom the participant considered a fling (relationship with no commitment), they first started exchanging messages on Facebook. Sexting refers to the sending of self-made sexually explicit messages, pictures, or videos through a computer or mobile phone (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019, as cited by Nesi et al., 2022). Eventually, sexting would arouse the sexual drive of the adolescents, which also developed their desire to try sex.

This finding was also in line with the research brief on the Factors Influencing Youth Sexual Activity: Conceptual Models for Sexual Risk Avoidance and Cessation sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which emphasized that youth exposure to media content through various forms of media was a risk factor for the increased in sexual activity and the increased in permissive attitudes on sex during adolescence (Inanc et al., 2020).

Additionally, this finding was also consistent with the studies on adolescents conducted by Yosef et al. (2020), Kassahun et al. (2019), Adongo (2019), and Cordero (2018). It is imperative that exposure to sexual materials through various forms of media raises adolescents' curiosity that increases their desires to engage in sex. And since online pornography can easily be accessed through the internet, these adolescents would view and be driven by their sexual drive without knowing the underlying consequences of their early sexual engagement.

Another theme was *Peer Pressure* which emerged from clusters of themes, namely *Direct Pressure and Indirect Pressure*. Peer Pressure refers to the members

of the same social group that influenced the participants to do things that they might want or not want to do. Specifically, direct pressure refers to a situation when someone convinced the participant to do something, which might in the form of verbal or non-verbal cues (Hartney, 2022). For instance, a few participants claimed that their friends challenged them participants to engage in sex and were to the extent forced by friends to engage in sex, as expressed by feeling nervous on the first try. In Indirect Pressure, no one directly convinced the participant to do something, but they might be influenced to conform to their environment (Hartney, 2022). For instance, a sense of pressure was experienced by one participant, she claimed that the reason for her engagement in vices was the fear of being left out of the group and also labeled her friends a bad influence, despite her denial that no one from the friends directly forced the participant to engage in sex.

This finding was consistent with the other studies conducted by Inanc et al. (2020), Kassahun et al. (2019), Adongo (2019), Rimban (2020), and Cordero (2018). To explain the emergence of this factor, a study revealed that peers were one of the most influential during adolescence because adolescents were in increased need of a sense of autonomy from their parents while simultaneously seeking approval and acceptance from their peers (Lerner et al., 2010, as cited by Nesi et al., 2022). Because adolescents value more of their peers than their parents during adolescence, they tend to do something that is being asked by their peers to feel a sense of belongingness.

*Alcohol Consumption, Smoking, and use of Illicit Substances* was a theme which emerged from clusters of themes, namely *peer influence and familial influence*. Alcohol consumption refers to drinking of beverages containing ethyl alcohol (Keller & Vaillant, 2023). Smoking refers to inhaling and exhaling the fumes of burning plant materials with tobacco as the most common (Henningfield et al., 2023). Illicit Substances refer to substances that are illegal to consume, such as marijuana and methamphetamine hydrochloride, popularly known as shabu.

Peer influence refers to a participant who did something to feel accepted and valued by their friends. ("Peer pressure or influence," 2021). For instance, a participant felt pressured to conform to her environment and later claimed that the participant was sort of forced by friends to drink alcohol and smoke, but denied that drinking and smoking may have contributed to her early sexual initiation. Due to the influence of friends, another participant claimed to

consume alcohol, smoke, and try marijuana and shabu but denied the result of such vices on his early sexual initiation because the sexual initiation happened before his engagement in vices. The participant claimed to hang out with friends without having vices when the first sexual initiation occurred. The familial influence was when a family member in a nuclear or extended family convinced the participant to do something. For instance, one participant claimed to drink alcohol occasionally with family members because the participant claimed to have no other friends and also denied the influence of alcohol on its early sexual engagement.

Alcohol Consumption, Smoking, and use of Illicit Substances were consistent with the study conducted by França & Frio (2018). Alcohol consumption was again in line with the study of Durowade et al. (2017) while smoking with Kassahun et al. (2019). All participants claimed that they have been drinking alcohol, only a few were smoking, and only a few have tried using illicit substances such as marijuana and methamphetamine hydrochloride, popularly known as shabu. Still, all of them verbally denied the influences of these substances to their early sexual initiation.

Although participants may not be aware of the influences of these substances, a study on the Interaction Between Smoking Cigarettes and Alcohol Consumption on Sexual Experience in High School Students revealed that the gathered data on the daily number of cigarettes smoked and weekly consumption of alcohol were observed to have a dose-response relationship with the sexual intercourse of the students due to the reasons that alcohol may cause an impaired judgment and a lack of inhibition (Soo & Kyoung, 2019). Thus, adolescents under the influence of alcohol may feel less self-conscious as alcohol caused a lack of inhibition that would most likely lead adolescents to engage in sex.

The same finding in smoking was noticed by Kassahun et al. (2019), who revealed that those students who smoked were more likely to engage early in sex due to a reason that a substance found in cigarettes may alter one's judgment. One participant reported that the sexual engagement happened before the start of drinking alcohol, smoking, and using marijuana, but claimed that the participant was at that time already hanging out with friends who were into vices which likely increased the risk of the participant to secondhand smoking.

Although studies revealed that smoking was associated with the increased likelihood of adolescents engaging

in sex, discussions as to its association in terms of the substances found in cigarettes that increased the possibility to engage in sex were not fully explained. Since these findings were contrary to the study conducted by Healthwise (2021), which revealed that men who smoke may have problems with penile erection while women may have less sexual sensation due to the effects of nicotine in narrowing the blood vessels. The gap between the association of smoking with early sexual initiation and the scientific findings of the impact of tobacco on sex may require further investigation.

A study on How Pot Affects Your Mind and Body by Paul Frysh (2021) showed that Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), as the primary and psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, would stimulate the part of the brain that responds to pleasure, such as sex. Therefore, using marijuana would increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging in sex. While A Qualitative Study of the Relationship Between Methamphetamine Abuse and Sexual Dysfunction in Male Substance Abusers showed that the first usage of methamphetamine caused an increase in the quality and quantity of sexual pleasure, but a decrease in its effect would appear over time (Dolatshahi et al., 2016).

Another theme was the *High Level of Intimacy*, which emerged from clusters of themes, namely *Emotional Intimacy* and *Physical Intimacy*. Intimacy is when you have a close sexual relationship with someone ("Intimacy," n.d.). Emotional Intimacy refers to a type of intimacy where the participant learns how to trust someone where they feel safe enough to let their walls down (Johnson, 2019). For instance, few participants claimed to have feelings of trust and love for one's partner as the reason for their sexual initiation. Physical Intimacy refers to intimacy that involves touch and closeness between bodies (Johnson, 2019). For instance, a participant claimed that it was his partner who influenced his early sexual initiation since the participant had no experience with sex yet. This finding was also the same as the studies conducted by Yosef et al. (2020), França & Frio (2018), and Cordero (2018). For instance, a few participants claimed to have feelings of trust and love for one's partner as the reason for their sexual initiation. However, the investigator noticed that more female than male participants were more likely to state that their feelings of love and trust toward their partners were the catalyst for their early sexual initiation.

This observation was consistent with the study conducted by França & Frio (2018), which showed boys need to constantly prove their sexuality through

the number of partners, while girls' first sexual experiences sought a more stable first love experience and didn't need to prove their sexuality.

Lastly, *Satisfy Curiosity* as a theme that emerged from clusters of themes, namely *Interest-driven* and *Deprivation-driven*. Curiosity refers to the desire to know more about something ("Curiosity," n.d.). Interest-driven refers to a type of curiosity that caused the participants to explore new things for pleasure (Donnellan et al., 2021). For instance, few participants engaged in sex because of curiosity caused by the invitation of their sexual partners. Deprivation-driven refers to an urgent acquisition of specific knowledge (Donnellan et al., 2021). For instance, few participants engaged in sex because of curiosity and also after being teased and challenged by friends to engage in sex. This finding was also in line with the studies by Adongo (2019) and Rimban (2020). According to Adongo (2019), one of the influences of adolescents to engage in sexual intercourse was their desire to satisfy their curiosity. About the study on Adolescence, the book on Lifespan Development by Julie Lazzara (2020), some adolescents were just curious about sex and want to experience it. Still, some who have had early sexual intercourse report strong peer pressure that led them to such engagement.

As others say, our lives are shaped by our experiences, which means the more we experience things, the more we indulge ourselves with opportunities for us to learn and grow, which in turn, shape our wisdom. Since the participants of this study were those experienced in the phenomenon of interest, the interview was also the opportunity to know and learn from these participants as they relay their messages to their peers on how to take care of their well-being.

As for the second research question, four (4) emergent themes were identified, as shown in appendix 2.

## **Problem 2. What is your message to your peers on taking care of their well-being?**

Table 5. *What is your message to your peers on taking care of their well-being? (see appendix 2)*

The thematic map of Clusters of Themes and Emergent Themes of Adolescents' messages to their peers on taking care of their well-being is shown in Table 6 below.

### **The Thematic Map of Clusters of Themes and Emergent Themes of Adolescents' messages to their peers on taking care of their well-being**

Table 6

No.	Clusters of Theme	Emergent Theme
1	Pleasant life Meaningful life	Live a Happy Life
2	Cessation of Smoking and Drinking Avoid excessive use of a smartphone Avoid bad influence friends	Break Bad Habits
3	Stay focused Avoid distractions	Finish School
4	Integrity Self-worth	Be Sexually Responsible

Well-being refers to having a good quality of life ("Well-being," n.d.). One of the emergent themes was to *Live a Happy Life* which emerged from the clusters of themes, namely *pleasant life and meaningful life*. Be Happy is a common expression for many, but what does happiness mean for these participants? Pleasant life refers to having a positive emotion. For instance, one participant advised her peers to enjoy life but, at the same time, make better decisions in life. The participant also emphasized to don't letting the beliefs of others consume you, which means that even if you've committed mistakes from the past, make sure to learn from them and move forward to having a better outlook in life. At the same time, meaningful life refers to living a life based on purpose and value. For instance, one participant advised his peers always to pray to become successful in life. According to the study of the Power of Positive Emotions, it revealed that positive emotions affect our brains, specifically in increasing our attention, memory, and awareness, which in turn help us solve problems better (Nemours Teens Health, 2018). Happiness refers to "an emotion of joy, gladness, satisfaction, and well-being," as defined by the American Psychological Association (Heid, 2023), which means that happiness involves positive emotions. Therefore, if adolescents are happy when faced with different challenges in life, they are likely to think and solve problems better, which probably reduces the risks of being involved in risky sexual behaviors.

Another theme was *Break Bad Habits*. Bad habit refers to a behavior pattern that is considered unhealthy. To break bad habits, first, one must practice *cessation of the use of substances*, which means quitting smoking and drinking alcohol and also the use of illicit substances. Alcohol consumption refers to drinking of beverages containing ethyl alcohol (Keller & Vaillant, 2023). Smoking refers inhaling and exhaling the fumes of burning plant materials with tobacco as the most common (Henningfield et al., 2023). Illicit Substances



refer to substances that are illegal to consume, such as marijuana and methamphetamine hydrochloride, popularly known as shabu. As we all know, these unhealthy habits could cause serious health problems, both physical and mental. For instance, one participant advised her peers to stop their vices, such as smoking and drinking to become a good role model to their children for those who were teenage parents already.

According to the studies mentioned above, these substances alter one's judgment, and avoidance of these substances would also decrease the likelihood of adolescents engaging in risky sexual behaviors.

Second, *avoid excessive use of a smartphone* because a smartphone is a medium of communication. For instance, one participant advised his peers to as much as possible avoid excessive use of their smartphones to avoid communicating with others. Because being able to share with others is sometimes the start of having friends who invite friends to engage in vices. Moreover, an article written by Robinson et al. (2023) revealed that excessive use of smartphone has been associated with impaired cognitive functions and mental health problems. And lastly, to *avoid bad influence friends*. For instance, one participant advised his peers to stay away from friends who were bad influences, which implied that staying away from bad habits would always start with avoiding friends who were bad. Because adolescents value more of their peers than their parents during adolescence, being surrounded by bad influence friends would likely increase the risk of adolescents being involved in risky sexual behaviors.

*Finish School* was another emergent theme. All participants valued the importance of education, and to finish school, one must stay focused. For instance, a few participants emphasized that it's never too late to go back to school and advised their peers to continue and finish school as soon as possible because they might regret it later on when they're left behind with their peers. And, of course, to stay focused, they also have to avoid distractions. For instance, one participant advised his peers to continue and finish school and, at the same time, practice sexual abstinence. As we all know, education increases the chance of an individual to better career opportunities which provide stability in an individual's life.

Lastly, *Be Sexually Responsible*. Being sexually responsible is synonymous with maintaining one's bodily integrity, such as taking full responsibility for protecting one's own body, specifically its sexual organs, through using it the right way and practicing

health-promoting behaviors. For instance, one participant advised her peers to be responsible for their bodies, specifically their sexual organs to avoid consequences such as unwanted pregnancies and socio-economic problems. Self-worth refers to acknowledging ourselves that we are worthy of love, and it all starts with self-respect by knowing one's value through learning how to set appropriate boundaries that are unhealthy. For instance, few participants emphasized the importance of sexual abstinence and self-respect among women.

## Conclusion

The findings of the study conclude that the triggers of the participants to engage in early sexual initiation are Broken/Dysfunctional Family, Poor Parental Monitoring/ Lack of Parental Support, Lack of Sex Education, Exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials in social media, Peer Pressure, Alcohol Consumption, Smoking and use of Illicit Substances, High Level of Intimacy and Satisfy Curiosity. Early sexual initiation is more likely to occur in adolescents who come from broken or dysfunctional families, who are not well-monitored by their parents, and who lack parental support. Also, male adolescents are more likely to experience an intense peer pressure, while females have a strong feeling of trust and love for one's partner as the reason for their early sexual initiation. Exposure to sexually explicit materials and alcohol consumption, smoking, and use of illicit substances also increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging early in sex. All these considered, the urgent need to satisfy their curiosity may also lead them to engage early in sex.

Relating all these messages of these participants to their peers on taking care of their well-being are identified as to Live a Happy Life, Break Bad Habits, Finish School, and Be Sexually Responsible. These suggest the importance of teaching positive emotions, which in turn, help adolescents to think and solve problems better and reduces their risks of being involved in risky sexual behaviors. If adolescents can think and solve problems better, they are more likely to break bad habits, finish school, and be sexually responsible.

Based on the findings of this study, I highly recommend that further studies may be conducted to address the gaps between the study under investigation and other literature, considering that adolescents in other studies were diverse in terms of culture. Additionally,

(1) The Department of Education may find solutions to the problems of adolescents' risky sexual behaviors and their consequences based on the triggers of early sexual initiation presented. The findings of this study may stimulate a demand for the inclusion of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in the basic education curriculum. Simultaneously, the Department of Education may intensify existing programs such as Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH). (2) School nurses may help reduce the number of cases of teenage pregnancies as well as promote optimal health for adolescents through having a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the triggers of early sexual initiation. (3) School owners/School Heads/ Principals may take initiatives that are specific to the school, like developing action plans and putting them into practice, to address issues with early sexual initiation and to encourage adolescents' best health. (4) Parents/ guardians of adolescents may help reduce the likelihood of early sexual imitation by adequately educating and guiding them at home. (5) Teachers may make classroom-based action plans to reduce the risks of early sexual initiation gradually. (6) The Department of Health (DOH), The Commission on Population and Development (POPCOM), and other government organizations involved in adolescent reproductive health may put into place programs that gradually reduce the instances of early sexual initiation and do away with the adverse effects of it. (7) Future investigators may carry out a similar study at other institutions to assess the study's findings' commonalities with other studies.

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Appendix 1 (Table 3. *What are the triggers of the participants to engage in early sexual initiation?*)

<i>Essential Themes</i>	<i>Interview Transcript</i>
Broken/ Dysfunctional Family	“No, I am living with my Lola and Lolo. My mom went abroad in [a place in West Asia] and my father is her boss. She [the mother] was raped [by the father] and I am the product. Sometimes... when I see others with their parents, I feel envious... because I haven't tried growing up with a father”- <b>P1</b>
	“They are still together but currently separated [in their homes] because my mom is in [the mountain] to watch over my grandmother, while my father is here in CDO [Cagayan de Oro City] to watch over us...ever since when I was still in elementary around grade 5. The feeling that your father is the only one who watches over you, he is a bit strict and you are like being locked up at home sometimes. If I'm not with my dad, I'd rather stay with my mom who lives in the mountain”- <b>P2</b>
	“No. My mom is in abroad and my dad is with someone else... That no one will reprimand you no matter what you do. It's better if they are there [the parents] because they can reprimand you.”- <b>P3</b>
	“No, because when I was still 5 years old, I'm the youngest, my father is gone already. My mother raised me until I grew up. Something is missing, I need something from a father- It's like I'm thirsty for a father's attention and then I found it from someone else..”- <b>P5</b>
Poor Parental Monitoring/ Lack of Parental Support	“No, with my aunt. They separated already [the parents]. Because of third wheel [third party]... I was still young when they separated..”- <b>P6</b> “Sometimes... they [ask me] where I've been and where I went. Now, they just leave me alone. I felt maybe they got fed up already of scolding and telling me on what I should not do, but ended up still doing those things.”- <b>P1</b>
	“Yes, my dad will monitor me every time I go out, he will say, where are you going? Before, I am boy cutting... And because he [the father] can't monitor well, I will tell him the truth, that time when I was sent to the guidance.”- <b>P2</b>
	“No, she [the aunt] will just send me to school, she will lend me money and then I will work and then I will pay her.”- <b>P3</b>
	“They monitor me on my vices such as my smoking and drinking habits and also on my girlfriend.”- <b>P4</b>
	“Nothing. She only did one thing for me as a parent [the mother], she provided for me to grow up, that's all.”- <b>P5</b>
	“Yes always. She [the aunt] asked me at that time when I already have a boyfriend if we had sex already, she kept on asking me that. Either she'll direct it but, I didn't say anything anymore.”- <b>P6</b>
Lack of Sex Education	“No, they just gave me an advice before... When I was still a girl, I really like to wander until morning. I am into vices...friends. They [advised] me to stop doing all those because may be one day, I'll come home pregnant already.”- <b>P1</b>
	“No, because if my father talks about [sex] with someone else, he will send me away, just like before.”- <b>P2</b>
	“Nothing”- <b>P3</b>
	“Nothing”- <b>P4</b>
	“Nothing because it is said that it is not allowed for children... it is not possible for me to know that. Now, I realized that they [young people] should be aware because if they are not aware they will be ignorant”- <b>P5</b>
	“Nothing. She [the aunt] just told me that I should not get pregnant.”- <b>P6</b>

Exposure to Sexually  
Explicit Materials in  
social media

“I only knew him when that birthday happened, that's when we started chatting [in Facebook]. Like Ph? Pornhub. That time when I lost my [virginity]. I learned it from my classmates because my male classmates gathered [at that time] and I wondered what they were watching and I found out it was [Pornhub].”-P1

“Social media sites?- I will tell you, okay? Fuck book, it's like Facebook... In Fuck book, you will pay so that you can chat others-There are many sites such as xnxx, pornhub.com and hentai, it's an anime...Staring at the age of 13 [has viewed porn sites]... Because you can really learn if you stay in the internet shop, because there are those who are older than you- "look at this". Yes, that's when I thought about how it would feel if I tried it.”-P2

“Scandal? There at the computer shop. Those who are older than us will let us watch it. Yes, it's like when you look at it, it seems what they're doing is good.”- P3

“Tiktok. Redtube like that because at that time I didn't have a cellphone it is through my friends, internets, my friends. They let me view virals, look at this. It seems like it is one of which influenced me to engage in sexual intercourse. I think it's about my curiosity to try sexual intercourse. It seems like it is one of which influenced me to engage in sexual intercourse.”-P4

“Yes, I just see the videos...Like, I just watched it [in Facebook]. No [on the influence of social media on sexual behavior].”- P6

“We hung out together... from there on, I've learned how to drink, smoke because of them. I think it's awkward that you don't know [how to drink and smoke] because you might get out of place. I don't have any friends who pushed me to engage in [sex]. For me, you have to choose your friends well. I'm just unlucky at that time because I thought my friends were good but, they were not.”- P1

Peer Pressure

“Yes, because the first topic when we drink is- will also be included in our topic [about sex]. They then asked if you have tried it...that's when you will be triggered to try it because it seems like they were the only ones who have tried it. You try it to your girlfriend. Have you tried that?-Ah, not yet, then they will tease you. It hurts when you haven't tried yet [sex]. Your pride will be hurt, and they will really hurt your pride because you haven't tried it yet. Why haven't you tried yet when you are a man, they will tell you that and then they will tell you that you're like a [into same sex].”- P2

“They would tell us, you would be the first one to touch [to have sex with] bro later in the evening. You will take it first. You will take it first- that's when I got nervous. They then told me, you have to try it so you won't get ignorant, what is your use in the world if you haven't tried it [sex]. Yes, my friends were the ones who invited me like, you touch [have sex with] this girl because she would get in to become a prostitute.”- P3

“Yes, it's because they were showing me that and that they were saying do you have a girlfriend, right? You have to taste a human, I was also challenged to try sex with my girlfriend.”-P4

Alcohol  
Consumption,  
Smoking and use of  
Illicit Substances

“I think it's awkward that you don't know [how to drink and smoke] because you might get out of place. Because they are enjoying and you're just on the corner. And then, that's it... I was sort of forced [by my friends] until such time, I started to like it [to drink and smoke]. No, because I was normal at that time [when they had sex]. I didn't drink, he was the only one who drank.”- P1

“No- because it's different... It's like you're just being influenced by your friends that you have tried it already [vices]. Actually, when I dropped out of school, we drank around four days in a week [with friends]. I also smoke... When I was still drinking, smoking is different from drinking. I just smoke every night, about one stick. My schedule before was, I drink at around 10 in the morning and at night, after eating dinner around 6pm, I go out again....to smoke.”- P2

“I just eat, I had no vices [aged 13 on his first sexual initiation]. I tried drinking,



smoking.. marijuana and shabu, before [aged 14]. I started smoking at 15 [age], drinking at 14 [age] and beyond, up until now. But now, I stopped those drugs already [aged 16]. The smoking, gradually too. No, they were only forcing you to try it so you wouldn't get ignorant, that's all, drinking didn't lead me [to initiate in sex]. But drinking, before, when I drank already at the age of 14, we invited girls, with friends, we were just treating the girls like appetizers.”- **P3**

“I drink but not totally, just one shot, I didn't really like the taste. I was influenced by my friends [to smoke]. Actually, I tried marijuana when I was 17 years old. No because I am still not much into using marijuana yet and I didn't drink that much, the one who influenced me was my girlfriend”-**P4**

“No, that time when I was in a relationship with my ex was also the time that I stopped drinking since he forbade me. I also have many friends [started drinking at the age of 15]. I don't smoke because it's prohibited because I have asthma. Every week...twice or thrice, like that, because it came to the point that we cut classes even when we were in school.”- **P5**

“Yes, [on drinking]. With my aunts and cousins [drinking companions] but I didn't have those friends. Only if there is an occasion. No [on drinking as the cause of early sexual initiation]. It seemed that I also wanted [to have sex]. It seemed that I also didn't want him to get offended, like I wanted it too.”- **P6**

“At that time [at 14 years old] I was still a virgin. It seemed that I got carried away [to give in to sex] because I loved him. That's why I allowed him to [have sex] with me... but afterwards, I regretted because he no longer bothered to reach out to me, it seemed that he rejected me already. It was during that time, that I found out that he has a girlfriend already.”- **P1**

High Level of Intimacy

“No because I am still not much into using marijuana yet, I didn't drink that much, the one who influenced me was my girlfriend, she wanted to have [sex] because that's my first time.”- **P4**

“He said he would not leave me no matter what happens, it was a trick, but honestly, he also didn't leave me alone at that time, it's just that he was deceived by his friends [on cheating and using drugs]. I really trusted him... I gave in because I really loved him.”-**P5**

“It seemed that I also wanted [to have sex]. It seemed that I also didn't want him to get offended, like I wanted it too. He didn't force me... I also wanted it, like what is that?”- **P6**

“Yes, I got engaged [in sex] because I was just curious...Yes, that's when I thought about how it would feel if I tried it.”- **P2**

Satisfy Curiosity

“Yes, it's like when you look at it, it seems what they're doing is good.”-**P3**

“It seems like it is one of which influenced me to engage in sexual intercourse. I think it's about my curiosity to try sexual intercourse.”- **P4**

“I knew about sex, it was through my ex. He was also the one who [invited], that's why I got curious.”-**P5**

“He didn't force me... I also wanted it, like what is that?”- **P6**

Appendix 2 (Table 5. *What is your message to your peers on taking care of their well-being?*)

<i>Essential Themes</i>	<i>Interview Transcript</i>
Live a Happy Life	<p>“It's okay to be happy but don't overdo it, like what happened to us because it was not easy. But not the kind of happiness that will lead you to do bad things... Because you do not know the course of your life.”- <b>P1</b></p> <p>“And to stop bad habits, stay away from friends, always pray for success, keep going to school.”-<b>P4</b></p> <p>“They just have to enjoy themselves, they shouldn't make any impulsive decisions. They just have to enjoy, they should not be moved by what other people say. They don't listen to what other people say.”-<b>P6</b></p> <p>““If they are the same as me that has a child already, they have to stop their vices because it's not good that their children will see that they're like that.”- <b>P1</b></p>
Break Bad Habits	<p>“My advice to them is that, they will stop- avoid using a cellphone, avoid chatting with others.” For instance, if somebody invites them to drink, they shouldn't give in, they should refuse it, they should not be a common woman so that they won't get touched by men.”- <b>P3</b></p> <p>“And to stop bad habits, stay away from friends, always pray for success, keep going to school.”-<b>P4</b></p> <p>“If they have dropped out of school, it's not too late to recover.”- <b>P1</b></p>
Finish School	<p>“My only advice is to go to school when you're young and not to have sex. And to stop bad habits, stay away from friends, always pray for success, keep going to school.”-<b>P4</b></p> <p>“They should finish school because in my case I was sent to school late already by my parents, on and off, my age is far beyond my grade, it seemed that I regretted why is my life like this. At this age, I'm still at Grade 0, I should have graduated already. Just keep on going to school, don't stop no matter what.”- <b>P6</b></p> <p>“If they have tried [sex] already, they should not influence other people, so that others that they try to influence will not get curious. If they will try sex again, they should use protection so that they don't become a father at a young age. It's also difficult to become a father at a young age because of the rice [commodity], you also have to work.”-<b>P2</b></p>
Be Sexually Responsible	<p>“Don't touch the woman because that's too cruel, you'll have enough of her and you won't marry her. If you will get her, it is only when you are married already.”-<b>P3</b></p> <p>“My only advice is to go to school when you're young and not to have sex.”-<b>P4</b></p> <p>“It's better to stop it [sex] while you still don't have any stable work, if you don't have your own money as a source for the needs of your family. It's necessary to stop because it seems that you are not ready yet in that matter. What if it would have a result and would eventually get pregnant, it would be very difficult. So, it's better to stop it while it hasn't resulted yet because as a girl, we should be aware on how to respect ourselves, that we are worth it, we are very precious because others are still being taken care of by their fathers, by their older brothers, that's why we need to apply it to ourselves, that we have to take care of ourselves because we are at some point at risk to everyone.”-<b>P5</b></p>