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Adolescent Reproductive Health, Sex and Sexuality Education Program in a Science-Based Approach for Junior High School Learners

¹Joey Lyne D. Datinggaling & ²Elisa N. Chua

Abstract

This study was undertaken to determine the stakeholders' perspective on the adolescent reproductive health (ARH), sex, and sexuality education with the purpose of developing a program using a science-based approach to provide age and developmentally appropriate information for junior high school learners. A descriptive-developmental research design was used to determine any significant difference on the perception of the three groups of respondents on the adolescent reproductive health, sex, and sexuality education. Moreover, it determined the significant relationship between the students' evaluation of the designed program as to their profile and awareness on ARH, sex, and sexuality education. The results revealed a significant difference on the perception of the respondents on the adolescent reproductive health, sex, and sexuality education. Findings also revealed significant relationship between the students' profile, except religion and family orientation, and the effectiveness of the designed program. Therefore, the null hypothesis is partially upheld. Likewise, students' awareness is significantly related to the perceived effectiveness of the program on adolescence reproductive health, sex, and sexuality education. The research suggests that the designed program must be aligned to the holistic development of adolescents ensuring that the information is comprehensible and relevant to their stage of life.

Keywords: *Adolescent Reproductive Health, Sex Education, Sexuality Education, Science-Based Approach*

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1. Introduction

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported in April 2022 that approximately 1.3 billion adolescents, accounting for 16 percent of the global population, face challenges to the notion of youth as the hope and future of nations. Factors such as rising rates of teenage pregnancies, sexual violence, and HIV infections contribute to the difficulties of this situation (Department of Education, 2018). These issues not only jeopardize the physical and educational prospects of young individuals but also have lasting impacts on their overall well-being and their communities. Despite the magnitude of these risks, adolescent sexual and reproductive health has historically received inadequate attention due to various political, economic, and social barriers (Morris & Rushwan, 2015).

Adolescents aged 10 to 19, and youth, aged 15 to 24, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), undergo a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood. While they become physically capable of reproduction, their emotional, social, and economic development remains interconnected with their parental support. Reproductive health, encompassing psychological preparedness and behavioural adaptations, is a multifaceted process essential for a holistic well-being. However, misconceptions and taboos surrounding discussions about reproduction hinder effective education on the subject, leading to adverse outcomes like sexually transmitted diseases, early pregnancies, and unsafe abortions (Njoku & Josiah, 2015; Munakampe et al., 2018; Janighorban et al., 2022; Panda et al., 2023).

In the Philippine context, teenage pregnancy has emerged as a pressing concern. Studies indicate that adolescent mothers are less likely to complete secondary education, affecting their future employability and overall family earnings (UNFPA, 2020). The economic impact of early childbearing is substantial, potentially causing annual losses of up to 33 billion pesos for the country. Despite a decline in overall teenage birth rates, the Philippines still faces high rates of teenage pregnancy compared to other ASEAN member states (Zorilla, 2021). For instance, in 2019 alone, over 62,000 minors gave birth, with certain regions like CALABARZON, National Capital Region, and Central Luzon recording the highest numbers (POPCOM). To address these challenges, promoting reproductive health among youth is imperative, ensuring the development of beneficial habits and hygiene practices (Siswantara, 2020; Villa-Torres & Svanemyr, 2015).

The Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (DRDF) and University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFSS) indicated a notable increase in early sexual encounters among youth aged 15 to 24. Similarly, the PSA's 2017 National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) demonstrated that adolescent girls' childbearing rates escalate with age, with marriage being identified as a key factor in school dropout rates. Moreover, there were also high incidence of teenage pregnancies in certain regions, such as CALABARZON, Region III, and NCR. Cases of teenage pregnancy are observed to be on the rise in places like Quezon Province, and the influence of technology and lack of parental guidance are suggested as contributing factors. To address this issue, former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte issued Executive Order No. 141, prioritizing measures to curb teenage pregnancies. The Department of Education has also taken steps to incorporate comprehensive sexuality education into the curriculum (DepEd, 2018).

This study asserts that proper guidance and information dissemination, involving parents, teachers, and students, can contribute to healthy reproductive health among adolescents. While the DepEd acknowledges the importance of equipping youth with comprehensive knowledge and life skills to make informed decisions, studies also show pressing concerns on adolescent reproductive health (ARH) in the Philippines (Habito et al., 2019; Melgar et al., 2018; Maravilla et al., 2018; Gipson et al., 2020) and sex education among students (Kumar et al., 2017; Mueller et al., 2008; Soto-Fernández et al., 2023). In addition, studies showed that a science-based approach in sexuality education is effective in addressing issues on reproductive health (Philliber & Nolte, 2008; Sedivy et al., 2017). Hence, this study assessed the awareness of the three groups of participants (teachers, parents and students) on ARH, sex, and sexuality education as basis for the development of the science-based learning material. The developed learning material was also evaluated to determine its applicability as educational resource.

2. Literature review

2.1 Adolescent Reproductive Health

According to Backes and Bonnie (2019), adolescence is a critical developmental phase marked by the expansion and development of key brain regions. This period, extending

from puberty to the mid-20s, involves structural, functional, and connectivity changes in the brain. These changes contribute to the exploration of identity, building relationships, and experiencing new perspectives. Biswas (2020) emphasizes that reproductive health encompasses physical, psychological, and social well-being. It involves having a satisfying sexual life, making autonomous reproductive decisions, and accessing accurate information. It consists of quality health services, informed consent, and confidentiality.

The Open University (2017) points out that over a quarter of the world's population is aged 10 to 24, with most residing in less developed nations. The choices adolescents make regarding their sexual and reproductive health will have lasting impacts on communities and nations. Despite efforts, challenges persist in ensuring access to reproductive health care and education. Two significant issues affecting adolescent sexual and reproductive lives are family planning and HIV/AIDS. Pregnancy during adolescence is linked to various health risks for both mothers and infants, including increased chances of maternal mortality, STIs, and poor mental health outcomes (The OU, 2017).

The United Nations Populations Fund (2021) data revealed that a significant number of adolescent girls give birth each year in Asia and the Pacific. Teenage pregnancy has far-reaching consequences for individuals and future generations. High adolescent fertility rates are found in regions with varying levels of gender inequality. Early childbearing is more common among less educated, rural, and disadvantaged adolescents. Such circumstances can hinder reproductive health behaviors and lead to exploitation, poverty, and family separation. Adolescents may resort to high-risk behaviors to cope with their situations. For instance, Sawyerr and Adam-Bagley (2023) point out the global prevalence of adolescent sexual abuse, which is associated with low self-esteem and mental health issues. Osmeña and Barrera (2021) highlight the prevalence of child and adolescent sexual abuse in the Philippines and its significant impact on victims' physical and mental well-being. UNICEF's study in 2016 reveals that adolescents, particularly those aged 13-24, often experience various forms of violence, including sexual violence and abuse. Vulnerability to exploitation and abuse can disrupt supportive social structures, education, and well-being.

2.2 Sex Education

Sex education is defined by the American Sexual Education Association as providing scientifically accurate, non-judgmental information about sex. It encompasses sexual anatomy, reproduction, activity, and birth control (Leung et al., 2019). Research by Santelli et al. (2021) underscores its role in curbing adolescent behaviors leading to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Aquino et al. (2017) stress that sex education, especially in schools, is crucial for educating youth about the risks of early sexual activity. In fact, Goldfarb and Lieberman (2020) found that school-based sex education contributes to healthy relationships, prevention of abuse, and enhanced emotional learning while Netsanet et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of topics like human sexual anatomy and contraception. In the Philippines, discussions on contraception in sex education face resistance due to cultural and religious beliefs (La Bella, 2014).

According to Lindberg and Maddow-Zimet (2012), sex education fosters safe sexual behaviors and reproductive health. Inclusive sex education equips youth with skills for lifelong sexual health, fostering respect and understanding. It aids in preventing unplanned pregnancies and STDs (Planned Parenthood, n.d.). While it aims to educate about sex, sexuality, and growth, leading to STD and pregnancy prevention (Nichols, 2020), delivery of sex education varies globally due to cultural acceptance. The most challenges include societal taboos, differing views on addressing adolescent sexual behavior, and diverse delivery methods (Leung et al., 2019). Hence, sex education in schools must navigate cultural values while providing respectful discussions and skills training (Shtarkshall et al., 2007).

2.3 Sexuality Education

Sexuality education goes beyond the biological aspects of sex and reproduction, encompassing topics like gender identity, relationships, and body image for teenagers, including those with disabilities and special needs (Breuner & Mattson, 2016). Its aim is to enhance young people's ability to make informed decisions about relationships, sexuality, and well-being (European Expert Group on Sexuality Education, 2016). Sexuality education covers various aspects of human sexuality, including body interaction, emotions, gender

identity, and sexual orientation, and it is crucial for promoting healthy relationships (UNESCO, 2017).

During adolescence, forming a healthy sexuality involves understanding consent, sexual orientation, and relationships, shaped by factors like culture and personal identity (AAP, 2016). Homosexual adolescents might face challenges like isolation and discrimination, impacting their well-being (McDermott, 2010). Gender identity can differ from assigned sex, influencing how individuals perceive themselves (DepEd, 2017). Adolescents' body image is influenced by culture, media, and social media, affecting their self-esteem (Promoting Healthy Mental Development, n.d.).

Values play a role in decision-making about relationships and sexuality, impacting behavior (Prabhu, 2023). Culture also shapes development, including attitudes toward sexuality, hygiene, and gender stereotypes (Denis, 2013 as cited by Hedge et al., 2022). Digital technology and social media affect how adolescents interact, access information, and develop relationships (Benvenuti et al., 2023). The internet is a source of sexual health information, shaping behavior (von Rosen et al., 2017), but it can also expose adolescents to harmful content (Landry et al., 2017).

Parents and teachers are vital in addressing teenagers' questions about sex, with parental teaching impacting learners' educational activities (Shin et al., 2019). Schools play a role in comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), with teacher attitudes and willingness influencing its effectiveness (Mkumbo, 2012; Ollis et al., 2013). A comprehensive sexuality education aims to empower youth to make informed decisions about relationships and well-being, and not promoting sexual activity (UNFPA, 2016).

2.4 Science-Based Approach

Human life is inherently linked to sexuality, and providing accurate and scientifically grounded information about this topic is vital for children and young people. Nonetheless, the teaching of reproductive health and sexuality in schools is a critical issue, with differing viewpoints from various groups like parents, religious leaders, and politicians. These groups hold contrasting stances on the content and timing of such education, often leading to divisive debates (Mijatović, 2020). To address this, it is advocated that children should receive up-to-date, science-based process about sexuality education.

The scientific approach involves a systematic and evidence-based pursuit of knowledge concerning the natural and social realms. It encompasses objective observation, the search for evidence, using facts to draw generalizations or conclusions, repeated testing, critical analysis, and validation (Science Council, n.d.). Research suggests that employing a science-based approach entails employing rigorous and organized methods to gather precise and credible knowledge relevant to educational initiatives (Knoff, 2017). It is crucial to refrain from relying solely on personal judgments, emotions, or preferences when addressing subjects like sex, sexuality, and reproductive health to prevent misinformation and prejudice.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Reproductive Health (CDC DRH) initiated the Promoting Science-Based Approaches Using Getting-to-Outcomes (PSBA-GTO) project in 2016. The goal is to advocate for science-based approaches (SBAs) concerning adolescent sexuality and reproductive health. SBAs involve implementing policies and programs that have been effective in research. It emphasizes the importance of achieving tangible outcomes when designing programs at various levels, including schools, neighborhoods, communities, and states, to create positive societal impacts (CDC DRH, 2016).

According to Lesesne et al. (2016), promoting science-based approaches using getting-to-outcomes in topics involving ARH, sex and sexuality will aid the practitioner by systematically preparing, reviewing, updating and continuously improving a program or plan of actions. This approach manages to focus on the community's most pressing issue, requires using current research to identify important risk and protective factors so that work can be focused for the greatest possible benefit. It develops a clear and logical program and evaluation plan which is culturally sensitive to the needs of the community and incorporates continuous quality improvement and sustainability. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2015) specifically, the approach involves ten distinct steps. These steps include assessing the community's needs and resources, setting clear goals and outcomes for prevention programs, selecting evidence-based programs that align with the goals, ensuring the chosen program fits the community's context, identifying the organizational capacities required for implementation, crafting a detailed plan for program success, evaluating the program's planning and execution quality, determining whether the program achieved its intended impact, continually enhancing the program's quality, and

finally, sustaining the successful program over time. This guide provides a structured framework for creating and maintaining effective programs based on scientific principles.

Furthermore, to be an effective and efficient program the PSBA-GTO approach ensures proper planning and goal setting to guide in the identification of specific needs in the community, assessment of available resources and setting priorities and outcomes. There will also be program development which include pre-implementation and implementation phase to select and gather information by means of consultation and ask for support from stakeholders. This will guarantee that the program will fit for the learners and learnings will be age and developmentally appropriate. Evaluation and feedback will also be part of the program to monitor and assess its effectiveness (CDC, 2015).

3. Methodology

The study used a descriptive-developmental research design, utilizing questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaires include a 4-Point Likert Scale researcher-adapted survey questionnaire of Adolescent Reproductive Health, Sex, and Sexuality Education, researcher-adapted pre-implementation validation questionnaires and the post-implementation evaluation tool. In this context, the descriptive survey developmental research approach was chosen to establish a significant relationship between stakeholders' perspectives on ARH, sex, and sexuality education. The aim was to design a program which includes activities such as symposium and classroom-based discussion rooted in the acceptability of respondents, to address topics related to ARH, sex, and sexuality education.

The study employed four sets of respondents. The first set of respondents were composed of expert validators from the Department of Education – Division of Quezon province. The second set of respondents involved public school teachers of an integrated high school, junior high school department. Specifically, it included the participation of 21 teachers from the science department, 15 Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) teachers, 15 Araling Panlipunan teachers and nine teachers from Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP) department and the entire population were selected. The third set of respondents consisted of parents who were chosen using purposive sampling technique while the fourth set of respondents consisted of selected Grade 7 to 10 students. The participants

were oriented on the goal of the study, consented and expressed their willingness to join the survey. The study ensured confidentiality and anonymity of their personal information.

The statistical tools used were mean and standard deviation, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Pearson- r and Chi square test of independence.

4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1
Extent of Awareness on Domains of Adolescent Reproductive Health

Domains	Students (n = 400)		Parents (n = 135)		Teachers (n = 60)		Overall (n = 595)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Teenage pregnancy	3.30	0.51	3.51	0.51	3.80	0.30	3.40	0.52
Sexual health	3.07	0.52	3.38	0.50	3.74	0.35	3.21	0.55
Sexual violence and abuse	3.26	0.63	3.48	0.49	3.73	0.35	3.36	0.60

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 – Highly Aware(HA), 1.50 – 2.49 – Not Aware (NA), 2.50 – 3.49 – Aware (A), 1.00-1.49 – Highly Unaware (HU)

Table 1 shows the extent of awareness on the domains of ARH. In terms of teenage pregnancy, the students perceived themselves as aware while the parents and teachers are highly aware. Among the indicators, the respondents are highly aware that pregnant teenagers need special medical care and support. However, only parents and teachers are highly aware that pregnancy can happen anytime a woman has unprotected vaginal intercourse with a man even during teenage years. Moreover, teachers are highly aware of all the variables about teenage pregnancy. The findings are attributed to teachers' unique role in adolescents' lives, as they possess knowledge about various topics such as Science, Health, ESP, and AP, enabling them to offer valuable support despite not being medical experts. They also contribute significantly to the well-being of their students, even those facing teenage pregnancy. Simultaneously, parents are crucial in providing emotional support, connecting adolescents with medical professionals, and facilitating access to resources for navigating the challenges of pregnancy. Students themselves are urged to raise awareness,

fostering an inclusive environment and ensuring access to necessary resources for all during these trying circumstances.

In terms of sexual health, the students perceived themselves as aware as well as the parents while the teachers are highly aware of the concept. The respondents are highly aware that male and females need to take care of their bodies during childhood and adolescence. As a teacher, it is a critical role in educating both males and females about the importance of taking care of their bodies during childhood and adolescence. Teachers provide age-appropriate healthy habits and behaviors. Parents have to deal with their children specially during adolescence as it is a critical time for their physical, emotional, and cognitive development. For the students, this may be attributed to their exposure to lessons about reproductive system and reproductive health, personal experiences, media and internet that teach them about the importance of taking care of their bodies during adolescence.

In terms of sexual violence and abuse, the students perceived themselves as aware as well as the parents whereas the teachers are highly aware. The overall mean of 3.36 suggests that the three groups of respondents are aware on the domain of ARH specifically, topics about sexual violence and abuse. Parents and teachers are highly aware that sexual assault is a crime and a person who is sexually assaulted can report the assault to the proper authority. Teachers have the duty to protect their students from harm, including sexual assault. They are taught to recognize the signs of sexual assault and to take appropriate steps to protect the victim and prevent further harm. For instance, the student discipline committee released a student discipline handbook based on DepEd 4A-OIC-RM-21-217 (DepEd CALABARZON, 2021) which includes offenses related sexual assault. It was discussed by the teachers to parents and learners during the HPTA conference and students were given a copy of the handbook. Additionally, this may also imply that the parents are aware of legal implication of sexual assault. Parents are also exposed to news either through television, radio or newspaper where sexual assault to children are being reported. As parents, they also have a natural instinct to protect their children from any harm. Furthermore, students are aware that sexual assault is a crime because they are taught by their teachers, parents, through school campaign, and peer education.

Table 2
Cognition Level on Sex Education

Domains	Students (n = 400)		Parents (n = 135)		Teachers (n = 60)		Overall (n = 595)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Anatomy and physiology	2.96	0.60	3.18	0.60	3.55	0.44	3.07	0.61
Reproduction	2.95	0.61	3.25	0.55	3.58	0.44	3.08	0.62
Birth control	2.89	0.66	3.30	0.57	3.66	0.41	3.06	0.68

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 – Highly Familiar (HF), 1.50 – 2.49 – Moderately Familiar (MF), 2.50 – 3.49 – Familiar (F), 1.00-1.49 – Not Familiar (NF)

Table 2 illustrates that the students perceived themselves as familiar as well as the parents in terms of anatomy and physiology. Meanwhile, the teachers are highly familiar about the concepts. The overall mean of 3.07 suggests that the three groups of respondents are familiar on the domain sex education specifically topics about anatomy and physiology. Topics about anatomy and physiology are part of the school curriculum. Based on the K-12 Curriculum Guide (DepEd, 2013), the parts and functions of the reproductive system is being introduced in Grade 5. Since it is a spiral curriculum, higher concepts about anatomy and physiology of reproductive system are again being discussed in Grade 7 and Grade 10. It has an implication that as a teacher it is an essential part of their role in providing comprehensive sex education to their students. Schools have a responsibility to provide sex education as integrated topic in science education. Similarly, parents are familiar because they may have learned about it during their own education or from personal experience and the need to educate their children and promote a culture of respect and understanding when it comes to reproductive health. Although students show familiarity on topics about anatomy and physiology of reproductive system, it gained the least mean due to the fact that they still continuously learning these concepts.

As to reproduction, the students perceived themselves as familiar as well as the parents. The teachers are highly familiar. The overall mean of 3.08 suggests that the three groups of respondents are familiar on the domain of sex education, particularly topics about reproduction. Although they are familiar, they got the least mean score on topics about ovulation. However, the statement that common sign of pregnancy is a missed menstrual period got the highest mean.

As to birth control, the students perceived themselves as familiar as well as the parents. Students are the least familiar on topics about birth control whereas the teachers are highly familiar. The overall mean of 3.06 suggests that the three groups of respondents are familiar on the birth control. For teachers, they exhibited highly familiar on the concepts because they have the knowledge as they have learned these throughout their education. There are also programs and training under the Department of Education in support of DepEd's commitment under R.A. 10354 or the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 (DepEd, 2022). Parents are familiar with the recommendation that young individual should talk to adults about sexual intercourse and contraception because they have ideas about the consequences of early pregnancy. However, students have limited knowledge on concepts such as birth control since parents are cautious to discuss it.

Table 3
Familiarity on Sexuality Education

Indicators	Students (n = 400)		Parents (n = 135)		Teachers (n = 60)		Overall (n = 595)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Sexual orientation	3.20	0.53	3.32	0.48	3.61	0.43	3.27	0.52
Gender identity	3.17	0.53	3.21	0.49	3.62	0.41	3.22	0.53
Body image	3.18	0.57	3.27	0.46	3.58	0.44	3.24	0.55
Relationship	3.27	0.56	3.38	0.48	3.63	0.40	3.33	0.54
Personal skills	3.38	0.57	3.47	0.45	3.72	0.39	3.43	0.54
Society and culture	3.17	0.57	3.34	0.47	3.61	0.43	3.26	0.55
Media	3.14	0.55	3.31	0.49	3.55	0.49	3.22	0.55

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 – Highly Familiar (HF), 1.50 – 2.49 – Moderately Familiar (MF), 2.50 – 3.49 – Familiar (F), 1.00-1.49 – Not Familiar (NF)

Table 3 shows that the students as well as the parents are familiar with sexual orientation while the teachers are highly familiar with an overall mean of 3.27. This indicates that the teachers are knowledgeable as they have the responsibility to ensure that all students feel safe and supported in the classroom, regardless of their sexual orientation. For the parents, it can be inferred that it is important for them to create a safe and supportive environment where their children feel comfortable talking about their sexual orientation and where they can seek guidance and support. In addition, it is important for the students to develop empathy and understanding towards their peers who may have different sexual orientations.

On the other hand, gender identity showed students and parents familiarity and teachers high familiarity. The overall mean of 3.22 implies that the three groups of

respondents are familiar on topics about gender identity. For teachers, gender-based violence can have serious consequences for the students and can create an unsafe and negative learning environment. In addition, it is crucial for teachers to take these incidents seriously and to take immediate action to prevent further harm. Through the DO 32, S. 2017 also known as the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy by the Department of Education (DepEd, 2017), teachers are guided on how to protect students regardless of their gender identity and provide a safe and inclusive education for all. It is also essential for parents to be familiar with the importance of reporting incidents of discrimination, intimidation and harassment based on gender identity. By doing so, they can help ensure the safety and well-being of their children and others in the community. Furthermore, adolescents' familiarity of gender identity and issues related to it will provide them a sense of security.

Results further showed that students and parents are also familiar with body image while again the teachers are highly familiar. The overall mean of 3.24 implies the three groups' familiarity on the domains of body image. It is important for the teacher to be highly aware about body image which they can impart to their students and can help develop a healthier relationship with their bodies and to build a more positive self-image. This will lead to positive impact on their sexual health. Parents can provide support to teenagers and boost their self-image by appreciating other qualities aside from their physical attributes. Adolescents are in the process of developing their own identities and becoming aware of how their bodies are changing. The concept of body image influences their sense of self-worth and confidence and becomes a significant part of how they define themselves (Body Image Issues Among Adolescents, 2017).

In terms of relationship dimension, students and parents are still within the familiar range while the teachers are in the highly familiar range with an overall mean of 3.33. The respondents affirmed that family members are individuals, each with a unique personality. This implies that as teachers, they may help students understand that each person in a family is different and may have different needs, preferences, and boundaries. On the part of the parents, they play a significant role in shaping their children's attitudes and values towards relationships and sexuality. This understanding can help students develop healthier family relationships by promoting respect for individual differences and encouraging open and

honest communication. By promoting healthy family relationships, students can develop a strong support system that can help protect their sexual health.

In terms of personal skills, still students and parents are familiar while teachers are highly familiar with an overall mean of 3.43. Teachers are familiar with the importance of discussing personal values in sexuality education because they play a critical role in guiding decision-making related to sexuality health and promoting healthy attitudes and behaviors. Meanwhile, parents set the foundation for children's attitude, morals, and values. They contribute an important role in helping their children understand the role of values by expressing and discussing their own values and beliefs.

The society and culture dimension showed students and parents' familiarity and teachers' high familiar with an overall mean of 3.26. Teachers are highly familiar with this as they interact with students from various backgrounds and are often in a position to observe and address cultural differences in the classroom. This is also in the case of the parents as they have their own cultural or family background. They are also familiar about how society and culture may affect the views on sexuality based on their own experiences or interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds. For the students, they come from different family background that holds specific beliefs and values that they may have learned from their parents and relatives. By acknowledging and understanding these cultural differences, teachers and parents can provide support to students.

The students and papers are still familiar with media while teachers are still highly familiar with an overall mean of 3.22. Based on the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977 as cited by La Bella, 2015), children learn by mimicking others in their environment, and have clear connection to the effect of social media. Therefore, if children are exposed to negative types of sexuality information chances are, it might result to misconceptions and undesirable attitudes. Teachers and parents belong to the trusted persons among their children and students. They often look up to these people as role models. Accordingly, they can help their children and students develop critical thinking skills and media literacy to navigate the media landscape effectively. Students may personally experience how the adults and trusted persons guide them on various issues including media consumption.

Table 4*Experts Evaluation on the Appropriateness of the Designed Program of ARH, Sex and Sexuality Education*

Criteria	M	SD	VI
Program design	4.00	0.00	HA
Pre – implementation	3.96	0.10	HA
Implementation	3.92	0.20	HA
Post – implementation	4.00	0.00	HA

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 – Highly Appropriate (HA); 1.50 – 2.49 – Inappropriate (I); 2.50 – 3.49 -- Appropriate (A); 1.00-1.49 – Highly Inappropriate (HI)

Table 4 exhibits the experts' evaluation on the appropriateness of the designed program of Adolescent Reproductive Health, Sex, and Sexuality Education in a science-based approach for junior high school learners. The program focused on activities such as symposium to selected grade 7 to 10 learners. The table reveals that most respondents gave an evaluation of highly appropriate in all indicators implying the potential utilization to the target participants. The expert-reviewed program design effectively meets its purpose through a science-based approach, tailored to learners' needs and resource optimization. Objectives target holistic student needs with a well-planned monitoring system. Experts emphasis age-appropriateness and value post-implementation assessment for quality enhancement and program sustainability. However, seeking stakeholder support and refining symposiums for participant options require further consideration. According to Lesesne et al. (2016), science-based methods can be summarized into four parts: goal setting, program development, program planning and evaluation, and improving and sustaining the program. Employing this guide combined with proper training and technical assistance of the implementer will improve individual capacity and program performance.

Table 5*Students' Assessment on the Effectiveness of the Designed Program*

Criteria	M	SD	VI
Rationale	3.44	0.40	E
Objectives	3.51	0.38	HE
Pre-implementation	3.46	0.43	E
Implementation	3.53	0.33	HE
Impact	3.55	0.40	HE

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 – Highly Effective (HE); 1.50 – 2.49 – Moderately Effective M(E); 2.50 – 3.49 – Effective (E); 1.00-1.49 – Not Effective (NE)

Table 5 displays the students' assessment on the effectiveness of the designed program. It was revealed that the designed program is highly effective. This indicates that the program was successful. It can be interpreted that the students realized the importance of the program to their well-being and viewed the topics as relevant to their needs.

Table 6

Significant Difference on Respondents' Familiarity on the Adolescent Reproductive Health, Sex and Sexuality Education

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Adolescent Reproductive Health	Between Groups	18.518	2	9.259	42.318**	.000
	Within Groups	129.525	592	.219		
	Total	148.042	594			
Sex	Between Groups	28.526	2	14.263	51.422**	.000
	Within Groups	164.204	592	.277		
	Total	192.730	594			
Sexuality Education	Between Groups	8.630	2	4.315	21.711**	.000
	Within Groups	117.657	592	.199		
	Total	126.287	594			

**Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 6 shows the test of the difference in the perception of the three groups of respondents on the adolescent reproductive health, sex and sexuality education. Based on the results, there is a significant difference on the familiarity of the respondents on the adolescent reproductive health, sex, and sexuality education.

Table 7 displays the significant relationship between the student respondents' perception on the designed ARH, sex, and sexuality education program as to their demographic profile. The result reveals a low positive correlation between the age and students' perception on adolescent reproductive health ($r = 0.360$), sex education (0.374), and sexuality education (0.324). This implies that the age of the students' respondents has minimal effect on their perception regarding the designed program on ARH, sex, and sexuality education. Most of the respondents belong to middle adolescence (14-17 years).

Table 7*Correlation between the Students' Evaluation of Designed Program and Their Profile*

Students' Evaluation	Demographic Profile				
	Age (<i>r-value</i>)	Sex (χ^2 value)	Religion (χ^2 value)	Family Orientation (χ^2 value)	Media Source (χ^2 value)
Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH)	.360**	27.505**	4.449	1.911	21.182**
Sex Education	.374**	10.149**	2.412	4.138	11.282
Sexuality Education	.324**	10.287**	1.358	6.080	16.240**

**Significant at .01 level *Significant at .05 level

In this developmental stage, teenagers have their previous knowledge about concepts related to ARH, sex, and sexuality education and their continuous maturity enable them to understand that these concepts are needed for their well-being. Furthermore, the sex of the respondents correlates with the student's perception on adolescent reproductive health ($x^2=27.505$), sex education ($x^2=10.149$), and sexuality education ($x^2=10.287$). Based on the study of Aventin et al. (2020), gender distinctions exist in intergenerational communication on sexuality. However, the result also viewed that the relationship between students' evaluation, religion and family orientation are not significant. Family orientation and religion do not affect the perception of students when it comes to ARH, sex, and sexuality education. For most adolescence, they tend to get information about reproductive health, sex and sexuality related topics to other sources such as social media, internet, peers, and school rather than their family. They have hesitations discussing their sexual matters to their parents. Moreover, in media source and student's perception, only adolescent reproductive health and sexuality education were significant and correlated with $x^2 = 21.182$ and 16.240 , respectively. Being digital natives, most adolescence tend to rely on social media and internet for information. Topics about adolescent reproductive health and sexuality education are rampant in social media and the internet, and adolescence has a quick access to this information.

Table 8 reveals the correlation between the student respondents' perception on the designed ARH, sex, and sexuality education program and their familiarity on ARH, sex, and sexuality education. It is noted that there is a significant relationship between students'

awareness and their assessment on the designed program. Based on the result, it may be suggested that the respondents have their previous knowledge on some topics about ARH, sex, and sexuality before the implementation of the program. The students who have previous knowledge are more eager to know about the topics on ARH, sex, and sexuality education since it deepens their understanding, answer their questions, and correct their misconceptions about their reproductive and sexual health.

Table 8

Correlation between the Students' Evaluation of the Designed Program and Their Familiarity on Adolescent Reproductive Health, Sex, and Sexuality Education

	Rationale	Objective	Pre-implementation	Implementation	Impact
ARH					
Teenage pregnancy	.188**	.208**	0.095	.261**	.146**
Sexual health	.170**	.231**	.158**	.265**	.190**
Sexual violence and abuse	.166**	.207**	.112*	.247**	.194**
Sex education					
Anatomy and physiology	.157**	.140*	.112*	.199**	0.103
Sexual reproduction	.160**	.186**	0.106	.176**	.139*
Birth control	.191**	.178**	.133*	.199**	.111*
Sexuality Education					
Sexual orientation	.170**	.188**	0.104	.212**	.155**
Gender identity	.177**	.191**	0.087	.190**	.147**
Body image	.185**	.211**	0.094	.220**	0.072
Relationships	.195**	.266**	.183**	.302**	.140*
Personal skills	.175**	.231**	.126*	.249**	.128*
Society and culture	.185**	.213**	.114*	.236**	.150**
Media	.225**	.272**	.185**	.266**	.164**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5. Conclusion

This study showed significant difference on the familiarity of the respondents on the adolescent reproductive health, sex, and sexuality education. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not supported. Similarly, there is a significant relationship between the students'

demographic profile except on variables about religion and family orientation and their evaluation of the designed program. Therefore, the null hypothesis is partially upheld. There is a significant relationship between the students' familiarity and their evaluation of the designed program. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not supported.

In the light of the findings and conclusions, this study suggests the program design be adjusted for student' readiness, particularly for elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels, enhancing flexibility. The content can also be tailored to students' needs and grade levels for age-appropriate learning. This adaptable program can serve as a model for other schools, potentially becoming a recognized best practice.

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Human Development Gaps: Evidence from Eastern Indonesia

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Abstract

The Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia continues to improve. However, the rate of development varies by region, most notably in eastern Indonesia. Based on our findings, it is clear that during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in 2020, HDI growth in Indonesia slowed, with Eastern Indonesia even experiencing negative growth. During this time, Eastern Indonesia dropped from 65.78 to 65.74, or 0.04 points, while other regions continued to increase by 0.05 to 0.06 points. Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) per capita, the number of poor people, the expected length of schooling, and life expectancy are among the variables that affect HDI. Between 2012 and 2022, data about variables affecting HDI were gathered as panel data from 159 regencies/cities in 5 provinces in Eastern Indonesia. The provinces are East Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, North Maluku, Papua, and West Papua. According to the data, GRDP per capita, expected length of schooling, and life expectancy all positively affected the HDI. In contrast, the number of poor people had the opposite effect. Differences in these four elements in each of Indonesia's regions will cause HDI disparities. The study's policy implications are that the Indonesian government can emphasize equitable distribution and improve the quality of human development in eastern Indonesia.

Keywords: *Human Development Index, GRDP per capita, Poor people, Expected Length of School, Life Expectancy*

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1. Introduction

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of human development. HDI measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living (The World Bank, 2010). Bilbao-Ubillos (2013) refers longevity to the ability of the individuals to enjoy a long and healthy life, access to knowledge with the educational system and average life standards through purchasing power. In the element of decent living, the economic ability (purchasing power) to meet primary needs is represented by the average spending of the population per capita. According to Todaro and Smith (2014), HDI is an index measuring the national socioeconomic development, based on combining measures of education, health, and adjusted real income per capita. It is a summary indicator in comparing the well-being of countries in the world (Deb, 2015; Lind, 2019; Ranis et al., 2016). Although it is a widely-accepted measure of country's social and economic development (Dervis & Klugman, 2011; Paliova et al., 2019; Ghislandi et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2023; Perkins et al., 2021). Pinar et al. (2022) argue that there are other indicators to measure the overall construct of national well-being. For instance, Comim (2016) asserts the inclusion of capability perspective while Ghislandi et al. (2019) also include the fusion of two indicators, namely life expectancy (LE) and expected length of schooling (ELS), from the education aspect. In addition, Ibar-Alonso et al. (2019) introduced the Time Human Development Index (THDI) to include the impact of time period on national development. In Indonesia, the Central Bureau of Statistics uses life expectancy at birth to measure health factors (BPS.go.id, 2020).

There are several studies that measure the HDI in various countries. For example, Liu et al. (2023) measured the China Human Development Index (CHDI) using inequality adjustment model and DFA model to analyse the current situation of regional imbalance. Meanwhile, Tunsu and Alidrisi (2023) considered technological factor as the fourth dimension of HDI in G8 countries using Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) techniques. There are other dimensions introduced to measure HDI such as adolescent fertility rate as value-added in oil-dependent nations (Fossaceca, 2019), tourism market as composite indicator (Biagi et al., 2015), peace and happiness as component of Composite Development Index (Prakash & Garg, 2019) and HDI as predictor of life satisfaction in

Malaysia (Ngoo & Tey, 2019). However, Muluk and Wahyudi (2022) identified that in Indonesia there are limited studies on HDI in the regional and municipal levels.

Geographically, Indonesia is divided into three parts, which are western, central, and eastern as shown in figure 1 and table 1.

Figure 1

Provincial Map of Indonesia



Source: <https://www.resourcefulindonesian.com/mapping-indonesia.html>, 2023

Table 1

Provinces & Areas by Region

Regions		
West	Central	East
Aceh	DKI Jakarta	East Nusa Tenggara
North Sumatra	West Java	Maluku
West Sumatra	Central Java	North Maluku
Riau	Di Yogyakarta	West Papua
Jambi	East Java	Papua
South Sumatra	Banten	
Bengkulu	Bali	
Lampung	West Nusa Tenggara	
Bangka Belitung Islands	South Kalimantan	
Riau Islands	East Kalimantan	
West Kalimantan	North Kalimantan	
Central Kalimantan	North Sulawesi	
	Central Sulawesi	
	South Sulawesi	
	Southeast Sulawesi	
	Gorontalo	
	West Sulawesi	

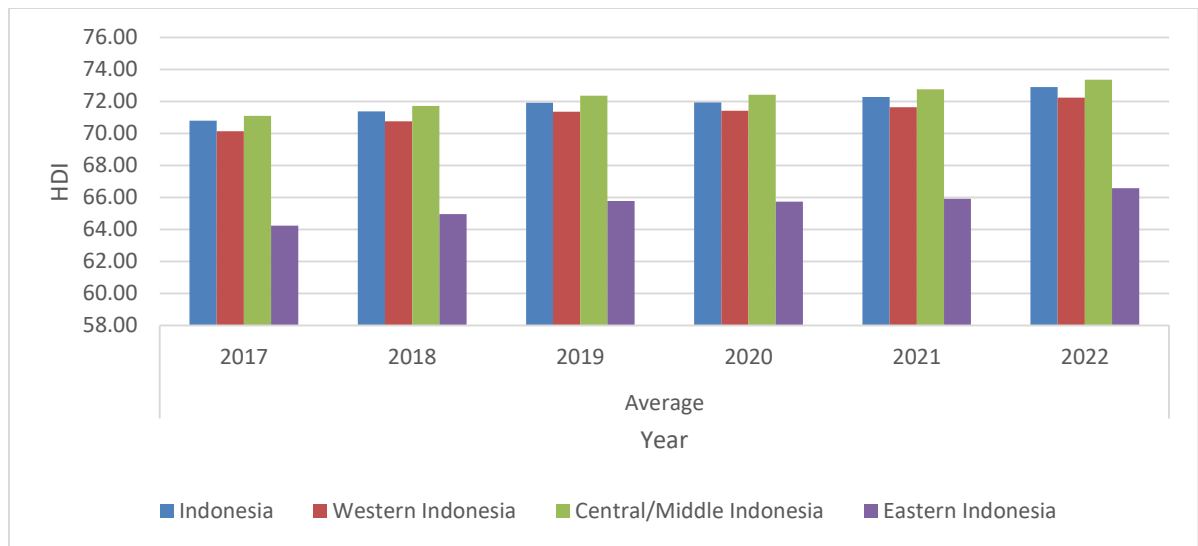
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020

Human development in Indonesia continue increased to an HDI score of 71.92 in 2019, or an increase of 0.53 points, and has grown 0.74% compared to the previous period.

In the same year, it also appears that Indonesian people meet the needs of life with an average purchasing power parity (PPP) of up to IDR 11.30 million per year, or IDR 240 thousand higher. Although HDI in Indonesia has increased in recent years, there are also prominent gaps between provinces/regions. It is undeniable that HDI, in general, is more focused on Indonesia's central and western areas. The following graph shows these phenomena of HDI development over the past six years.

Figure 2

Human Development Index in Indonesia



Source: processed data, 2023

According to the data in figure 2, the HDI in Indonesia has a significant gap. There is a tremendous disparity among the three Indonesian regions. Eastern Indonesia has a much lower HDI than the rest of Indonesia and the national average. There are allegations that factors affecting HDI's performance are GRDP per capita, poor population, literacy rate, and life expectancy. Arisman (2018), Khodabakhshi (2011), and Dasic et al. (2020) argued that developing countries such as ASEAN, Africa, and South America face slow-accelerating human development rates due to uncontrolled populations. In addition, the government, as a macroeconomic policy maker, is also overwhelmed to overcome socio-economic problems such as poverty due to population explosion. Because the government budget is so limited, it is impossible to reach every population level. Therefore, improvements in quality of life, employment, education, health insurance, and public facilities are frequently overlooked.

In the current situation, economic conditions in Indonesia, marked by GDP in 2020, have contracted by -2.07% (ZA et al., 2021). Compared to 2019, there is at least striking

change, where the 2019 period still grows at 5.02%. Covid-19 is undoubtedly the dominant factor in why the GDP growth rate in Indonesia has dived sharply (Budiono & Purba, 2023; Mishra, 2021). A decline in GDP growth during 2020 affected people's economic capability (Roy et al., 2021). The level of household consumption has been the foundation of GDP growth in Indonesia for decades. The financial condition was worsened by the addition of poor people due to job losses. Putra (2018) highlighted the correlation between HDI in Jambi Province and economic growth, poverty, and unemployment during 2011-2015. As a result, HDI is positively affected by poverty and unemployment. At the same time, the increase in economic growth can reduce HDI.

Poverty is described as a lack of economic power and a failure to provide equal treatment and fulfill basic human rights. In addition, Haughton and Khandker (2009) characterize a poor person without financial or economic means to live decently. This point of view looks at poverty from a monetary standpoint. However, poverty is also associated with some types of consumption, such as homelessness, lack of food, or bad health. The most often used method of determining happiness (and poverty) is based on a person's ability to engage in society. The impoverished frequently lack basic capacities; they may lack income or education, be ill, feel helpless, or lack political freedom. Furthermore, Buhaerah (2016) emphasized that fundamental rights include health, work, education, food, clean water, defense, housing, the environment, a sense of security, natural resources, and the right to participate in socio-political life. Hence, poverty also encourages people or groups of individuals to make real efforts toward living a dignified life (Darma et al., 2020). There must be progress to transform from a slump to a better one. In addition to social problems, other adverse effects of poverty can potentially affect economic development and the decline of HDI (Sugianto & Vasantan, 2018; Swastika & Supriyatna, 2016).

The Covid-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on all aspects of life. For instance, the lower GRDP per capita achievement reflects economic indicators that contribute to an increase in the poor population. In addition, the Covid-19 also limited school activities, which affected the expected length of schooling, and it certainly affected health, which is directly tied to life expectancy. Inconsistencies between real-world facts and literature pose the issue on the causes of human development gaps. Similarly, arguments arise on the HDI being affected by GRDP per capita, the number of poor people, the expected length of schooling, and life expectancy.

The issues raised in this study are relevant to various United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG), such as eradicating poverty in all of its forms worldwide, encouraging healthy lifestyles and well-being for all ages, improving educational quality, and reducing disparities (United Nations, 2015). The findings of the study are expected to have policy implications for the Indonesian government to raise the level of HDI, thus contributing to the achievement of the UN SDG Goals. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to assess how the four variables (GRDP per capita, poverty, expected length of schooling and life expectancy) affected HDI in districts/cities in Eastern Indonesia.

2. Literature review

2.1. Human Development Index (HDI)

Biao (2011) outlines that education, per capita income, and health are three significant components in HDI based on the evolution of the modern world since the emergence of classical economic theory to the idea of sustainable economic welfare. Although the utilization of HDI in various parts of the world nowadays is aimed at different goals, employing HDI as a tool for public decision-making is still worth investigating. As a significant basis, the essential principles of HDI seek to study the extent to which gross national product (GNP) plays a role in human development. Compared to other indicators, the HDI's complexity shows advancement in the multidimensionality of fundamental growth. On the other hand, the characteristics of the population's ability to receive welfare, essential health, and good education have influenced the paradigm of concentration and transformation of evolving human goals (Bagolin & Comim, 2008).

2.2. GRDP per capita

Central Bureau of Statistics defined gross regional domestic product (GRDP) as the amount of gross value added by business units in a domestic region or the sum of all the final value of products and services produced by all economic activity. GRDP per capita, or total GRDP divided by population, is a standard indicator used to assess the level of economic well-being of a region's people. GRDP per capita is also used as an indicator of overall economic performance. Income per capita is a monetary indicator of a region/country population's economic activity. The higher the income per capita, the better the economy.

National income is an essential element in driving economic growth. One of the things that can increase national income is human development. In fact, Elistia and Syahzuni (2018) found a strong correlation between HDI and GDP. GDP allows for an increase in HDI. Therefore, with a rise in HDI, there is a possibility of strengthening GDP more broadly.

On the other hand, aggregate economic and social development in numerous countries has linked the broad concept of income with the HDI components (health, morals, and education). According to Yakunina and Bychkov (2015), combining these two characteristics demonstrates the concept of comprehensive development capacity resulting to GRDP per capita positively impact HDI.

2.3. Poverty

While the concept of poverty is comprehensive, Gweshengwe and Hassan (2020) analyze and examine the characteristics of poverty. Although various notions tend to be multidimensional and complex, poverty is split into two parts: absolute and individual. Individual poverty is reflected in the severity of poverty based on sex and age. Meanwhile, the absolute nature of poverty tends to be more effective and holistic, depending on their contribution to development policies (Wagle, 2018). Deonandan (2019) asserts that the size of relative poverty is the lower threshold of the population in a country. Those said to be 'relatively poor' have less wealth than other social groups. That is, if their income is not more than 60% of the average income of the population, then they can be said to be poor.

Regina et al. (2020) examined the effect of poverty and its impact on HDI in Indonesia. Through panel data involving 33 provinces throughout Indonesia, the result showed poverty negatively affecting HDI. Similarly, Syofya (2018) found that poverty reflected by poverty thresholds and lines can significantly affect HDI in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Amaluddin et al. (2018) concluded that development performance such as HDI could explicitly reduce poverty levels in West Seram (Maluku Province). Based on the results of the previous studies, this research argues that poverty negatively impacts HDI.

2.4. Expected Length of Schooling (ELS)

Another dimension of HDI is the human knowledge or education level. Referring to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2020), the ELS is the number of the expected duration or length of school within a certain period felt by children at a certain age in the future. The

ELS is measured by involving residents aged seven years and above. It is a dimension previously included in the Average Length of Schooling (ALS). Like ALS, ELS also uses standards agreed upon by some countries with the minimum limit as zero (0), and the highest as eighteen (18). They are using ELS to analyze the current situation of the education development system from various levels.

Referring to the findings of Yogiantoro et al. (2019), in districts/cities in Central Kalimantan Province, the quality of education has been dominant in increasing HDI during 2015-2017. Meanwhile, Humaira and Nugraha (2018) found that during 2012-2015, HDI as a parameter of human development in West Kalimantan Province, tended to be determined by the quality of education. On the other hand, the study of Juliannisa and Siswantini (2019) revealed something more interesting in a smaller scope, such as Cibadak District (Sukabumi Regency, West Java Province). Findings showed that when considered carefully, human resource factors significantly impact the course of the economy in the surrounding area. A better educational status in the community becomes the basic foundation to support the sustainability of human resources. In line with this, this study posits that ELS positively impacts HDI.

2.5. Life Expectancy (LE)

LE is derived from projections against the average of each individual's age gain that is expected to continue living. It is also interpreted as the average unit year lived by individuals after they reach their birthday in a certain period. It is one of the benchmarks in evaluating government performance aimed at improving population welfare measured on the number of babies with a longer life expectancy yearly.

A further important trait is identifying variations and similarities in empirical assessments of prior studies that show the involvement of LE in HDI. For instance, Iskandar (2017) recorded 23 regencies/cities in Aceh Province that experienced a significant increase in human development. Since the existence of a particular budget for health and education, LE's performance has increased sharply and can push HDI in a sustainable direction. On a national scale, Wijaya and Suasih (2021) explained that the government's role in accelerating the increase in health and education budgets has boosted LE, which has a causal relationship to poverty. The priority program to reduce poverty is consistently improving the health and education sector. Therefore, LE has a positive impact on HDI.

3. Methodology

This research is based on hypothesis testing or explanatory research. The data used are panel data collected from publications of the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) Indonesia. Furthermore, the panel data combines time series data from all variables during 2012-2022, including data from 159 regencies/cities in eastern Indonesia. This research used Eviews software to calculate the data.

This research focuses on the role of the composite index in human development. The analysis model emphasizes an equation on a more practical interpretation of the results of regression calculations that still reflect the effects of each HDI dimension. The formulation of the equation is as follows:

$$\text{HDI} = \alpha_0 + \beta_1\text{GRDP} + \beta_2\text{PP} + \beta_3\text{ELS} + \beta_4\text{LE} + e \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where, HDI = Human Development Index (%); GRDP = Gross Regional Domestic Product per capita (IDR); PP = Number of poor people (%); ELS = Expected Length of Schooling (%); LE = Life Expectancy (%)

According to Gujarati and Porter (2013), three models can be used to process the panel data: the common effect model, the fixed effect model, and the random effect model. We decided, however, that a common effect model would be inappropriate for our inquiry and dropped it. In this study, the Eviews software runs a fixed effect model and a random effect model, followed by a Hausman test to evaluate which model best fits our panel data. If the Hausman test yields a probability of less than 5%, the fixed effect model can be used. Otherwise, if the result is greater than 5%, the estimate is recommended using the random effect to obtain better results.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Findings

The common effect model is not used in this research since it does not display dimensions between time and area coverage with the condition of time range behavior similarity from various regions. Indeed, this is far from the case, as the characteristics of eastern Indonesia are undeniably different from those in the western and central areas of the

country. As a result, the common effect technique produces biased results with multiple interpretations (Gujarati & Porter, 2013).

The fixed effect technique prioritizes panel data based on intercept differences in each region. However, the similarity is the intercept between times. The output of fixed effects in the panel data of districts/cities in Eastern Indonesia is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Fixed Effect panel data regression

Variable	Coefficient	T-Statistics	Prob
C	0,3602	0,1672	0,8672
GRDP	3.05E-08	11,5287	0,0000
PP	-0,1557	-13,9016	0,0000
ELS	2,6485	49,3337	0,0000
LE	0,4934	14,7255	0,0000
R ² = 0.8919			
N = 912			

Source: Eviews 8 output, estimated 2023 data.

Based on the fixed effect regression output, the equation function is: $HDI = 0,3602 + 3.05E-08 GRDP - 0,1557 PP + 2,6485 ELS + 0,4934 LE + e$

The random effect, known as the Error Component Model (ECM) with particular panel data in districts/cities in Eastern Indonesia, is described in Table 3.

Table 3

Panel data regression with random effect

Variable	Coefficient	T-Statistics	Prob
C	-33,2307	-4,6197	0,0000
GRDP	8.74E-11	0,0231	0,9816
PP	-0,1279	-3,6792	0,0002
ELS	1,5991	11,8686	0,0000
LE	1,2037	9,7756	0,0000
R ² = 0.9747			
N = 912			

Source: Eviews 8 output, estimated 2023 data.

The equation of regression results from the random effect is: $HDI = -33.2307 + 8.74E-11 GRDP - 0.1279 PP + 1.5991 ELS + 1.2037 LE + e$

In addition, if the Hausman test shows probability with criteria below 5%, then the fixed effect model is feasible to apply and vice versa. If above 5%, the estimate is recommended through random effect to get better results.

Table 4*Regression of panel data with the Hausman test*

Test Summary	Chi – Sq. Statistics	Chi -Sq. d.f	Prob.
Cross-section random	52,9388	4	0,0000

Source: Eviews 8 output, estimated 2023 data.

Table 4 shows the probability of the Hausman test <0.05 . In conclusion, applying the model with panel data related to HDI from districts/cities in Eastern Indonesia has met the criteria. Then the fixed effect is the best fit for the data. Therefore, the function of the regression equation with a fixed effect is as follows:

$$\text{HDI} = 0,3602 + 3.05\text{E-}08 \text{ GRDP} - 0,1557 \text{ PP} + 2,6485 \text{ ELS} + 0,4934 \text{ LE} + e$$

4.2. Discussion

According to the result of fixed effect panel data regression, the R^2 value of 0.8919 implies that the variables GRDP per capita, number of poor people, expected length of schooling, and life expectancy influence the HDI by 89.19%, with the remaining 10.81% explained by factors outside the model.

With a coefficient of 3.05E-08, GRDP per capita positively impacts HDI in districts/cities in Eastern Indonesia, suggesting that every 1% rise in GRDP raises the HDI level by 3.05E-08%. Eastern Indonesia, particularly Papua and West Papua, is an example of looping economic growth, with a strong GRDP per capita but low HDI growth. A high level of GRDP per capita does not necessarily imply that every Papuan earns more than the average. Public access to health care, education, and economic development is relatively limited in various districts. In eastern Indonesia, the average HDI is 60.45, placing it in the bottom group. Papua has great natural resource potential, but it appears to have escaped the government's attention thus far, maybe due to the exploitation of an urban-biased economic paradigm. Eastern Indonesia's natural resource wealth is massively exploited, but local human resources' asset transfer and development are not optimized. According to Nainggolan et al. (2021), GRDP growth is an overall combination of the added value of services and goods produced from all economic activity at a specific period. GRDP also describes the rate of a region's development of people.

The critical task of the dual effect of expanding GRDP is to help increase the quality and quantity of human resource development. By the 'Kuznet Theory,' the achievement of continuous per capita output at all levels is a mark of modern growth (Ranis & Stewart, 2012). There will be a transformation in consumption patterns based on purchasing power intensity. The increase in purchasing power of the population, of course, can boost HDI. According to Ranis and Stewart (2012), one of the indicators to measure the level of welfare of the people of an area is to look at the GRDP per capita figure. The higher economic quality of the population also represents the quality of high economic growth in an area. Economic development characterized by inclusive growth is an absolute requirement to achieve harmonization in human development. There is a guarantee for income and productivity improvement through the availability of jobs if the mission is to boost economic growth.

Statistical results show that the number of poor people hurts HDI with a coefficient of -0.1557, which means that every 1% increase in the number of poor people reduces the HDI rate by approximately 0.15%. Data from 2012 to 2022 show a tendency for the percentage of poor people to rise, resulting in a drop in HDI. Papua, one of the provinces in Eastern Indonesia, has a high poverty rate, while the HDI shows a low level. This situation aligns with Malthus Theory (Budhijana, 2020). The 'Malthusian Theory' highlights that as population expansion increases, so does the need for food supplies, and it will almost definitely come down to the capacity or availability of food stocks, which will become increasingly limited and scarce. Those classified as lower middle class or low-income will find it hard to access food and be pushed into poverty. As broadly defined, poverty is when a person no longer has sufficient resources to live a decent life. Even basic (primary) needs can fail to satisfy them effectively. Because poor people have little purchasing power, they cannot meet their physical and non-physical needs. Because of this, their standard of living is low. A low standard of living can hurt human development.

With a coefficient of 2,6485, the expected length of schooling (ELS) positively affects HDI in districts/cities in Eastern Indonesia, with every 1% rise in ELS increasing HDI by roughly 2.64%. ELS demonstrates the intensity and concern for a region's education sector. The higher the ELS, the greater the level of schooling pursued. The generally accepted theory is that, the higher an individual's level of education, the higher the quality of both mindset and behavior. Several districts/cities in Eastern Indonesia, such as East Nusa

Tenggara, Maluku, and North Maluku, demonstrate a high level of concern for education, as evidenced by the higher average length of school expectations compared to other regions in Eastern Indonesia, as well as a higher HDI level, implying that the expected length of schooling has a positive influence on HDI. The Human Capital Theory states that the educated population is a productive-age population, emphasizing the quantity of education to improve the quality listed in the 'Theory of Productivity and Work Efficiency.' It is interesting to note that changes in the level of cognitive abilities of individual workers will increase productivity economically. Dasic et al. (2020) linked ELS to HDI in countries incorporated in the Western Balkans region and conclude that HDI growth is increasing along with the progress of human development in terms of improvements in the field of comprehensive education. In their implementation, they adopt specific action plans and strategies to expand the knowledge of the population by providing pathways of competency for the short and long term.

With a coefficient of 0.4934, life expectancy (LE) positively influences HDI in districts/cities in Eastern Indonesia. With every 1% rise in LE, it is increasing HDI by roughly 0.49%. According to Health Economic Theory, the theory's practice and techniques focus more on health economics. They are closely related to the ability to allocate resources to encourage improving individual health, thus requiring policies in organizing, financing, and providing health facilities and services (e.g. Bauchner et al., 2020; Chhatwal & Postma, 2021; Sullivan et al., 2020). The theory is an elaboration and application of economics that focuses on the health sector to bring differences in broadening horizons on how to treat, restore health, and prevent for the community. LE is very appropriate to show the government's ability to improve public welfare, especially health status, as LE also describes the average age of individuals in the community in certain mortality situations. If the LE in an area is low, it means that development in the health sector has not been successful, and vice versa (Saha & Zhang, 2017). Lonska and Boronenko (2015) presented a trend of competitiveness and achievement of human development in the global scope of 2006-2012, which is relatively high and not necessarily in line with its capacity for growth. Realistically, global comparative results also represent that economic growth is driven by human resource productivity.

Interestingly, high HDI also does not necessarily indicate the capacity of quality human resources, where the analysis of human resource development currently tends to be

very competent if supported by improvements in nutrition and good health. Generally, people in Western and Central Indonesia have the support of adequate health facilities, so they have the opportunity to obtain decent livelihoods and welfare. Those in the East, however, are less likely to have good health support. Therefore, the HDI level in the eastern region tends to be lower than in other parts of Indonesia.

5. Conclusion

This study consistently examined the factors that have influenced the HDI in recent years, including GRDP per capita, the number of poor people, the length of schooling, and life expectancy in Eastern Indonesia. This study discovered that GRDP per capita, ELS, and LE have a significant and beneficial effect on HDI; however, increasing the number of poor people hurts HDI. Differences in these four elements in each of Indonesia's regions cause HDI disparities. The study's policy implications are that the Indonesian government can emphasize equitable distribution and improve the quality of human development in eastern Indonesia, specifically by increasing the proportion of households with access to electricity, clean water, and adequate housing. Improving HDI can be achieved in the education and health sectors by increasing the number of schools and improving health facilities in eastern Indonesia. These policies hopefully reduce the HDI gap.

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The Unknown World of Male Masseurs

Andro T. Tabiolo

Abstract

Massage as a camouflage for prostitution using the online dating application is one of the rarely explored topics. This qualitative study, in the form of a narrative, presents a comprehensive story of the lives and situational experiences, vulnerabilities, and resiliencies of five freelance male sex masseurs. A narrative approach was used in the study. Specifically, this study highlights personal and social circumstances of the participants and the participants' motivation and exposure to engage as a sex massage therapist. The study revealed that participants had varying reasons for entering this kind of career; the common denominator in offering extra service was that they came from poor families, were abuse victims, and had low academic performance. The love for their families, easy money above all, a personal choice motivates them to engage in sex massage. For most participants, part of their motivation is the economic benefit, which bolsters the position of an economic necessity to alleviate their financial conditions. Further, their current personal circumstances, specifically the lack of job opportunities due to their educational attainment, limit their choices of profession. The results of this study conformed with the understanding that the most common reason for engaging into sex work concerned the financial benefits; that most participants enjoyed being male-sex masseurs; and the participants have positive improvements in their psychological health in terms of increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and the ability of the work to reduce feelings of depression and isolation.

Keywords: *extra service, prostitution, narrative inquiry, sex massage, male masseur, online sex work*

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1. Introduction

Massage is an integrative modality recognized as adjunctive supportive care in managing pain. It is defined as the "hand motions practiced on the individual body surface with a therapeutic goal" (Wilkie *et al.*, 2000). Massage therapy is a part of Filipino culture in terms of pain management and has become one of the standard practices in the province Aklan. According to Fajardo and Panascola (2013), the Philippine *hilot* massage therapy is an ancient art of treatment using bare hands and herbs. It is a part of the traditional, ancient culture of Filipinos. *Hilot* is practiced all over the islands, cutting across ethnolinguistic divisions. While different names know it, and best practices may vary across the regions, the underlying principles are unmistakably the same. Massage therapy is available in various settings, including shopping malls, tourist attractions, and residential areas. Massage therapy services while always protecting customers' privacy. These settings are frequently utilized as prostitution venues by others.

Freelance male masseurs looked for other ways to attract clients by using the male-exclusive online application offering "extra service." "Extra service" refers to sexual services in addition to body massage in exchange for money or goods. This "extra service" could be classified as prostitution, sex for livelihood, usually paid in cash. It includes not only regular intercourse but also any form of sexual contact with another person for a fee.

The accessibility and ease of use of these apps have facilitated this growth for both masseurs and clients in trading services. This underground and discreet activity of male masseurs is unknown to the general public. Thereby sex massage therapy is disguised as prostitution (Wiryanwan & Bunga, 2018; Tayibnapis *et al.*, 2019; Matolcsi *et al.*, 2021; Monk-Turner & Turner, 2017).

Masseurs engage in online services using special applications offering "extra service" to attract clients. In massage sessions, male masseur provides various types of sexual transactions, ranging from holistic to sensual and erotic massage therapy such as *lingam* (*a type of tantric massage that primarily focuses on massaging the male genitalia to create meditative sexual and spiritual experience*), *rimming* (*the act of using one's tongue on the anal rim of the client to gain sexual pleasure*), *blowjob* (*oral sex performed to the client or sucking the dick*), *hand job* (*masturbation*) or *anal sex* (*intercourse with a client through the*

anus). With the practices and scenario, this study explored the socio-cultural narratives on sex massage therapy so that male masseurs can tell stories about their experiences, vulnerabilities, and resiliencies in massage prostitution. Specifically, this study highlights personal and social circumstances of the participants and the participants' motivation and exposure to engage as a sex massage therapist. The researcher believed that men who offered "extra service" are in a liminal space as a socio-cultural narrative emphasizes men's sexuality. Socio-cultural narrative refers to the participants' living conditions, family background, socioeconomic status, and deviant behavior. At the same time, male masseurs are condemned morally for using their sexuality to earn a living. Allowing these men to tell their stories will bring them out of this liminal space and enable them to share their stories. The narratives on prostitution that are currently available seem to be restrictive and may not have provided men the freedom to openly tell their stories of coping, resilience, and strength.

The study was conducted to reveal the unknown world of male masseurs to shed light on this kind of sex trade, masked as a legitimate profession, and the kind of lives they live to understand their individual life stories better specifically the participants' motivations and exposure in engaging as a sex massage therapist. The Epistemology of the research is drawn out from Constructionism – this stance will underlie the entire research process. "...constructionism is the epistemological 'view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998).

In this study, the researcher applied the interpretive framework of social constructivism by asking research participants open-ended questions. The approach permits the study participants to share their experiences as masseurs willfully. The role of the researcher is to carefully listen and interpret findings as they share their views based on their experiences and background (Creswell, 2013). The interpretation of their experiences revealed significant information regarding the phenomenon and offered new insight into the overall study. Applying the social constructivism framework is the most helpful approach in gaining access to the views and nuances that will influence the separate worlds of the research participants.

Using interpretivism as a theoretical perspective, this study on the lives of male masseurs one may gain new insights and a greater understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context instead of generalizing the base of knowledge for the whole population (Creswell, 2007). In the same way, Hammersley (2013) emphasizes that since multiple interpretations are developing among human relationship, this study tries to understand "the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different contexts and cultures" and tries to avoid the bias in studying the events and people with their interpretations. This study uses interpretivism to explain objects, humans, or events and deeply understand them in a social context. In addition, it "allows the researcher to investigate and reveal some things that we cannot directly observe; researchers can probe an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings, and perspectives" (Wellington & Szczerbinski 2007).

Moreover, this study was anchored in the Culture of Poverty Theory by Oscar Lewis (1959, as cited in Tuason, 2002), Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1989, as cited in Nabavi, 2012), and Psychosexual Theory by Sigmund Freud (1905, as cited in McLeod, 2019).

According to the Culture of Poverty (Lewis, 1959, as cited in Tuason, 2002), poverty is the result of cash and economy: labor wage and production for profit, high rate of unemployment of unskilled labor, low wages, and inadequate social and economic organizations to serve the low-income bracket of the population. This theory may underpin this study as it has been observed that the male masseurs seem less determined, more fatalistic about their views in life, generally looking for easy money, and usually pleasure-oriented. On the other hand, the Psychosexual theory (Freud, 1905, as cited in McLeod, 2019) stresses the role of man's cravings, motives, and desires, which are often hidden and repressed in the subconscious mind, resulting in abnormal behavior. The thoughts propounded in this theory concerning the unconscious processes that contain childhood's unacceptable, anxiety-provoking wishes, ideas, and desires, which were driven out of awareness; thus, they are believed to be primarily sexual and only find expression through free association and dream analysis. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) contemplates the dynamic interaction of human behavior, personal factors, and the environment. Individual factors include self-efficacy, the belief about one's confidence to perform a specific behavior,

outcome expectations, and expectancies (Bandura, 1989, as cited in Nabavi, 2012). The environment refers to objective factors that can affect a person's behavior but that are physically external to that person (Baranowski *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, male masseurs' personal characteristics, stories, life experiences, outcome expectations, and expectancies, and whether they practice alone or with others, may be related to their behavior. Studying the characteristics of male masseurs may shed light on their struggles and challenges.

This study is limited to freelance male masseurs using online applications such as *Grinder* and *Blued*, who lived in/are residents of the province of Aklan. An identified online male sex massage masseur with ages ranging from 18 to 35 years old based on their profiles were the participants. Participants must be of legal age and willing to be interviewed. Participants were identified as sex massage masseurs with five (5) years and above experience as male therapists. They have been a massage practitioner since 2016 up to the present. This study focused only on male masseurs who offer "extra service" to gay, straight males, bisexuals, and male homosexuals only.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design. Qualitative inquiry provides a good fit for this particular study- the lives of male masseurs, given its ability to help researchers who "are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research aims to collect an in-depth knowledge of human behavior and the reasons that dominate such behavior—the qualitative method probes the how and why of decision-making, not just what, where, and when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are needed. Qualitative methods permit the researcher to study the matter in depth, with data collection often happening through open-ended questions permitting "one to recognize and apprehend the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through the prior selection of questionnaire categories" (Patton, 2002).

This study is grounded in narrative inquiry to elicit the critical tales that depict the male masseur's experiences. Narrative inquiry is a methodology gaining attention in qualitative research (Kim, 2011).

Therefore, this is a qualitative study in the form of a narrative where the stories become the raw data. The narrative approach implies inquiry directed at narratives of human experience or inquiry that produces data in narrative form (Creswell, 2013). This approach has been used in many areas to learn more about the narrator's culture, historical experiences, identity, and lifestyle (Lieblich et al., 1998). The narrative approach implies inquiry directed at narratives of human experience or inquiry that produces data in narrative form (Hoshmand, 2005). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described the narrative inquiry approach as inquiry into the narrative. By this, narrative is both a method and a phenomenon. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied and the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction, it uses the reasonably well-established device of calling the phenomenon "story" and the inquiry "narrative." Thus, people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories about those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience.

A narrative inquiry is needed to provide in-depth information regarding male masseurs' life stories and experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advocated narrative inquiry in which storytelling was acknowledged as a powerful tool for reflecting on personal practical knowledge and how such knowledge is formulated. Narratives were extracted from face-to-face conversational in-depth interviews collected during the study. The study's end product resulted in a thick narrative description depicting a multi-dimensional rendering of the participants' life stories and experiences in a sex massage (Saldaña, 2015).

2.2. *Participants of the Study*

Table 1

Participants profile

Pseudonym	Highlights of Narrative	Age	Location	Civil status	Application (Apps) Used
Xander	The Naked Masseur	27	Eastern Aklan	Single	Grinder/ Blued
Thoto	Just for Fun	35	Western Aklan	Single Father	Grinder/ Blued
Rick	A Devoted Family Man with Three Children	32	Western Aklan	Married	Grinder/ Blued
Kevin	Happy, but I'm Not Enjoy	27	Eastern Aklan	Single	Grinder/ Blued
Eric	Teaching Requires Me to Turn Off Everything that Turns Me On	34	Eastern Aklan	Living In	Grinder/ Blued

Five (5) participants were selected using purposeful, maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002). Each of the five (5) participants was given a pseudonym to protect their personal identity.

Selection of the Participants and Inclusion Criteria. In identifying the participants, non-probability sampling - specifically, purposive sampling is employed based on the following inclusion criteria: must be a male masseur offering extra service; of legal age (18 to 35 years old); an online application user of either Grinder or Blued; masseur in the province of Aklan; practicing masseur for five years and willing to be interviewed.

Participants Locale of the Study. The study was conducted in the province of Aklan, specifically Boracay Island, which is the location of the participants. Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority poverty incidence among Aklanon individuals in the first half of 2021 went up to 24.9 percent from 19.8 percent in 2018. This is equivalent to 152,300 persons.

2.3. Ethical Considerations

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), ethical considerations can be specified as one of the most important parts of research. A research undertaking may even be doomed to failure if this part is missing. They help to determine the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Essentially, this consideration addresses issues such as honesty, objectivity, respect for intellectual property, social responsibility, confidentiality, non-discrimination, and many others, for it will greatly impact the integrity of the research project. Friesen *et al.* (2014) identified seven important ethical issues to be considered: a) informed consent; b) voluntary participation; c) do not harm; d) confidentiality; e) anonymity, and f) only access relevant components.

Informed Consent. This study ensured that participants were fully informed of the evaluation, aware of the purpose of the research, and how findings were used.

Voluntary Participation. This study ensured voluntary participation; people participate in the evaluation free from coercion. Participants were also free to withdraw their participation at any time without negatively impacting their involvement in future services of the current program and the relationship of any researchers or research bodies involved.

Do not harm. This study does not intend any physical and psychological harm to the participants all throughout the data gathering process.

Confidentiality. In this study, any identifying information was not made available to or accessed by anyone and that identifying information is excluded from reports or published documents.

Anonymity. The identity of the participant in this study remains unknown throughout the research process. This is to safeguard and prevent the identification of individuals who contributed to the research.

Only assess relevant components. The evaluations are as simple as possible and remained focused on the objectives of the study and the data gathered would be used.

2.4. Data Sources and Collection Procedure

In this qualitative study, the primary data-gathering method involves primarily in-depth interviews with participants (Creswell, 2007). A narrative interview describes the meaning of a phenomenon that several individuals share (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

An interview guide translated into the local language (Tagalog and Aklanon) was used in the face-to-face interview to gather information about the participants. The researcher asked the questions as worded and sequenced in the interview guide. A voice recorder or a voice interview was used to validate the transcript with the participants' consent.

The interview was conducted by the researcher utilizing interviewing techniques. An in-depth conversational interview determined the antecedent events to offer "extra service" in a massage session. According to Burgess–Limerick and Burgess–Limerick (1998), conversational interviews gain access to the interpretation of personal experiences.

There were two private conversational in-depth interview sessions with the researcher. The first session involved an hour-and-a-half face-to-face interview regarding their stories, experiences, involvement, and exposure to sex massage. The second session involved any follow-up questions and a review of the first session transcript. This session lasted approximately one hour. Questions were asked in the local language that the

participants understood and were conveniently used during the conversations. This is to let the participants express themselves fully.

All of the information collected from this study is confidential. The recorded voice interview was reviewed only by the researcher and a professional transcriber who agreed to keep the information confidential. The interview transcripts were coded, the researcher kept a separate master list with the names of participants, and the corresponding code numbers or pseudonyms were used. Once the data were collected and analyzed, the master list was destroyed. The recorded voice interviews were destroyed after they were transcribed. Transcribed transcripts were saved to a CD- ROM or flash drive and retained for at least three years, kept in the researchers' position.

2.5. Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2014) defined qualitative validity and reliability as the steps a researcher takes to check "for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures." According to Butina (2015), qualitative researchers can use numerous strategies to promote validity and reliability to prove their data is valid and reliable. There are no specific strategies for the narrative approach.

Creswell (2013) recommends that researchers utilize at least two strategies in any study. Strategies promoting credibility (internal validity) begin with the utilization of member-checking, the "sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately" (Glesne, 2006). Next, this study was submitted to a panel of experts as an expert audit review, an expert serving as a committee that will assess the quality of data analysis (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Last, the researcher's biases were clarified in the study. Assumptions were openly and honestly discussed to shape the interpretation of research findings and approach to the study (Creswell, 2013).

A strategy used for consistency (reliability) was the documentation of an audit trail which is the authentication of the study's findings by following the trail or steps of the researcher. Strategies promoting transferability (external validity) included providing detailed, thick descriptions. The term thick description is "a highly descriptive, detailed presentation of the setting and, in particular, the study's findings" (Merriam, 2009). A

description of the research participants and presented findings with supporting evidence presented as narrative quotes.

2.6. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is "a system of understanding out of the data" (Merriam, 2009). Narrative analysts may use one of four approaches (Butina, 2015). The most common of the four approaches is narrative, and thematic analysis within the text is the primary focus; therefore, this was the study's approach. The narrative, thematic analysis process used in this study consisted of five stages: (a) organization and preparation of the data, (b) obtaining a general sense of the information, (c) the coding process, (d) categories or themes, and (e) interpretation of the data (Singer, 2004).

3. Results

3.1. Personal and social circumstances of the participants to engage in extra service.

3.1.1. Vignettes: Unveiling the Men

This part unveils the life circumstances of the participants. Personal and social circumstances in this wise refer to the participants' personal and sociological background, such as age, place or location, educational background, socioeconomic status, and other matters that shape the person's background. The following statement accentuated how sex massage helps the participants to support themselves and their families for a living and as a leisure for some. Extra service becomes their source of additional income. This study was participated by Xander, Thoto, Rick, Kevin, and Eric.

The Naked Masseur. He is known as "**The Naked Masseur**" for Xander's story. Xander advertised himself on online dating apps as a "naked masseur," and his attached naked photo with bottled water covering his one-holed flute. He used the said account name and pictures to catch the attention of other app users. Xander is a 27-year-old, single, and adventurous man. His account states that he is 165cm in height and 41kg in weight and has a fair complexion. This guy has an average body type, with monolid eyes, and belongs to daddy tribes after a dating relationship. Xander belongs to a clean-cut group, which means he underwent circumcision. He is a typical guy on the Island with a pleasing personality, well-

groomed and clean looking in *sando* to display his physique. He lives with his relatives on the Island of Boracay, who migrated from Davao. Fifth, among the eight siblings of a farmer who hails from hardships to survive daily, his parents are Davao rice and vegetable farmers. Admittedly, he is a third-year high school dropout due to poverty and a lack of interest in pursuing his education. The family source of living is selling Ready-to-Wear (RTW), souvenir items, and other dry goods products to the visiting tourist on the Island. He shared capital with his brother. For seven years, a 24/7 on-call freelance sex massage therapist has been offered—excellent "extra service" to well-satisfied visiting clients. Xander is known as the naked masseur on the Island. Admittedly, his first sexual experience was with his girlfriend.

Just for Fun. Another participant is Thoto, who treated massage as "**Just for Fun.**" According to Thoto, "*Ito naman kasi ay just for fun lang naman, after that magkakalimutan din naman kayo. Pag nandito pa ang client okey pag wala na magkalimutan na parang ginagawa lang na temptation island*". (The reality is, everything here is just for fun. While the client is still on the Island, the attachment is there. Everything ends once the client leaves the Island). Thoto has an average body type, upturned eyes, fair complexion; his entire body is hairy, attracting fetish clients. He also belongs to clean-cut tribes. This a neat-looking guy is 175cm tall and 84kg, coordinating his physique. Wearing a well-trimmed bore around his face, this masseur can be identified easily from the rest. He has been a Boracay sea sports commissioner and local Korean tour guide for seven years. This 35-year-old hardworking single father from Roxas City graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with a specialization in Values Education from one of the catholic schools in Roxas. He took the licensure examination once but did not pass it. Even though he did not try his luck again since, according to him, teaching was not his passion and choice, and it was his parents' choice. The second child among two siblings of a fisherman and Manila shoe exchange (MSE) dealer is trying his luck on the Island. Thoto has lived alone on the Island for the past seven years; he offered massage to visiting tourists for extra income to finance his daughter and his family during his free time. On the Island, Thoto is known as the guy wearing white; all of his upper shirts are white to denote identity, according to him. As narrated, he was repeatedly sexually molested by his high school teacher.

A Devoted Family Man with Three Children. On the other hand, Rick's story is about "**A Devoted Family Man with Three Children**". He is a 32-year-old married man who straightforwardly introduced himself during the interview. Rick is 5'5" in height and 143lbs in weight; he looks mature with enticing sex appeal. Wearing a skinned head haircut that matched his round face and round eyes with a bunch of well-trimmed beard below his chin emphasizes his masculinity. His fair complexion symbolizes the aggressive aura of a clean-cut daddy. A guy with bulging biceps painted with permanent ink stretched up to his stocky torso as a form of body art gives a mind-blowing perception of the natural man. His tattoo is a thorn crawling around his arms and body to symbolize his struggles and hardships in life. A hardworking husband and supportive father of three, married to a real estate broker. Being a high school graduate, he landed as a lineman in a cable company in the province of Aklan. Working away from his family, he stays in the company barracks with fellow workers to practice massage during their free time, especially at night. The story of Rick is different from the rest, during his childhood he was physically abuse by his father. He was beaten, punched and tortured.

Happy, but I am not Enjoy. Kevin's story focused on his experience and denoted the masseur as "**Happy, but I am not Enjoy.**" This Christian by religion is a sex fellatio expert, a 27-year-old hunk 5'2" in height, and 143lbs looks smart in how he dressed to attract clients. Kevin is a man in style, wearing an earring in the right ear, fashionable eyewear, and a clean-cut hairstyle. This average-looking masseur advertised himself as a discreet top with round black eyes and rosy lips that were always ready to lick. Currently in a relationship for months during the interview. He has been a small but terrible masseur for eight years, a guy from the second district of Aklan. Kevin lives with his family of six members, his parents, and three siblings—second among four children of a *habal-habal* (motorcycle) driver and sari-sari store owner in their locality. After high school graduation, he did not continue to college since his parents could not afford to send him due to financial incapacity. With this, he went to Metro Manila to find a job. Kevin was raped by a woman in a drinking session. It was a nightmare for him to be sexually abused without consent.

Teaching requires Me to Turn Off Everything that Turns Me On. Finally, "**Teaching requires Me to Turn Off Everything that Turns Me On,**" that's the story of Eric. At 34, Eric has a rugged muscular body, 170cm in height and 59kg in weight. His round

face wears a smile with seductive round eyes that complement his fair complexion. This versatile clean-cut guy is willing to meet his client at his place, coffee shop, or restaurant and looks to chat and make friends online. Eric was orphaned at an early age. His father re-married two times after the death of his mother. They were seven siblings, three of them from the first family, another three in the second, and one in the last relationship. Being the eldest, Eric hugged his parents' obligation to provide for his younger siblings' needs. They lived in a simple way where farming was the source of income. Even hard up, Eric manages to send himself to school through farming, copra, and *kaingin* as means of income. He finished a Bachelor in Secondary Education, major in Mathematics, and passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers. He opted not to share the real reason; he did not practice his chosen profession for personal reasons. He lives with his partner in an austere boarding house in Kalibo, the center of commercial establishment and the sex trade. A room they rented serves as a massage place for Eric while his partner is at work, and he has practiced this massage with extra service for almost ten years now. Eric received his sexual baptism from his older cousin while doing “*kaingin*” in the mountain that leads to his desire in flesh.

Based on their profile, the five participants work as freelance masseurs, offering extra service at their convenience. While engaging in massage, three are employed or have permanent jobs, while others work full-time as freelance masseurs. This study's participants range from 27 to 35 years old at the time of the interview. All five participants had an investment in obtaining their high school diploma. They overcame multiple familial, school, and job-related issues as they progressed through school. The study revealed that poor academic qualification was the main reason these people fell into the massage industry; they had insufficient educational capabilities to find decent jobs. Only two of the participants have baccalaureate degrees. One is a licensed professional teacher who prefers to engage in massage.

Most participants had a history of sexual experiences during their childhood or teenage life. Early in life, they have engaged already in sexual activities that make them somehow addicted to their fantasies and desires. In sex, they find pleasure, comfort, and short-lived satisfaction with their sex partner. To support the needs of a family, this group of people serves as the breadwinner. In the interview, one of the five participants was married with children. At the same time, the rest were single and in a relationship status. To remain

unnoticed or their work a secret how they earned money, they work far from home and the family's visibility; most participants preferred to work outside their province or hometown, and they find comfort in living alone. Four participants live alone and independently, away from their families, to work to support their families.

3.2. *Exposure and Motivation of the participants as sex masseurs.*

Masseurs' life is truly unknown to the general public, for they are the only one who knows why and why they engaged in offering "extra service." Sharing their kept stories undress on what motivated them in engaging to sex. These research questions were divided into three sub-themes:

Ro Ugat: The Poor Play, participants narrated the roots of their involvement in sex massage. They shared how everything started, making them dance gracefully to every beat of erotic music played in different circumstances.

Kwarta sa Kanamit: The Deep Truth, the need for easy money, and the promising economic benefit motivated me to perform "extra service" towards their clients. Explored the hidden adventures of the participants who took the road less travelled, engaging in different livelihoods both legitimately and those that are done under the covers.

Paun: Getting Mass Tour Bait, participants shared their stories on how they learned that using online dating apps is dealing with possible clients for hook up. Dating apps serve as a gateway to trading flesh free.

Themes	Subthemes	Significant Statement
The Unknown World	Ro Ugat: The Poor Play	It happened first in Manila, where I learned massage. Then, I was sent to Bulacan for formal training. After that, I was employed in Pasay. I have a licensed, but it is now expired.
		I underwent training while in Boracay and took my license in Kalibo.
		Just experience. I used to work in a motel as a room boy. The guests come in and out of our motel, sometimes looking for a masseur. My -worker is a masseur; that's how he taught me how to massage and where I learned it from
		It's through my friend, who's also a cousin of mine. He brought me to the Island of Boracay because they needed a therapist, so I underwent training. It's my initiation as a masseur.

Themes	Subthemes	Significant Statement
The Unknown World	Kwarta sa Kanamit: The Deep Truth	<p>Most clients are looking for extra service. They demand extra service... first, it is a message, then if they like extra service, it depends on the price range.</p>
		<p>All the way is Php 2,500.00, its 2 hours. It helps. Much better to have extra service because I earned more. I've been offering extra service for over five years already, and all of them are satisfied.</p>
		<p>I do not charge for extra service; the clients will pay for it. If they ask me how much I charge, I answer... it is up to you. Just add a little to my professional fee.</p>
		<p>Of course, yes, it is an additional income. I learned to give extra service only here in Boracay.</p>
		<p>I need it as an additional budget to buy milk and diapers for my child because my salary is insufficient. Sometimes my wife also does not have a regular income, so I have to take it away.</p>
		<p>It depends on the conversation and it depends on the price. Usually, I offer all the way, and it costs Php 1,500.00 to Php 2,00000 for overnight sex.</p>
		<p>My salary is not enough, so I need to make a remedy when there is a time.</p>
		<p>You earn more when you do ES than just plain massage to make money. I will offer the client a massage; if he does not want to take it, I will ask ES, sir, do you like it?</p>
		<p>Nowadays, it is a necessity... ha ha ha; that is the only way to earn big. Sometimes it also depends on the client if he wants it</p>
		<p>It depends on the package—one thousand for a massage with ES.</p>
<p>It also helps. I am also making money on it. I use it for my daily needs and vices; I buy what I want, share a little with my family, and spend for my needs.</p>		
<p>At first, I was also afraid because of possible diseases that I could acquire. Lately, my two siblings are both graduating. I badly needed money, so I entered the offering of extra service to my client.</p>		
<p>It's the client's choice. If you are deeply and badly in need of money, extra service is the way. It is also the client's request.</p>		
<p>Financially it helped to finance sending my two siblings to college until graduation.</p>		

Themes	Subthemes	Significant Statement
The Unknown World		My friend registered me on Grinder and Blued; most of the Island visitors are online apps users.
		In Manila, I noticed that finding clients using the apps is easy. He added: I preferred face-to-face rather than apps; most apps use filtered pictures.
	Paun: Getting Mass Tour Bait	From my circle of friends, I have found the apps. Since they easily get a client, I also started using the apps. You have to be vulgar here in Grinder and Blued to get noticed. If they want a massage, send a tap or message to the nearby app users.
		I used Grinder just lately... but I've known that for a long time. I use Facebook.

The journey of the participants as legitimate male masseurs to those who offer extra service via online applications and face-to-face transactions has a beginning and a drive that keeps the participants staying in the said profession. The participants' exposure to the world of massage therapy started legitimately. They have received proper training and licenses and have been employed in licit establishments. Yet, the male masseur's pay is insufficient to support their needs.

The exposure that the participants encountered motivated them to engage in sex commerce disguised as legitimate massage. In the Delplanque *et al.* (2015) study, the mere exposure phenomenon refers to improving one's attitude toward an a priori neutral stimulus after repeated exposure. The results affirmed the study's findings, where it was found that most participants' knowledge of massage combined with their history of sexual experiences during their childhood or teenage lives. At an early age, they discover the sexual pleasure that triggered them to embrace sex as an avenue of getting off into the road of victimless scenarios. Rick mentioned that his father physically and mentally abused him. On the other hand, Thoto was sexually abused by his teacher. Kevin supports the claims that he was sexually harassed in a drinking session, leading to the call of the flesh. The narratives of Xander supported these claims. In their early years, they have already been exposed to the sex trade, unknown them that it is not appropriate.

The responses have been proven from the study by Allen (1980) that has attempted to provide the underlying determinants of why males urged and engaged in sex masseurs. These were: 1) early exposure to and acceptance of sexual experiences during their childhood; 2)

awareness of prostitution as a social phenomenon; 3) subcultures were acting as a prostitute is accepted or even encouraged to which most of the participants have been employed in the hotel where sex masseurs are being exercised; 4) sufficient psychic interest and arousal to permit a homosexual experience in which there are motives when it comes to arousal and wherein the clients demand it, and 5) money which becomes the main reason why male masseurs involved into this kind of activity.

The participants' exposure to sexual activities has led them to comfortably embrace their careers as male masseurs. These decisions were driven by various factors. The participants' narrative shows that the need for money to sustain a family has been a major motivation for them participants. Thus, the reason participants engaged in "extra service" was poverty. Participants find massage an avenue for a quick remedy for difficulties in life that no one can depend on. By dealing with "extra service" in a massage, they grab the opportunity to work with it to survive and gain income. Poverty is described in four dimensions: the relationship between the subculture and the larger society, the nature of the slum community, the heart of the family; and the individual's attitudes, values, and character structure (Lewis, 1966).

The findings were affirmed in the study of Khan *et al.* (2009). It stated that its content analysis of data resulted in the identification of one main theme: Poverty of opportunity forcing women into prostitution and had identified driving forces behind women resorting to selling sex were poverty, materialism, and the desire to move up in society. The participants' narrative shows that being a product of a low-income family whose hand-to-mouth existence is the means of day-to-day activities is another reason that motivates the participants in sex work. Finding means at an early age to become productive family members, they enter into the massage world and fall into sex work. These claims strongly adhere that prostitutes are products of a poor home environment characterized by violence, lack of parental love and affection, and drug and alcohol abuse. Many have been the victims of sexual abuse, including incest and rape, and have experienced physical abuse and neglect at home. They see prostitution as a life of adventure, glamour, excitement, and an easy way to earn money. Many are dependent on their income from prostitution for their survival (Ahart, 1982; Gore & Patwardhan, 2022; Phrasisombath *et al.*, 2012). Paperny and Deisher (1983) and Williams (2016) argued that mistreatment in the early childhood of male prostitutes predisposed them

to prostitution. Other factors have also been cited, such as chaotic and disorganized homes (Allen, 1980; Shoemaker, 1977, as cited in Mannino, 1989)), physical abuse (Caukins & Coombs, 1976; Coombs, 1974), and sexual abuse (Gray, 1974). Other researchers have found a relationship between prostitution and broken, dysfunctional, ineffectual, or overcrowded homes (Allen, 1980; Butts, 1947; Cory & LeRoy, 1963; Deisher *et al.*, 1969; Doshay, 1943; Mac Namara, 1965; Peiper, 1979, as cited in Mannino, 1989).

The need for extra service to support the family is highlighted in the story of the five participants. Denoting the demand for the illicit commodity of a happy ending. This scenario is evident in the story of Xander, Eric, and the other participants. Xander left his province to try his luck in Manila to help his family, where he landed as a masseur. In Eric's narrative, he mentioned that as orphaned at an early age, he became the breadwinner of the family, where his two siblings depend on him financially. Another reason this group of people indulged in giving "extra service" in massage was the call for easy money. The need for money to sustain the needs and wants in day-to-day life was the root of everything. The luxury of enough in exchange for sexual services makes them embrace prostitution in a camouflage of massage. It was further agreed by Nguyen (2017) that a group of youth who are at high risk of entering sexual work for survival, most of them considerable breadwinners of the family. Easy money is the product of an effortless activity that gains huge money in just an hour or less. This can be done through sexual activity among male freelance therapists in massage sessions. When a prostitute engages with a client, the sexual activity is often consciously well-planned and defined ahead of time (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, as cited in Going, 2008).

Based on the participant's narratives, they earned enough in a day equal to or more than a month's salary. With this, they find comfort in offering "extra service" to possible clients. They must create gimmicks and advertise almost nakedly in online apps to attract clients. Lankenau *et al.* (2005) highlighted that the pathways to the street economy, like sex masseurs, are characterized by accumulating street capital and transforming this capital into street competencies. He also delineated two paths to sex work, such as financial desperation and the advantages of money and pleasure. These significantly affect why males engage in sex masseurs because of the luxury and enticement. In the study of Samis (2021), the easy money experience makes some sex workers commit themselves to a long-term relationship with gay patrons, plunging them deeper into the sex work business. That poverty is why

"easy money" is bait for sex workers to stay in sex work. Others cite that they enter sex work as a way to "thrill-seeking" (Koken, 2004). Out of the curiosity of how sex masseurs can have brought and caused their lives, most males have engaged in it and did not find their way out due to the monetary value they can get.

4. Discussion

The participants have been in the massage industry for quite some time, including giving extra service. The participants have varying reasons why they entered this kind of career; nonetheless, the common denominator was that they came from low-income families, were victims of abuse, had low academic achievement, and it was a personal choice. These situations pushed them to find financial means to support their needs and families, even if it was considered immoral and frowned upon by society. Thus, masseur has become the profession that could help them earn a living and, at the same will, aid their clients in achieving a healthy lifestyle.

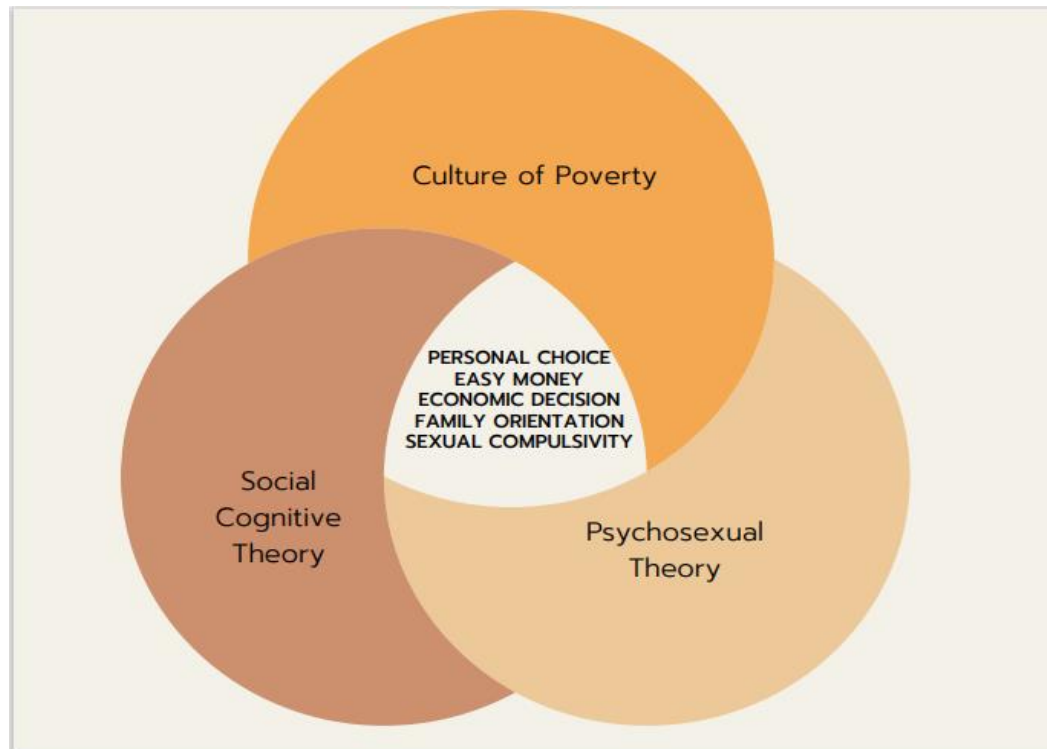
The common factor that pushed the participants to be sex massage therapists was love for their families. Based on the participants' responses, they verbally expressed that their families were the main concern about why they entered sex work. As a breadwinner, their desire for financial stability is the top priority to uplift their families from poverty. According to participants, they need to take advantage of their opportunity to earn more by offering extra services to Boracay's visitors. Through their extra service, they could feed their families, support their siblings' studies and needs, and at least make their lives comfortable.

Another factor that made them continue with this profession is the growing demand for masseurs with extra service on the Island, which they saw as an opportunity to be professional masseurs but simultaneously continue with the extra service they provide. By profession, they admitted that they earned a lot high from the services they offer. The number of visitors visiting the Island increases the opportunity for them to earn more because the demand is high. Relatively, their financial issues will be addressed.

The unfortunate experiences they encountered during childhood also allowed them to be exposed to this kind of profession which later led to them offering extra services. Given that they were financially in need, the reality of them being encouraged to enter this profession was high, even if it was considered indecent.

Figure 1

The interplay between the theories as used in the study



The three theories used in has proven strong support for the results of the study. The culture of poverty has laid down poverty as a motivation to earn a living and survive hunger and education for their family members. They have been inclined to earn money at all causes. The psychosexual theory has led the participants to choose how to answer the call of poverty. Prompted by their sexual experience of abuse in the past, their craving for sexual pleasure and the easy money in extra service has been the perfect reason why they chose to engage in the king of the profession. Finally, the social cognitive theory lays down the foundation that strengthens the participant's professional stay. The presence of the circle of friends and the networks they were able to make has led to their protection to survive the world they chose.

The focus of study implications is placed on two: theory and practice and among those who are in any form or manner involved with sex massage.

For Theory. The results of this study conform with the understanding regarding the culture of poverty that the most common reason for engaging into sex work concerned the

financial benefits that this job affords them. In this study, sex massage participants earned more money and had more financial security. According to Lewis (1959, as cited in Gao & Postiglione, 2015), the setting is a cash economy, with wage labor and production for profit and persistently high unemployment and underemployment rates, at low wages, for unskilled labor. Society fails to provide social, political, and economic organization for the low-income population voluntarily or by government imposition. This theory restores nature with nurture as the leading cause of school failure. Its theorists presume that some racial/ethnic groups do not experience a cognitively stimulating family environment. Thereof their cultural attributes or practices are second class and intellectually destitute (e.g., lack of work ethic, limited outlooks toward the future, low intellectual abilities, and other deficiencies such as early actuation to sex among children, female-headed households, or limited interest in education (Eitzen & Zinn, 2006), thus preventing them from achieving in school (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Deutsch, 1967; Hess and Shipman, 1965, as cited in Gao & Postiglione, 2015), and resulting in culturally-based cross-generational poverty (Lewis, 1959, as cited in Gao & Postiglione, 2015). The motivation and the drive of the participants have proved that poverty has been the greatest challenge for them. With a lack of education, they cannot think of a better way to find a living. Yet, driven by their love for their families, they embraced a profession that could aid their survival.

On the other hand, psychosexual theory has a significant connection as results revealed that most participants enjoyed being male-sex masseurs; they cited some advantages and improvements resulting from their occupation. Male masseurs displayed physical or emotional intimacy with their clients. This implies the development of close friendship between them—a development of love and cares for a friend without the shadow of guilt and fear. The level of physical and emotional intimacy between the male sex masseur and his client is highly developed. Foucault (1980), in his writings on *The History of Sexuality*, argues that the concept of sex developed because of the discourse regarding sexuality. He argues that sexuality stemmed from the Christian custom of confession. Christians began reflecting on their erotic desires as a road to moral purity. Foucault (1980) argues that sexuality developed in the 19th century, which paralleled the development of a disciplinary society in modern times. Within a disciplinary society, citizens are led by disciplinary control. Disciplinary control takes 20 places by people internalizing a definition of normal and

engaging in self-monitoring to govern themselves without external control. Through this process, society develops the ability to control its citizens. Human expectations, beliefs, emotional bents, and cognitive competencies are developed and modified by social influences that convey information and activate emotional reactions through modeling, instruction, and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). People also evoke reactions from their social environment through physical characteristics, such as age, size, race, sex, and physical attractiveness, quite apart from what they say and do (Lerner, 1982). People similarly activate different social reactions depending on their socially conferred roles and status (Bandura, 2004). Weitzer (2009) revealed that many indoor workers report increased self-esteem after working in prostitution, are delighted with their work, or feel that their lives improved after entering prostitution.

Finally, the social cognitive theory relates to the findings that most of the participants have positive improvements in their psychological health in terms of increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and the ability of the work to reduce feelings of depression and isolation. In contrast, some participants reported that they felt being used, depressed, or with a feeling of inner guilt. Some people do not appear to be able to leave one stage and go on to the next stage. The reason for this may be that the needs of the maturing individual at any certain stage may not have been decently met, in which case there is frustration. Alternatively, the person's necessity may have been so well pleased that he/she is hesitant to leave the psychological benefits of a specific stage where there is intemperance. It is presumed that some libido is perpetually invested in each psychosexual stage, and thus each person will act in some ways that are characteristic of infancy or early childhood (McLeod, 2019).

For Practice. Most of the participants are academically deprived. Findings suggest that there should be free education with incentives for every learner to decrease child labor that leads to prostitution. With the incentives, learners will not leave school to finance their family needs.

Results revealed that male masseur has a history of sexual abuse. Findings suggest that every school should keep anecdotal records to understand every clientele's background. This anecdotal record will serve as a basis for every learner's guidance program; with the presence of the record, school guidance will track the behavior of every learner. This also suggests that the Department of Education should strengthen a strong sex education program

from primary to senior high school. This program should be emphasized, and experts should ensure this is handled properly.

For most participants, part of their motivation is the economic benefit, which bolsters the position of an economic necessity to alleviate their financial conditions. Further, their current personal circumstances, specifically the lack of job opportunities due to their educational attainment, limit their choices of profession. Efforts in the governmental aspect towards providing scholarships and job opportunities must be provided for in the community to ensure educational progression and alternative financial opportunities.

The majority of the participants have experienced sexual trauma in their young years. In relation to the psychosexual theory, it could be shown that a causative link exists between the trauma and the practices that they hold. Thus, the researcher submits that guidance counseling and intervention must be made as soon as possible to rehabilitate the consequences of such trauma.

As to the social aspect of the study, it can be shown that most respondents found solace in the companionship of their comrades. They stick together in a typical relationship which may explain why they run to one another in need. A healthy group discussion may be beneficial during intervention programs by providing them with a safe space to air out their grievances as part of the action plan.

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