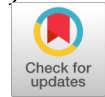




Prevalence of Sexual Intention and its Associated Factors Among Youths in Samarahan District, Sarawak



Syakinah Binti Mohamed, Deburra Peak Ngadan

Abstract: Sexual intention is an important predictor of sexual behaviour and sexual risk-taking among youths. Understanding the determinants of sexual intention is essential for developing effective sexual and reproductive health interventions. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of sexual intention and its associated factors among youths in Samarahan District, Sarawak. A community-based cross-sectional study was conducted among 302 youths aged 18–24 years in Samarahan District, Sarawak. Data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaires based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour framework. Variables assessed included socio-demographic characteristics, youth attitudes, perceived social norms, self-efficacy, internet pornography usage, sexual intention, and sexual risk behaviour. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and correlation analysis. The mean age of respondents was 21.31 years (SD = 1.80). Sexual activity prevalence among respondents was 6.3%. Ethnicity and religion were significantly associated with sexual intention, whereby Malay and Muslim youths were less likely to report sexual intention. Youths with more permissive attitudes and higher self-efficacy scores were more likely to report sexual intention. Internet pornography usage was significantly associated with sexual intention. Sexual intention was also significantly associated with sexual risk behaviour. Sexual intention among youths in Samarahan District was significantly associated with socio-demographic and psychosocial factors, particularly permissive attitudes, religion, ethnicity, and internet pornography usage. The findings highlight the importance of culturally sensitive and comprehensive sexual health programmes that address behavioural attitudes, digital media exposure, and safe sexual practices among youths.

Keywords: Sexual Intention, Youths, Sexual Risk Behaviour, Internet Pornography, Sarawak, Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Nomenclature:

STDs: Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TPB: Theory of Planned Behaviour
YPAT: Young Pornography Addiction Test
YIAT: Youth Internet Addiction Test
SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STIs: Sexually Transmitted Infections

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth sexual and reproductive health remains a

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significant public health concern globally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where rapid social and technological changes influence behavioural patterns. Youth, defined as individuals aged 15 to 24 years, represent a critical developmental stage characterized by biological, psychological, and social transitions that shape long-term health outcomes. (United Nations, 2007) [16]. During this period, sexual intentions play an important role in determining sexual behaviours and associated risks, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancies, and unsafe sexual practices (Blum et al., 2017 [3]; Bonnie et al., 2019) [4].

In Malaysia, sexual risk behaviour among youths has gained increasing attention due to its association with rising cases of STIs, teenage pregnancies, and other reproductive health challenges (Cheah et al., 2023 [5]; Hazariah et al., 2021 [8]; Idris et al., 2022 [9]; Nor Asiah et al., 2021) [14]. The nationwide prevalence of sexual activity among youths was 7.6%, with the highest in Kelantan at 9.5% and, followed by Sarawak at 9.1% (Institute for Public Health, 2022) [10]. Although these rates are relatively low compared to other developing states, they remain a concern for the region, particularly as the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including syphilis, gonorrhoea, and HIV, has been a growing issue over the last decade, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and evidence-based strategies to address this issue.

Sexual intention refers to an individual's conscious willingness or plan to engage in sexual activity and is recognised as a major determinant of sexual behaviour under the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) [2]. Attitudes influence sexual intention, perceived social norms, perceived behavioural control or self-efficacy, and environmental influences such as exposure to internet pornography. With increasing internet accessibility among youths, exposure to sexually explicit content may shape sexual attitudes and behaviours (Lin et al., 2020 [11]; Pirrone et al., 2022) [15]. Previous studies in Malaysia have mainly focused on school-going adolescents or university students, while limited research has explored youth in broader community settings.

Therefore, this study aimed to determine the prevalence of sexual intention and identify factors associated with sexual intention among youths in Samarahan District, Sarawak. This study was guided by the TPB, which posits that attitudes influence behavioural intention, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioural control (self-efficacy). In this study, socio-demographic characteristics and internet pornography usage were also examined as additional factors associated with sexual intention among youths.



II. METHODS

A. Study Design and Setting

A quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted in Samarahan District, Sarawak, Malaysia. The study was carried out between March and May 2024.

B. Study Population

The study involved unmarried youths aged 18–24 years residing in Samarahan District. Married respondents were excluded from the final analysis.

C. Sample Size and Sampling

The sample size for this study was calculated using the single population proportion formula through the Scalex SP calculator developed by (Naing. L et al., 2022) [13]. The calculation was based on a 95% confidence level, an assumed prevalence of 50%, and a precision level of 6%. To account for possible non-response, an additional 20% was added to the estimated sample size. The minimum required sample size was 267 respondents, increasing to 334 after accounting for the non-response rate. A total of 314 respondents were successfully recruited for the study. Following data screening, only 302 unmarried youths were retained for the final analysis after excluding married participants. Respondents were recruited through community-based sampling among youths living in the Samarahan District, Sarawak.

D. Study Instrument

Data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaires adapted from validated instruments, namely the Young Pornography Addiction Test (YPAT) and the

Youth Sexual Intention Questionnaire (YSI-Q). The YSI-Q was developed based on the TPB framework and adapted to the Malaysian cultural context, while the YPAT was adapted from the Youth Internet Addiction Test (YIAT) (Guan et al., 2015 [7]; Muhammad. et al., 2017) [12]. The questionnaires were available in both Malay and English and consisted of socio-demographic information, internet pornography usage, sexual intention, and sexual risk behaviour domains.

E. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to summarise socio-demographic characteristics and prevalence estimates. Chi-square tests and correlation analyses were used to examine associations between variables. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

F. Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

III. RESULTS

A. Socio-Demographic Characteristics

A total of 302 respondents participated in the study. The majority of respondents were within the older youth age group of 21 to 24 years. Most participants were female, single, and currently pursuing tertiary education. The majority identified as Malay and practised Islam. Most respondents reported living with their parents and belonged to middle-income households.

Table I: Sociodemographic Background of Respondents (n=302)

Independent Variables	n (%)	Statistics
Age		
18-20	89 (29.5)	Mean: 21.3146
21-22	117 (38.7)	SD: 1.80
23-24	96 (31.6)	18, 24
Gender		
Female	205 (67.9)	
Male	97 (32.1)	
Religion		
Muslim	181 (59.9)	
Christian	96 (31.8)	
Buddha	21 (7.0)	
Hindu	4 (1.3)	
Ethnicity		
Malay	155 (51.3)	
Iban	47 (15.6)	
Chinese	41 (13.6)	
Bidayuh	23 (7.6)	
Indian	5 (1.7)	
Others ^a	31 (10.3)	
Family Composition		
Two parents	211 (69.9)	
Extended family, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins	53 (17.5)	
Others ^b	38 (12.6)	
Education level		
Primary	4 (1.3)	
Secondary	102 (33.8)	
Diploma	50 (16.6)	
Degree	144 (47.7)	
Total Household Income		
RM 0-1500	134 (44.4)	Mean: RM3618.72
RM 1501-2000	34 (11.3)	SD: 4033.96
RM 2001-4000	64 (21.2)	Min: RM500.00
RM4000 and above	70 (23.3)	Max: RM25000.00

^aOthers for ethnicity = Melanau (12), Dusun (5), India (5), Bugis (2), Lun Bawang (2), Jawa (1), Kenyah (1), Kedayan (1), Murut (1), and Tagal (1)

^bOther family compositions include single parent/guardian (25), living with siblings (6), living alone (4), living with non-relatives or foster family (2), and Mother and stepfamily (1).





B. Prevalence of Sexual Intention and Sexual Activity

Sexual intention is a key predictor of whether adolescents will engage in sexual activity. The assessment of sexual intention includes five items that measure youths' intentions to engage in sexual activity. These items are, 'I expect to have sex with my partner', 'I want to have sex with my partner', 'I want to have sex with my partner I intend to have sex with my partner', 'I want to have sex with my partner I would like to have sex to see what it is like', 'I would have sex now if I could find a partner who would do it with me'. Respondents rate these statements using a 4-point Likert-type scale: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree), and 4 (strongly agree). Those who respond with "agree" or "strongly agree" to any of these questions are considered to have a sexual intention. A minimum score of 11 indicates an intention for sexual activity. Scores are then categorized into two groups: those with no sexual intention (scores below 11) and those with sexual intention (scores of 11 and above), result is shown

in table 4.9. The prevalence of sexual intention among respondents was 33.1%.

Table II: Sexual Intention Score Among Respondents (n= 302)

Sexual Intention Score	n	%	Mean (SD)
No sexual intention	202	(66.9%)	8.9272 (4.19)
Have sexual intention	100	(33.1%)	

C. Factors Associated with Sexual Intention

i. Sociodemographic Factors

Chi-square analysis was performed to determine the association between socio-demographic characteristics, internet pornography usage, and sexual intention among respondents. Significant associations were found between sexual intention and gender (p = 0.002), religion (p = 0.026), ethnicity (p = 0.043), and education level (p = 0.003). Female respondents, non-Muslims, respondents from non-Malay ethnic groups, and those with higher education levels were more likely to report sexual intention. However, age, family composition, and household income were not significantly associated with sexual intention (p > 0.05).

Table III Factors Associated with Sexual Intention: Chi-Square Analysis (n=302)

Factors	Sexual Intention				c ² , df	p-value
	Yes		No			
	n	%	n	%		
Age in Years					1.915, 1	0.166
< 21	46	(15.2%)	110	(36.4%)		
> 21	54	(17.9%)	92	(30.5%)		
Gender					9.679, 1	0.002**
Male	44	(14.6%)	53	(17.5%)		
Female	56	(18.5%)	149	(49.3%)		
Religion					4.969, 1	0.026*
Muslim	51	(16.9%)	130	(43.0%)		
Christian/ Buddha/ Hindu	49	(16.2%)	72	(23.8%)		
Ethnicity					3.211, 1	0.043*
Malay	44	(14.6%)	111	(36.8%)		
Sarawak Bumiputera	29	(9.6%)	60	(19.9%)		
Others	27	(8.9%)	31	(10.3%)		
Family Composition					1.230, 2	0.541
Two parents	67	(22.2%)	144	(47.7%)		
Extended family, including grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins	21	(7.0%)	32	(10.6%)		
Others	12	(4.0%)	26	(8.6%)		
Education Level					9.003, 1	0.003**
Lower education	24	(7.9%)	84	(27.8%)		
Higher education	76	(25.2%)	118	(39.1%)		
Household Income in RM					0.340, 1	0.560
<1500	42	(13.9%)	92	(30.5%)		
>1500	58	(19.2%)	110	(36.4%)		

p-value obtained from Pearson chi-square test of independence

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

ii. Internet Pornography Usage

Internet pornography usage was significantly associated with sexual intention among respondents ($\chi^2 = 16.822, p < 0.001$). Respondents with mild to moderate levels of internet pornography usage were more likely to report sexual intention compared to those with normal internet pornography usage levels.

Table IV: Relationship Between Internet Pornography Usage and Sexual Intention, n=302

	Sexual Intention				c ² , df	p-value
	Yes		No			
	n	%	n	%		
Internet Pornography Usage					16.822, 1	<.001
Normal level	68	(22.5%)	177	(58.6%)		
Mild-Moderate level	32	(10.6%)	25	(8.3%)		

p-value obtained from Pearson chi-square test of independence

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

iii. Youth Attitudes, Perceived Social Norms, and Self-Efficacy

Independent samples t-test analysis demonstrated significant differences in youth attitudes, perceived social norms, and self-efficacy scores between respondents with and without sexual



Prevalence of Sexual Intention and its Associated Factors Among Youths in Samarahan District, Sarawak

intention ($p < 0.001$). Respondents with sexual intention showed higher mean scores for attitudes, perceived social norms, and self-efficacy compared to those without sexual intention.

Table V: Association Between Youth Attitudes, Perceived Social Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control or Self-Efficacy and Sexual Intentions, (n=302)

Factors	Sexual Intention		Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)					
Youth Attitude	100	202	9.24	3.19	-7.05	300	<.001
			6.88	2.48			
Youth Perceived Social Norms	100	202	9.04	3.56	-4.33	300	<.001
			7.27	3.22			
Youth Perceived Behavioural Control/Self-Efficacy	100	202	14.22	2.92	-7.20	300	<.001
			10.73	4.39			

Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated significant positive correlations between attitudes, perceived social norms, self-efficacy, and sexual intention ($p < 0.001$). Higher levels of attitudes, perceived social norms, and self-efficacy were associated with higher sexual intention scores among respondents.

Table VI: Correlation Matrix of Attitude, Perceived Norms, Self-Efficacy, and Sexual Intention Scores (n = 302)

Parameters	Attitude	Perceived Norms	Self-Efficacy	Sexual Intention
Attitude	--	.625**	.415**	.520**
Perceived Norms		--	.415**	.406**
Self-Efficacy			--	.477**
Sexual Intention				--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

IV. DISCUSSION

This study examined the prevalence of sexual intention and its associated factors among youths in Samarahan District, Sarawak. The findings provide important insights into the socio-demographic, behavioural, and psychosocial factors influencing sexual intention among youths. The prevalence of sexual intention in this study was 33.1%, indicating that approximately one-third of the respondents reported intention towards sexual activity.

The findings demonstrated significant associations between sexual intention and socio-demographic factors, particularly gender, religion, ethnicity, and education level. Female respondents, non-Muslims, respondents from non-Malay ethnic groups, and youths with higher education levels were more likely to report sexual intention. In contrast, Malay and Muslim youths were less likely to report sexual intention, which may reflect the influence of religious teachings and conservative cultural values regarding premarital sexual activities. Similar findings have been reported in previous Malaysian studies where religiosity acted as a protective factor against risky sexual behaviours among youths. (Abdul et al., 2020) [1].

Internet pornography usage was also significantly associated with sexual intention. Respondents with mild to moderate internet pornography usage were more likely to report sexual intention compared to those with normal internet pornography usage levels. Increased accessibility to internet-based sexual content may influence youths' perceptions, curiosity, and attitudes towards sexual behaviour. Exposure to sexually explicit materials may contribute to more permissive views regarding sexual activities among youths. (A. A. Z. Ali et al., 2021; Ma'rof et al., 2021).

In addition, youths with sexual intention demonstrated significantly higher mean scores for attitudes, perceived social norms, and self-efficacy compared to respondents

without sexual intention. Positive correlations were also observed between these factors and sexual intention. These findings support the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which posits that behavioural intention is influenced by attitudes, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioural control (self-efficacy). Youths with more permissive attitudes, stronger perceived social acceptance, and greater confidence regarding sex-related behaviours were more likely to report sexual intention. (Ajzen, 1991; Faiza. et al., 2020) [6].

The findings of this study highlight the importance of addressing psychosocial and digital influences when designing youth sexual and reproductive health programmes. Comprehensive and culturally sensitive sexual education programmes focusing on safe sexual practices, digital literacy, and healthy relationships are essential in reducing risky sexual behaviours and improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes among youths.

V. CONCLUSION

This study found that sexual intention among youths in Samarahan District was associated with several socio-demographic and psychosocial factors, particularly ethnicity, religion, permissive attitudes, and internet pornography usage. Although the prevalence of sexual activity was relatively low, risky sexual behaviours among sexually active youths remain a concern. The findings suggest the need for comprehensive and culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive health interventions that address behavioural attitudes and digital influences among youths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education programmes should be strengthened among youths to improve their awareness and understanding of safe sexual practices, healthy





relationships, and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections. Digital literacy programmes should also be implemented to educate youths on the potential influence of internet pornography and online sexual content on their sexual attitudes and behaviours. In addition, families and community leaders should be encouraged to actively participate in sexual health education by promoting open and supportive communication regarding sexual and reproductive health issues among youths. Healthcare providers should continue enhancing youth-friendly healthcare services and counselling to ensure that young individuals have accessible and confidential support related to sexual and reproductive health. Furthermore, future research should consider longitudinal study designs to understand better the long-term relationship between sexual intention and sexual behaviours among Malaysian youths.

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DECLARATION STATEMENT

Some of the cited references are older and are noted explicitly as [2], [7] and [16]. However, these works remain significant for the current study, as they are pioneering in their fields.

After aggregating input from all authors, I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

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