Human Relationships in the Era of New Media Technology: The Invigoration of Exploitations of Filipino Men and Women

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Abstract

The advent of the new media technology introduces many ways to cultivate sexual connections between and among individuals across boundaries and geographical territories. Various forms of relationships, which several decades ago would not have been possible, have been cultivated.

These apparent changes in sexuality and/or relationships brought implications and ramifications to modern social lives. Aggressions and exploitations among men and women of various nationalities, including Filipinos, have been observed by scholars and academics   in   the   past   10   years.

To   explore   this   situation,   this   research   paper   had   the following objectives: (1) Describe the phenomenology of virtual relationships through the testimonies of Filipino women and men who are indulging themselves in this kind of relationships; 2.   Explore the motivations and drives of Filipino men and women in indulging in virtual relationships; 3.   Describe and classify sexual deviations and sexual neurosis that may likely develop from virtual relationships; and 4.   Explain the possible   exploitations   of   Filipino   men   and   women   that may be caused by these sexual interactions through the digital and internet   technology.

Keywords: Cybersex, Exploitation, Sex, Online Relationships, Filipino, Sexuality, Media Technology

Introduction

Generally, there are about 33 million internet users in the Philippines or more than 30% of its entire population (Asia Marketing Research, 2013). These users are engaged in various internet based activities including videochatting, social networking, research, education, etc.

The latest 2012 data published by Social Media Monitor Semiocast, a company based in Paris, France, showed that there are less than 10 million users of twitter.com from the Philippines. The country ranked 10th among countries with the most number of users on this social networking site. It trailed behind Spain (9th) but it was overtaken by Turkey which ranked 11th (Twitter reaches, 2012).

The Philippines also ranked 8th among countries with the most number of users on facebook.com. Almost 28 million Filipino users are recorded. This means that the penetration rate of facebook in the Philippines is 27.75%. There are approximately 5 Filipinos who open their Facebook Accounts every minute (Five Filipinos, 2012).

These above data may be surprising to few, considering that the Philippines has only about 30% internet access as compared to its neighbor countries like Singapore and South Korea. Likewise, the Philippines' internet access remains slow and expensive (Malig, 2012). It also trails behind South East Asian countries as regards internet speed and broadband adoption (Tuazon, 2013).

With this reality, Philippines is exposed to both the negative and positive impacts of the new media technology. As Filipinos benefit from the useful information and knowledge that technology provides and facilitates, a huge number of Filipinos also become greatly vulnerable to various threats and risks that the internet technology poses such as cyber exploitation, cyber crimes, etc.

This paper primarily studied one of these risks, most particularly the invigorated sexual exploitations that occurred on cyberspace. Though the paper focused on the phenomenology of virtual relationships through the testimonies of Filipino participants, it tried to approximate and inconclusively redefine human relations and sexuality.

Literature Review

Virtual Reality and Cyberspace: Impact to Society

The simple definition of virtual reality is near-reality. It comes both from *virtual* which means near and *reality* which refers to the phenomenon that human beings experience. It is a type of reality emulation. In the world of computers, virtual reality is a three dimensional, computer generated environment which can be explored and interacted with by a person (What is Virtual, n.d).

For French sociologist Jean Baudrillard, virtual reality is synonymous with his postmodern concept of hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1995). He defines it as the generation by models of a real without origin or reality. It is a representation, a sign, without an original referent. This means that for Baudrillard, hyperreality is a virtual world entirely remote from the real.

Although virtual realities and activities do not happen in a tangible environment and happens only on cyberspace, Michael Heim (1998) observed that social dynamics and personal interaction in the real world are inherently changed and affected. The same observation was also offered by Carmella Kedem (1999). The social dynamics of education, communication, business and personal relationships and interactions are greatly impacted.

In the field of education, the effect was so great. For example, the proliferation of various online universities and online academic programs that facilitated learning for a vast number of students around the world without the necessity of face-to-face interaction between teachers and learners is a thing that was never imagined possible several decades ago. Interactions between learners and teachers have become more and more inessential. Knowledge and information have become so accessible that anybody could easily access almost all information in various fields of study in no time.

Like education, social, as well as individual, communication was also greatly affected by the new technology. Communication has become so fast that what happens in one geographical point is instantenuously known by an

individual from a distant point. Two individuals who are miles apart can now communicate with each other as if there is no distance at all that hugely separates them. This scenario is never possible even after the invention of telegraph and and subsequently, telephone.

Almost all information that anybody needs could easily be accessed anywhere and anytime.   Business industries have become more and more dependent on this technology to stay afloat in the steep competition.

Personal relationships and interactions have also been greatly affected by cyberspace. Concepts like virtual friendships, virtual partnerships and online relationships started to surface.

Virtual Friendships, Virtual Partnerships,
Online Relationships: Distinguished

With the rapid development and movement of the internet technology since its early beginning in the 90s, social landscapes have certainly changed along with it. As pointed out, the technology has affected almost all the spheres of human life.   Internet has great impacts on education, communication, business, governance, morality and religion, and most importantly --human relationships.

Nowadays, human relationships have taken on different characteristics because of the new technology.   For example, concepts like *virtual friends/friendship*, *virtual partners/partnership*, and *online relationships*, which several decades back were not even part of our vocabulary, emerged. Steve Summers (2009) collapsed all these three concepts into one, which he generally calls as "friendships in virtual communities". On the contrary, the researchers of this paper believed that there should be distinctions. The distinctions could be found on the purpose of the connection.

Virtual friendship is purposely forged mainly because of the following reasons: building a business/professional network and other non-sexual purposes of connections. *Virtual friends* are friends that an individual collects through the social networking sites like facebook, twitter, etc. In this kind of friendship, the   individuals who are so much exposed to social networks tend to open their private lives to their virtual friends, who also reciprocate by opening their lives to them too.   Most of the time, in *virtual*

friendships, friends do not even meet in person. They just know each other online and/or on cyberspace. This is also true with *virtual partnerships*, most of the time the partnership is only on cyberspace. The partnership is formed, cultivated, and sometimes ended on cyberspace.

A virtual partnership is purposely forged to strengthen a particular advocacy or stance in an issue. It can also cultivate a particular interest which all the partners consider valuable. Virtual partnership is, thus, simply an aggrupation.

Virtual partnership is entirely different from *online relationship*. Online relationship assumes a sexual characteristic. It could either be developed between two individuals of opposite sex (heterosexual) or two individuals of the same sex (homosexual).   In this kind of cyber relationship, sex--both as a gender and an activity, is always a consideration. The relationship is not for any advocacy or for any stance, the relationship is for sexual gratification, and sometimes for LOVE and mutual affection.

Virtual friendships, virtual partnerships and online relationships are new phenomena but they have certainly become part of the adolescent culture (Wolak, et. Al , 2003). These concepts, though new, radically changed what human beings normally consider as usual and normal socio-psycho phenomenon.

Relationships on Cyberspace

Relationships formed over the cyberspace are nowadays common and at times considered as conventional. Like any relationship, internet relationships are forged because of various reasons, such as battling loneliness, seeking for intimacy, gratification of sexual desires, and even curiosities. Internet is only used as a vehicle for two people to meet, interact and formed these relationships.

There have been numerous researches and studies that have been undertaken to explore the dynamics of internet relationships: how these relationships are established; and how these relationships affect existing normal/physical relationships.

According to Underwood and Findlay (2004), online partners start to form relationships when they find and discover similarities and

commonalities especially in the way they think (intellect), their emotional make-up, and their perspective (world view). The respondents of Underwood and Findlay also noted that the internet allows them to greatly reduced their social anxiety (which is common in personal/physical relationships), thus, allowing them to disclose their selves freely. It was also observed by these researchers that most online relationships are between persons from distant geographical points.

Mckenna, Green and Gleason (2002) showed that individuals who are comfortable in divulging their true self and inner self online to others than on face-to-face are most likely to form virtual relationships and that they probably bring these virtual relationships to the real world. If they don't bring this relationships to the real world, these relationships would just disappear.

Though the internet is conducive to friendships because it permits disclosure at will, voluntary connection, mutual consent, and concealment of defects, Internet relationships are not sustainable over the long term on their own terms .

Wolak, Mitchell and Fingelhor (2003) claimed that youthful individuals who are having troubled relationship with their parents and family would have greater possibility of forming online relationship. In their study, which used data from the United States of America, they pointed that online relationship is established especially by young people, to escape from their poor relationship with their family and parents and to avoid living their troubled lives.

In a relatively similar study, Wysocki (1998) speculated that sexual gratification may be another powerful reason for the formation of online relationship. This speculation was drawn from the reports of his respondents who mostly admitted that their online communications are always related to sex.

Some online relationships are also forged for the purpose of prostitution. Sarah Earle and Keith Sharp (2007) observed that prostitution in cyberspace also forged relationship that is between a man who pays for sex and a prostitute who sells sex.

Sexuality and Exploitation on Cyberspace

Donna Hughes (2002) observed that sexual exploitation of women and children are prevalent in new communication and information technologies. This was two years earlier before the popular social network facebook was founded and four years earlier before twitter started. Sexual exploitations in the cyberspace have more and more become distinguishable from real-physical sexual exploitation.

In a virtual context, sexual exploitations do have some dynamics that may be different from real (not virtual) experiences. For example, online enticement could not easily be classified either acquaintance- abduction or stranger-abduction. This is because online sexual exploitation has the dynamics of both (Berson, 2003). When online relationship is built with someone, an individual who is involved no longer perceives another individual as an outsider. This is when a complete stranger is perceived as peer and so defenses against strangers are not triggered anymore. Although both adult and children could be easily victimized by predators, children are more vulnerable because of their young and innocent disposition.

In Hughes' research, she pointed out that sexual exploitations on cyberspace as perpetrated particularly over chat rooms were alarming. During this time, chatrooms have been very popular that there were around 100,000 chat rooms available to users worldwide. As there are a lot number of chatrooms, numerous cases of sexual exploitations and assaults were noted especially in the US and the UK. (Hughes, 2002) Both children and female adults have become vulnerable to cyber predators who most often inflict emotional and physical abuses online and offline.

Hughes (2002) noted that the use of new communication and information technologies for the sexual exploitations of women and children is creating a crisis for women and children's status, rights and dignity all over the world. She stressed that exploitations in cyberspace continues to grow with the increased number of users on the net.

Ilene Berson (2003) reaffirmed Hughes stance. Berson claimed that chatrooms, where young people initiate exchanges and conversations online, have become so dangerous that the safety and well-being of the users are threatened. Often, predators performed chameleon-like behaviors and

attitudes so sophisticated that they easily prey on young adults and children. Users in chatrooms at times assume different identities and characters to either lure, fool or deceive other users. Berson labeled this as Cyber Grooming.

Briggs, Simon and Simonsen (2011) explored how chatrooms create new typology of sexual offenders. They characterized chatroom sexual offenders to be either contact- driven or fantasy-driven. Contact-driven group is motivated to engage in offline sexual behavior with an adolescent, whereas, fantasy-driven group is motivated to engage an adolescent in online cybersex without express intent to meet offline. These two groups remain to be both dangerous and risky to both children and adult preys.

The behavioral description of online chat room sex offenders is "predatory" (Briggs, et.al, 2011). They usually search chat rooms to look for vulnerable teenagers both male and female. They start conversations with normal and neutral exchanges. They manipulate and control the interactions until the exchanges become so sexually charged. This process of manipulation paves way to sexual exploitation.

Other than chat rooms, social networking sites are also utilized by predators in victimizing their prey (Katzin, et.al., 2011). There have been several US cases involving sexual exploitations in the cyberspace since 2006. For instance, just last year June 2012, Joseph Anthony Kallash was sentenced 15 years after sexually abusing a minor in Owing Mills, Maryland, USA. Kallash met the minor victim over social networking site facebook.com. Last January 8, 2013, Middletown Press reported that Richard Henricks, a former East Hampton Middle School teacher was sentenced to 121 months in prison. Forensic evaluations revealed that Henricks used his computer to receive numerous images and videos of pornography, including images of children under the age of 12, and images portraying sadistic or masochistic conduct and other depictions of sexual violence (Ex-Teacher, 2013). The saddest part of this case was that most of the files of Hendricks primarily originated from the Philippines.

Method

The research paper carefully selected the participants according to the general notion or idea about the dominant research theme: cyberspace relationship and sexual exploitation. Consistent with this general notion, the researchers identified five participants who would likely supply important ideas about the research theme based on their lived experiences as having engaged in online relationships and exchanges. The researchers sought out the help of colleagues and students in the University who could possibly refer them to Filipino male or female internet user who probably experienced online relationships and /or sexual exploitation on cyberspace. With these referrals, about twenty candidates have been shortlisted. After initial visits and interviews that were conducted, the researchers finally trimmed down the number into five participants. However, two of the five shortlisted participants backed out before their turn for interview. Thus, these researchers had only three participants for this study.

Having in mind representativeness and generalizability of this qualitative research, the researchers conveniently selected the participants according to the following gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, and economic conditions. According to gender, there are 2 participants who are biologically female and only 1 participant is male. As to sexual orientation, the researchers decided to have at least one participant who comes from the LGBT community. As to age, the participants are within the age range of 24-43. As to marital status, two participants are single and one is married. There is only one participant who earns a stable income from his profession as a government employee. All the rest of the participants are living below poverty line.

The researchers employed personal or face -to -face interviews in the conduct of the research. To avoid leading the participants towards a particular biased end result, the researchers did not employ structured interview guide. The researchers decided to just ask two general questions after orienting the participants about the research topic and theme. The two questions are as follows: First, Can you describe as detailed as possible in which you experience "Online Relationship and Sexual Exploitation"? and Second, Can you describe a situation about "Online Relationship and Sexual Exploitation" in which you remembered something emotional. The second question is meant to generate psychological and emotional memory

from the participants. Other questions were also asked in relation to their general responses to focus their responses to the phenomenon of online relationship and sexual exploitation.

Prior to the formal face-to-face interview proper, the researchers conducted pre-interview at least one week before the formal and scheduled interview with the participants. This preliminary meetings and initial interview allowed the participants to develop trust to the researchers. It also meant to establish rapport and it initially acquainted the participants about the objectives and the research theme. These pre-interviews were also intended to give the participants longer time to ponder and remember vividly the experience.

The narratives of the Participants

Electra: A Filipina Yearning for Love

Electra obtained her Mass Communication degree from a private university in Metro Manila. She is 43 years old and single. She is about 5"2' in height. Despite her weighty built, she is very fashionable and neat looking. With her fair complexion, Electra, though not a stunner, is pleasant looking. She is graceful and careful in her manners like a typical middle-class professional.

Electra works in a government agency for over 20 years. With her stable job, she lives a very comfortable life. Since her parents have already passed away, Electra lives by herself and no one defends on her for sustenance. Her siblings do not also need any financial support from her because most of them are well-placed and well-off.

She lives alone in a condominium unit just stone's throw away from her office. During the day, Electra's life is not uncommon. She goes to work at 8 am and goes out at 5pm. She walks straight home and prepares her dinner. Before she retires for the day and sleep, Electra would spend 4 hours to five hours of video-chatting with her American boyfriend named Spencer, whom she never met in person.

Spencer is not Electra's first online relationship. He is the fifth. The first online boyfriend she had was Edward from Wales, United Kingdom in

2004. Followed by three others, Robert from Middle East, Sane from US, and Brye from South Africa. According to Electra, she was introduced to chatting online in the early quarter of 2004. It was her batch mate in college that introduced the medium to her. From then on, Electra by herself explored the technology until she met Edward in one chatrooms.

In 2004, Electra was feeling so desperate. She was sad and remembered that since she broke off from her College boyfriend in the 90s who married and eventually left for the US and immigrated, she never had any serious sexual relationship. She admitted during the interview that her College boyfriend was the first man whom she had sexual intercourse with. She never had any physical sexual intercourse since.

When she met Edward online, she was fascinated by the technology and that she was even more amazed by the sexual gratifications she got from all her online conversations and chattings with Edward. Early on in the relationship, there were only sexual inuendos and undertones in the conversations. These undertones made her addicted to the connection even more. After five months of constant chatting, sexual undertones become so sexually manipulative, instructive and direct. Edward would make her so horny through his carefully calculated chats that she would do almost all the sexual instructions given her. Almost every encounter, Electra would end up masturbating to gratify her sexual desires. Likewise, Electra would also satisfy Edward with her sexual chats that were meant to gratify his man. This went on for one and a half year without any physical connection. They never met even once. The relationship stopped when suddenly Edward was no longer in the same chatroom and not even in other chatrooms. His account was no longer active. Electra was left wondering about the reasons why the relationship stopped. Was it her fault? Was it anything she said or did while online? She had never gotten any answers to all her questions.

After almost a month of waiting for Edward, Electra was finally convinced that what she had with the British, if indeed he was British, was a case of sexual exploitation she would never forget. There was no genuine feeling and all was about online sex. Though she was never violated physically, she felt that she was used and overly abused by what happened. All the emotional investments she poured came to naught. She thought that everything was real. She even stayed so faithful and loving all throughout the relationship. She considered the relationship as if it was a conventional relationship.

In the second quarter of 2007, Electra again found herself in another online relationship. This time it was with Robert. Robert was an American living and working in Saudi Arabia in an Arab-American oil company. He was 33. By this time, Electra demanded a lot of personal information from Robert. His age, address, work, real and passport name, and other facts. Robert was seemed so real that he obliged to all Electra's requests. Electra verified and counter checked all the information given to her. To her satisfaction, all the information was truthful. Though they started their exchanges in the same chatroom where she met Edward, their relationship also employed other online media such as email, video chat, picture –sharing sites, etc. This was deliberate on the part of Electra to avoid the incident with Edward from happening again.

With the use of other online media, Electra's relationship with Robert was more intense and serious in that she started to show her naked body online by using a small camera through video chatting. Robert would likewise show Electra his naked body while masturbating and toying with his sex organ. He likewise taught Electra to use devices such as battery-operated vibrators in her masturbation. This went on for a year. Robert seemed so kind, patient, gentle, loving and caring all throughout their togetherness and exchanges online.

In early 2008, Robert was asked by his company to go to Malaysia for an observation and inspection for a possible business partnership. Robert obliged Electra to meet him there. At the expense of Robert, Electra flew in to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia nervous, uncomfortable but excited. She admitted that during her 3 hours of air travel she was thinking and fantasizing about the physical sexual intercourse that would eventually happen the moment she meets Robert in his hotel. She was so sure to give herself to Robert. Robert picked her up from the airport. Then they proceeded to the hotel where he stayed. Immediately upon closing the room-door, Robert and Electra passionately kissed each other so torrid that indicated their bursting lust for each other. They had sex all day and night. Electra had never been so happy.

But her happiness was short lived. During the third day of her stay with Robert in Malaysia, things became so different. Robert became violent and temperamental that a slightest error on her part would cause him to yell at her and shout to the top of his lungs. Robert also slapped her face twice

when she had accidentally broken his belt buckle. She was so afraid. She realized that Robert was completely different from the way he projected himself online. During the fourth day, while Robert was asleep, Electra left for Manila and never contacted Robert again.

It was difficult for her to accept what happened. But she was intelligent enough to avoid some more pain and abuses to happen to her. When she arrived in Manila, she immediately deleted all her old accounts in the internet like email, chatrooms, video chats, etc in order not to be traced and stalked and reached by Robert. She also decided then to change her residence. This was the time when she bought the condo unit where she now lives.

Few months thereafter, Electra registered first on Friendster and later, on facebook. It was through these social networking sites that she developed short time online relationships with Sane and Brye. Her relationship with Sane was not so memorable that it never left an imprint in her memory. Sane and Electra just suddenly stopped contacting each other without any known reasons at all. Until she saw some pictures posted by Sane with her wife and his newly born baby boy.

Her relationship with Brye was a virtual friendship. Brye would just share stories with her. He would ask her for pieces of advice and suggestions. There was no sexual relationship that happened between them. They remained friends until she met Spencer on facebook.

Her story with Spencer is still an open story. So far, she is happy with Spencer. They had already experience online sex or cybersex and Electra felt that she has to oblige herself to engage in such sexual activities to keep her man.

Cez: A born performer Online

Cez is biologically male but he belongs to the third sex or homosexuals.   He is gay since his childhood. Cez is from a dysfunctional family. His father left for Mindanao (Southern Philippines) and never came back. His mother is a peddler of cigarettes and candies in one of the major thoroughfares in Tondo, Manila. Most of his siblings are either jobless or drug addicts.

Cez was a very diligent and active college student. He was on scholarship. He was very active in a student theatre organization in his University. He was known for his talent in singing and acting. His comedic antics during school programs would always standout. He was a born performer and crowd pleaser.

One year before graduation, Cez decided to stop schooling. Thinking that the family needs him for support, he decided to work as a part time stand-up comedian in one of the bars in Quezon City, also in the Metropolitan Manila area. He earns $10 per night of performance. This amount is a big help to his starving family. He only has three shows in a week. He thought that the income he gets from his part time work is not enough to feed his family and to sustain some of his personal whims and so he decided to look for other source of income, especially during his vacant time. A colleague in the bar, who is also gay, introduced to him online cybersex performance where he could possibly earn around $100-200 in a week.

At first, Cez could not imagine performing sexual acts in front of the camera. He said that this violates his long held values and religious orientation. But his hesitation was not long. He still decided and was forced by circumstance to try the job.

In 2007, his comedian friend brought him to a house located in the slums of Sampaloc, Manila. Upon reaching the place, Cez immediately noticed several individuals who are performing various sexual acts in front of cameras hooked to the internet. Just on the ground floor alone, there are 12 performers and 5 performers at the second floor. The operation is 24/7. Performers are working on a shift to shift basis.

The house is a two-story house. Computers and booths are so arranged that performer could not see each other. Performers are varied. The house is owned by a certain Malou, a grocery owner in the locality. Malou is the operator of the cyber prostitution den.

Cez was enticed to join the packs of cyber performers on a part time basis, performing only during Friday nights. For every hour of performance online, Cez earns around $80 while the operator earns $20 on average. During his first night of performance, Cez was shocked to learn the trade.

Malou, the operator, co-owns with a Chinese national the pornographic website which advertises the services of online sex performers. The website has around 1500 registered users from around the world. In the website, pictures of naked Filipino women and gays are posted with various screen names. The user would have to click the picture to directly access the account of the performer. Once the user accessed the performer, they will be asked to enter their credit card information in order for the performance to commence. The minimum payment that the user has to pay is $10 per 5 minutes and $120 for an hour. The money is directly siphoned to the account of the Chinese operator who in turn transfers the money to the Philippines. Cez and the other performers just get their money from Malou.

For one year, Cez performed various sexual acts before hundreds of users. When Cez was asked to detail the performance, he obliged. According to him, in almost every performance unusual and exotic sexual acts are performed. He would use battery operated vibrators, softdrinks bottles, toothpaste tubes, wooden baton, and other objects as may be requested by the client/user. Cez is most often requested by the client/users to insert any desired object to his rectum/ass and his oral orifice. He would dance naked. Sing naked. Act out famous characters with pornographic twists. And the most demeaning according to Cez is when the client/user would request him, for a much higher rate, to perform sexual intercourse with another gay performer, women prostitute, Filipino young/minor boys, and the most unforgettable would be an intercourse with an animal (cat).

Cez got used to this set of activities that his perception about its ethical dimension begun to be blurred. He would always justify it by the hefty income the activities generate which continuously sustained his family. When asked about the relationship he forged with his clients through his job, Cez told the researchers that he just considered the clients/users simply as source of income. He would always make sure that there would be no personal attachment that would develop.

In January 2008, Cez had encountered an addicted Irish client. After three weeks of continuous connection, the Irish client offered a steady connection. He gave Cez 2,000 British pounds demanding him to resign from his cybersex job. Cez could not refuse such an offer. What he did was

to accede to the Irish man's request. He resigned immediately from Malou's cybersex den.

Cez used the money to cause repairs and improvement of their shabby and dilapidated shanty, which made his family happy. Whatever was left, Cez bought three sets of desktop computers and hooked the PCs to the internet. One PC became his constant vehicle to get in touch with the Irish national and the other two PCs where used by Cez to start his own cybersex den operation without the knowledge of his Irish boyfriend. Cez did not use any website to advertise his business. He just asked his performers to befriend any nationality over the social networking site facebook. Cez calls it 'operation hunting'. They hunt for possible client over facebook.

Other than the bulk money that was transferred to the account of Cez, the Irish boyfriend regularly sends an average of UK pound 200 per month to him. Cez felt comfortable with the setup. He also earns around USD 100-150 per month from the two PCs.

April of 2008, the Irishman decided to visit Cez. The Irishman, about 34 years of age, reserved a cozy hotel few miles from the airport. He requested Cez to accompany him in the hotel for 5 days. Cez obliged. They made love almost everyday. Despite the insistence of Cez, the Irishman, who left for Thailand for another 10 days, did not meet Cez' family and friends. The Irishman also did not give Cez any amount during their Manila meeting.

After 2 days, Cez received a message from his Irish boyfriend. The message says: "I WENT TO THAILAND TO MEET ANOTHER HOMOSEXUAL. PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT ME ANYMORE. HOPE THAT YOU ARE COMPENSATED WELL WITH ALL YOUR SERVICES. THANK YOU. I AM NOT EVIL AFTERALL."

Cez was devastated upon receiving this message. Not because he learned to love the Irishman but because he was thinking that the allowance, and all the money he was getting from the Irishman would suddenly stop. He was devastated because of the thought that he would be forced to go back to his old ways and lifestyle. He would be compelled to go back to Malou's ward. He realized that the small Cyber sex business he put up certainly could not measure up with the resources of Malou.

Cez went back to Malou.

Sweet: Married and Wanting to Escape

Sweet is a 35 year-old accounting assistant based in Pasay City (Metro Manila). She is married and has a 13-year old daughter. She was compelled to marry at a very young age of 22 to his boyfriend when she unexpectedly got pregnant despite all her precautions and measures not to bear child. Hesitant though she was, Sweet was civilly married to Ben, her boyfriend, whom she loved less. She would always tell her friends that she was not sure about her feelings towards Ben and that she was not ready to commit herself to a lifelong relationship.

Since the start of their relationship, Ben and Sweet would always quarrel over anything. They just do not fit with one another. Jealousy, finances, and trust issues caused the relationship to crumble.   When the couple's daughter turned 9 years old, they decided to part ways. Sweet together with her daughter went and stayed with a relative and Ben remained in the conjugal home.

Sweet was not so fond of computers and internet. She would say *"Walang appeal sa akin ang pa-facebook facebook na yan* (Facebook did not have any appeal to me), I only used computers to type documents and make powerpoint presentation for my company." She seldom opened her email account. She has only 5 friends in her facebook account. She rarely visited and updated her facebook page. Until sometime in 2012 a friend request from Patrick Buckley popped up her account, she immediately accepted the request. Patrick Buckley introduced himself as a real state professional from Central London, United Kingdom.

After three straight weeks of getting connected, they began to develop an intimate relationship. They began to use other media as well such as chatting, mobile phones, and emails. Sweet fell so madly in love with Patrick. She started to entertain thoughts of getting a formal annulment of her marriage with Ben. She started to entertain thoughts of immigrating to United Kingdom with her daughter and cohabit with Patrick. Patrick, according to Sweet's assessment, could be a great stepfather for her daughter and a greater lover for her.

Despite the disagreement of some friends and relatives, Sweet remained steadfast and stubborn about her relationship with Patrick. The couple would always be burning their lines and talk over the phone almost everyday. Sweet would always receive thoughtful and loving messages from Patrick.

Sweet spent so much time on her cellular phone and laptop talking with Patrick. She was always on her phone giggling, laughing, and whispering sweet notes to Patrick. "*Minsan napapabayaan ko na nga yung mga basic needs ng anak ko at hindi na rin kami masyadong naguusap.*" (Sometimes I tend to forget the basic needs of my daughter and it came to a point where I seldom communicate with my daughter.)

"Dumating sa punto na sa tindi ng pagmamahal ko sa kanya, inaaway ko na lahat ng tao na nakapaligid sa akin. Pinaglaban ko talaga sya at aming pagibig. " (It came to a point where, because of my deepest love for him, I would be in conflict with some people around me. I fought for him and our love.)

"My dislike for my husband who kept on wooing me to go back to the conjugal home even intensified. I was so confident that life with Patrick would be far better. My daughter would have a great future with Patrick. Despite all the efforts that my husband exerted, I am already so convinced of separating from him permanently and the prospect of a life with Patrick excited me."

When Sweet's job, relationship with her relatives, relationship with her daughter were already affected in a bad way, her relatives especially Ethel decided to investigate the real identity of Patrick. This investigation of Ethel infuriated Sweet. She got mad with Ethel. Her aunties and other cousins were alarmed.

Sweet was head over heels in love with Patrick that she was so blinded. Until an incident happened after ten months of their relationship. Patrick called her up using a UK number. He was telling her about a nephew who was incarcerated in Malaysia for a drug crime while touring the Asian country. The Malaysian authorities, he claimed, were asking around USD1500 as bribe money. He told sweet that he could not go to Malaysia immediately and that its midnight in UK. Banks were closed. Time was of the essence, he told Sweet. He requested Sweet to deposit the amount to the

account of a certain Malaysian sounding name. He told Sweet that the name to whom the deposit was to be made belongs to a Malaysian police officer tasked to collect the money.   Failure to deposit the money would mean death or life imprisonment for Patrick's nephew. Sweet was so shocked. She wanted to help Patrick but she could not do it because she has no money to send.

When she told Patrick of her inability to help and send money to Malaysia, Patrick broke up with her. Sweet was devastated. She thought that the love was real and genuine and that Patrick was a real lover. She felt so much violated and abused. She was scammed.

In her own investigation, she discovered that Patrick was a Malaysian national posing as British. He used UK cellular number which made it appear that he was really calling and communicating from Britain. But the truth is that he was just placing calls from Malaysia. Sweet discovered that Patrick was able to do it by getting a UK number over the the net the FREE UK NUMBER site. Patrick lures women from around the world. Attacked their vulnerability and then when the women are already in love with him, he would demand money.

Today, Sweet is trying to fix her marriage with Ben. Though they are not yet perfectly fine, things look brighter for their relationship. Sweet preferred not to tell Ben about what happened with her and Patrick. She decided to just forget about the incident and erase all the bad memories.

She also decided to deactivate her facebook account at the moment. The experience really devastated her but she learned so much from it.

"It was really painful because I lost him. I felt very abused and that I wasted precious time, efforts and emotions. But the experience taught me something good—that I have to value the love and care of my family, " she finally said.

Discussion

In the past decades before the discovery of cyber technology and all the elements that came with it, human relationships and sexual connections

and activities were very simple or uncomplicated.   In the Philippines, women are courted in the most traditional ways

Men have to exert so much effort to impress the women they love.   A suitor is required to visit the woman's house and he had to ask permission from her parents. During the suitor's visits, he has to cultivate rapport with the entire family. He has to woo all the members of the family to show that he respects and values the host family. After several visits, the suitor has to do '*paninilbihan*' or servitude.

The process of courting in the Philippines, in the traditional way, is a difficult process. The Filipina is expected to play hard-to-get as the norm dictates. Hence, no matter how the woman likes the suitor, she has to show disinterest and utmost restraint.

The case of Electra showed that Philippine courtship tradition is no longer as valued by women as before.   Electra's series of online relationships did not show her playing hard-to-get, as the tradition demands. She is easily lured by the glibness of her online suitors.   She also did not exercise caution in dealing with online users.   She was so used and contented with her cyber lovelife that all her relationships after her college boyfriend were on cyberspace.

The sexual and even physical (courtesy of Edward) abuses that she experienced in the hands of her online partners should have deterred her from having other online relationships. But she continued to be hooked and addicted to search for some other online partners. The bleak experiences became circuitous and repetitive and yet she remained so used and immune.

There is likelihood that she was already disillusioned by the pleasure she was getting from the online sexual gratifications that she gets and the online connection that she forges. This disillusionment made her more distant from real life relationships, particularly normal heterogeneous relationships. Perhaps, her being hooked in cyber relationships caused her to get older without any real physical partner or boyfriend in the traditional sense of the word.

In the case of Sweet, Patrick Buckley who groomed himself to be a very decent, wealthy and responsible British national wooed Sweet without even a single element of traditional Filipino courtship.   The relationship

blossomed as he deceitfully projected himself to be so in love with Sweet- who was then longing for a genuine love that she never experienced with her Filipino husband. A deceitful man, like Patrick, could never give the respect for women and family that the Filipino courtship norm demands.

Electra and Sweet were obviously abused and violated. They were both emotionally, psychologically and sexually abused by their cyber partners. What they did online, though truly satisfied and somehow gratified their sexual needs, turned out to be activities that shattered their perceptions. Electra's perception about sexual relationship become so much grounded on virtuality. Her sexual satisfaction become more and more anchored on activities such as masturbation, pornography and sex talks. Electra's continued search for online partners one after another is a testament to this.

The exploitation and deception that Sweet experienced altered her perceptions. Her perception about family was altered. She became so hooked to Patrick that she forgot her obligations to her daughter. She was at war and in conflict with almost all the closest people around her because of her boyfriend.

Clearly, Electra and Sweet share the same motivation on why they started to engage in online relationship which eventually caused them pain. Their motivation was LOVE. They were searching and looking for genuine love and love that also satisfies their sexual desires. This is where Cez, our second participant, differs from the two. Cez' principal drive was MONEY. He wanted to help his starving family. He wanted to provide them with good life. Cez also nurtured online relationships but relationship between customer and performer.

Cez was abused not because of LOVE and manipulations of a lover. Cez was abused online because of his customers or audience wanting to be entertained and wanting to satisfy their eccentric and exotic sexual desires. Cez never felt love during the course of his performance. He always considered the cyberporn site where he appears as a stage.

With the exposure of the three participants to the exploitation/abuses of cyber relationships, the following sexual deviations were observed to be either present or likely to be present in the psychological make up of the participants:

(1) Masochism- is defined as a person who gains sexual pleasure from his/her receipt of pain and humiliation (Thomson, 1959). Electra manifested slight symptoms of masochism. Despite constant pain and abuses that she gets from her online relationships, she still remains to be hooked and addicted to the activity.

(2) Scoptophilia- is a deviation where a person gains pleasure from seeing some undressed individuals with their genitals out, or from observing couple in the act of coitus (Thomson, 1959). Both Electra and Sweet may likely be inflicted by this deviation, if they do not stop indulging in online cyber sex. Online cybersex facilitates Scoptophilia.

(3) Exhibitionism- is a deviation where the individual gains pleasure from exposing his genitals and his /her sexual activities (Thomson, 1959). Cez is likely inflicted by this deviation. Electra and Sweet also have tendency to be inflicted by this sexual deviation.

Conclusion

The use of new communication and information technologies for the sexual exploitation of women and men is becoming more and more pronounced as social networking and internet penetration is becoming widespread. The testimonies of the participants manifested the gravity of the abuses and violence that are committed against them. Despite the variety of reasons that drove the participants to engage in online relationships, exploitations, though different in forms, certainly impacted the way the participants live their lives.

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