"Safe Surfing": Gender, Sexuality and Young People’s Digital Connections

Date:
02 October 2023

Time:
08:30 – 16:30

Venue:
The Capital Pearls Umhlanga

Room:
Ultramarine

For young people, online surfing has become the 'new normal.' As early as the age of 13, young people worldwide gain access to a multitude of social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and more, providing opportunities for entertainment, information and communication, relationship building and social connections. These connections serve as crucial spaces for expressing gender and sexuality, exploring sexual curiosities, and developing new intimacies and relationships. However, online surfing is also entangled with normative understandings of gender and sexuality, violence, harassment, and abuse, posing a significant threat to young people’s emerging sexualities, especially affecting young women and girls.

In this one-day conference, we open up debate, discussions, and dialogue on the dynamic interplay between gender, sexuality, and digital connections among young people based in South Africa. We will explore how they exert control over their online activities to claim their right to sexual expression and desires while also bringing attention to sexual harm and danger. Building from the recently published book – *Girls Negotiating Porn in South Africa: Power, Play and Sexuality* (Routledge, 2023), the conference participants will capture the complexity, contradictions, and contexts of gendered and sexual interactions as young people surf online. Collaboration among researchers, policymakers, youth advocates, parents, and educational institutions is indispensable for the development of effective strategies to address these pressing issues. Join us in this one-day conference as we collectively work towards a safer, more inclusive, and respectful digital landscape for young people.
Programme:

08:30–08:55
Arrival

08:55-09:05
Welcome
Phumlani Erasmus Myende, University of KwaZulu Natal

Session One:
Why Researching Childhood Sexualities Online Matters (Shaaista Moosa)

09:05–09:30
Gender, Sexuality and Young People in the Digital Age
Deevia Bhana, University of KwaZulu Natal

09:30-10:00
‘Boys and girls are viewing porn in school!’ Girls’ experiences of watching porn on cell phones and their accounts of sexual risk in the classroom.
Invited Speaker 1: Emmanuel Mayeza, University of Western Cape

10:00-10:15
Mid-Morning Break

Session Two:
Selfies, Sexual Double Standards and the Heterosexual Compulsion: Teenage girls learning gender and sexuality online (Vimbai Matswetu)

10:15-10:45
Sexy Selfies: Young girls, Social Media and the heterosexual compulsion
Wendy Nhlangulela, University of KwaZulu Natal

10:45-11:15
Teenage Girls, Sexual Double Standards and Social Media
Zandile Mhlongo, University of KwaZulu Natal

Session Three:
Masculinities and Femininities: Gender, Sexuality, and Online Intraactions (Patsy Jewnarin)

11:15-11:45
Sexual Cultures in a Digital Era: Boys and Girls Negotiating Gender and Sexuality on Social Media
Laaiqah Syed, University of KwaZulu Natal

11:45-12:15
“Smash or pass”: Young People Navigating Gender and Sexuality Online
Rabia Rizvi, University of KwaZulu Natal
12:15-12:45
Why Boys matter? - Sexual risk behaviour interventions targeting boys and young men in Sub Saharan Africa.
Roselyn Kanyemba, University of Pretoria

12:45 - 13:45
Lunch

Session Four:
Young people in the Pornoscene (Diloshini Govender)

13:45-14:15
‘You are worried if your pencil will ‘write’: Masculinity, sexuality and young men’s narratives of pornography
Melusi Dlamini, Rhodes University

14:15-14:45
Young People’s Engagement with Digital Porn: Pleasure, Power and Gender Norms
Valerie Reddy, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Session Five:
Gender and Sexual Violence Research (Patsy Jewnarain)

14:45-15:15
Spaces, Objects and Bodies: The Geographies of Heterosexual Dating and Intimacy among Young People
Invited Speaker 2: Ndumiso Ngidi, University of KwaZulu-Natal

15:15 - 15:30
Afternoon Break

Session Six:
Introducing the Book (Shaaista Moosa)

15:30-16:00
Girls Negotiating Porn in South Africa: Power, Play and Sexuality
Deevia Bhana, University of KwaZulu-Natal

16:00-16:30
Next Steps and Future Research
Emmanuel Mayeza; Ndumiso Ngidi and Deevia Bhana