

PREMARITAL SEX AMONG THE MUSLIM YOUTH IN MALAYSIA

Laetitia Mughni M. Yussli
Nur Adlina Aleesha Saiful Rizal
Nur Syazwani Shaharudin
Nurul Atikah Sarji
Puteri Aida Sakeena Abdul Majid

Faculty of Communication & Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

Correspondent email: laetitiatisha@yahoo.com

Abstract

Islam recognizes the sexual needs of a human being for the purpose of procreation and pleasure. However, the fulfilment of sexual needs of Muslims must be made in a conscientious manner that is within the lawful framework of marriage. Premarital sex carries a lot of consequences, which explains why it is highly forbidden by most Muslim countries including Malaysia which involves one in high risk of sexually transmitted disease (STD) and HIV/AIDS. In Malaysia, There are over 257 million births listed exclusive of the father's name, which proves that premarital sex is an actively occurring activity. The main method used in this study is a semi-structured interview. This study adopts the cultivation theory that was proposed by George Gerbner in the 1960s and 1970s. According to the theory, people who watch television frequently tend to be influenced by the message it portrays. The findings revealed that the main drive of premarital sex activities is love and media. Post involvement in the activity shows that people were either regretful or happier with their action. The advice given to those who are thinking of involving or already involving is to have a stronger faith in religion, do not be easily influenced by peer pressure, develop self-control, implement sex education, set priorities and encourage early marriage.

Keynote: causes, premarital sex, youth, Muslims, Islam.

INTRODUCTION

Islam recognizes the sexual needs of a human being for the purpose of procreation and pleasure. Still, the fulfilment of sexual needs of Muslims must be made in a conscientious

manner that is within the lawful framework of marriage. Islam is against the concept of free sex or sex out of marriage (zina) because of the disastrous consequences it will bring to human lives (Sudan, 2015). Thus, those who commit zina are committing one of the greatest sins in Islam. The Holy Quran says: “And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty” (Al-Quran, 25:28).

While Islam being the official religion of Malaysia with a clear prohibition on premarital sex, there is a worrying trend arising that Malaysian teens are becoming more open in matters pertaining to sexuality (Mudassir Anwar et al., 2010, Abdullah, 2010, Low, 2009, Lee et al., 2006). Research by the National Population and Family Development Board found that a total of 22% of sexually active students were influenced by pornography (Hassan, 2016). The increasing permissiveness towards premarital sex shows that it is likely that the Muslim youth in Malaysia will be in the same situation as the western societies in which adolescent sexuality is rather free and open, to the contrary to the teaching of Islam (Sudan, 2015).

Rising unlawful sexual activities leads to a rise in the number of issues. According to National Registration Department statistics in 2017, 4992 children were born out of wedlock to girls aged 18 and below. Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said among the factors leading to cases of illegitimate children and baby dumping were incest, child abuse, domestic violence, premarital sex and pornography (Joibi, 2018).

FACTORS OF PREMARITAL SEX AMONG MUSLIM YOUTH IN MALAYSIA

i) Media

Premarital sex among Muslims youth in Malaysia is a hot issue in Malaysia. Premarital sex is absolutely forbidden in Islam, no matter whether it is a girlfriend or a prostitute. There are a lot of factors that why the Muslims youth are involving in this case. First and foremost, **media** is the biggest factor in why this case happens in this country. The mainstream mass media such as the internet, social media, televisions, and movies are always providing

frequent portrays of sexuality. According to (Brown, 2010), media do have in impact because the media keep sexual behaviours on public and personal agendas, media portrayals reinforce a relatively consistent set of sexual and relationship norms, and the media rarely depict sexually responsible models. One largely unexplored factor that may contribute to adolescents' sexual activity is their exposure to mass media. (Chaves, 2007). According to (Kiragu & Zabin, 1993), other factors associated with premarital sex include the influence of media.

ii) Love

The second factor of premarital sex among youth Muslims in Malaysia is **love**. There are many ways for people to have meaningful relationships and satisfying lives, which differ from the implicit ideal of the couple that sustains love, intimacy, romance and sexual passion through life. (Blencher, 2006). He also said that there are many ways for people to have meaningful relationships and satisfying lives, which may differ from the implicit ideal of the couple that sustains love, intimacy, romance and sexual passion throughout life. This factor can be supported based on (Tukker, 2013), they want to be together because they are in love, and the sex they enjoy with one another is an expression of that love.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PREMARITAL SEX AMONG MUSLIM YOUTH IN MALAYSIA

i) Depression

On the other hand, the biggest **consequences** of the premarital sex among Muslims youth in Malaysia is **depression**. According to (Johson, et.al, 2003), when compared to teens who are not sexually active, teenage boys and girls who are sexually active are significantly less likely to be happy and more likely to feel depressed and significantly more likely to attempt suicide. Mental health problems such including depression and low self-esteem may play an important role in the development and maintenance of sexual risk behaviours. (Shrier LA,et.al, 2001) may lead to risky sexual behaviour as it may impair cognitive function and memory, decrease one's ability to control impulsive behaviour, increase emotional reactivity in peer relationships, reduce motivation, and increase fatalism. Their effects of depression

may inhibit an individuals' clear perception of the risk of contracting an STD and their ability to prevent risky sexual behaviour.

WAYS TO PREVENT PREMARITAL SEX AMONG MUSLIMS YOUTH IN MALAYSIA

i) Put religion number one at heart.

There are many ways to prevent premarital sex among Muslims youth in Malaysia. Firstly, the Muslims youth should always put religion number one at heart. In Islam, marriage between a man and a woman is a must before they want to involve in a sexual relationship. In Islam perspective, pre-marital sex is a zina, which is fornication. Allah said in the Quran, (17:32), "Do not near adultery, surely it is an indecency, and an evil way [of fulfilling sexual urge] ". Besides, premarital sex is one of the biggest sins in the Islamic religion. This statement can be supported based on the Quran, (24:2), "The woman and the man fornicate scourge each of them a hundred whips ; and in the matter of God's religion, let no tenderness for them seize you if you believe in God and the Last Day: and let a party of the believers witness their punishment".

ii) Sex education in school

Secondly, sex education. As we know, sex is a taboo subject in Malaysia. According to (Siti Syairah and Ruzianisra, 2014), the Malaysian government has suggested introducing sexual education in schools. Based on (United Nations, 1998), sex education is the process of acquiring knowledge and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationship and intimacy. Based on (Dyson, 2010), schools need to take an active role in providing written communication about what will be covered in sexuality education programs and be open to meet with those parents who express concern.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Strategies

a) Interview Type

In order to satisfy the objectives of this paper, the researchers chose qualitative research which is semi-structured interview as the main method in conducting this research to make

sure the data gained is dependable and has concrete data to help this research in its own quality. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research focuses on the interpretation of phenomena in their natural settings to make sense in terms of the meanings people bring to these settings. The qualitative research method involves data collection of personal experiences, introspection, stories about life, interviews, observations, interactions and visual texts which are significant to people's life. According to Doyle (2018) and Ridzuan, Ridzuan and Ridzuan (2018), a semi-structured interview is a meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions. They will ask more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than a straightforward question and answer format.

b) Sampling

The researchers chose nonprobability sampling as their data collection strategies. According to Foley (2018), a nonprobability sampling technique where the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected. The researchers use purposive or judgemental sampling. According to Perla (2012), judgement sampling is a type of nonprobability sample, which is selected on the basis of knowledge of a subject matter expert with knowledge of the process being studied. The researchers targeted six informants among the Muslim youth who have involved with premarital sex between the ages of 18 to 25 years old in Malaysia to be interviewed, six informants consisting of UiTM students of different campuses. The interview will be conducted in April 2019, specifically in UiTM Alor Gajah, Melaka (Abdul Rauf Ridzuan et al., 2015).

Details of informants:

- 1) Roy Naga (20 years old from Selangor)
Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, UiTM Seri Iskandar, Perak.
- 2) Ikhwan (21 years old from Selangor)
Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, UiTM Pulau Pinang.
- 3) Alia (20 years old from Perak)
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, UiTM Alor Gajah, Melaka.

- 4) Maya (20 years old from Selangor)
Faculty of Hotel and Tourism, UiTM Alor Gajah, Melaka.
- 5) Luna (20 years old from Selangor)
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, UiTM Alor Gajah, Melaka.
- 6) Intan (20 years old from Terengganu)
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, UiTM Alor Gajah, Melaka.
- 7) Adrien (20 years old from Selangor)
Faculty of Engineering, UiTM Shah Alam

Data Analysis

a) Thematic Analysis

The researchers used thematic analysis as it is a type of qualitative analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004), thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights. Thematic analysis is also useful for summarizing key features of a large data set, as it forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handle data, helping to produce a clear and organized final report (King, 2004).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

RQ 1: WHAT LEADS YOU INTO PREMARITAL SEX?

a) Love mainly leads individuals into premarital sex among youth in Malaysia.

Based on Luna, premarital sex happens because love is the main drive into youth involvement in premarital sexual activities. She also added that because of love between her and her partner is deeply that is why they are having sex together. Besides that, Adrien also agreed on the statement that love made her involve in premarital sex just like Luna.

According to Maya, it happened because they have established a level of trust that assures that they are in it together and without it, the relationship would have not evolved. Maya also said, "We love each other of course but without trust then our relationship wouldn't have gone anywhere".

"Because I'm attracted to my partner, physically and emotionally. Because I love my partner, therefore, I am willing to do it without any force" Alia said. Therefore, with all those elements combined, the willingness comes naturally.

Lastly, Intan stated because of madly in love with her partner and have no control of her lust to try the new thing. The curiosity is highly encouraging her to try premarital sex even she knows it is wrong as a Muslims. "I wanted to try and know how it feels" she added.

b) The media influence the minds of youngsters thus leading to premarital sex.

According to one of the informants, Luna, one of her main influences into her involvement in premarital sexual activities is the media factor. The existence of media that portrays the western culture has unconsciously led her into trying things that she has witnessed over the media.

Subsequently, according to Ikhwan, he too agreed that media is the main drive into his involvement in sexual activities before marriage. Upon the exposure towards explicit content through media, he confessed that he wanted to experience it himself.

According to Roy Naga, the biggest factor that led him into this act, specifically, is the existence of pornography. He mentioned that from watching pornography, he had imagined it being him and his partner. Thus, those imaginations have led him into making it a reality.

c) The feeling of curiosity causes involvement in premarital sex.

According to Intan, curiosity is what pushes her into exploring the dynamics of sexual activities. The informant stated that she wanted to know how it feels. "Curiosity kills" she added. This is undoubtedly due to exposure to inappropriate content that leads her to have that desire.

Conclusion remark:

Comparing the statement made by multiple scholars in the literature review, it is proven that media does play a significant role in leading youth into their involvement in premarital sex (Brown, 2010). It is parallel with that answers given by most of the informants stating that media, is one of their main influences. On the other hand, as have mentioned by most of the informants, love is a huge drive towards their involvement. Tukker (2013) they want to be together because they are in love, and the sex they enjoy with one another is an expression of that love. This shows that results that were jotted down are in sync with what past research has found. However, the curiosity factor stated by one informant does not match in any of the past researches. It might be the fact in some cases but deeper and more research needs to be done regarding the matter.

RQ2: HOW DO YOU FEEL AFTER INVOLVING YOURSELF IN PREMARITAL SEX?**a) Individuals of the Muslim youth in Malaysia feel regretful of their actions in premarital sex.**

According to the informant named Alia, she feels guilty over her actions in sex before marriage. She added that she felt cheap with a loss of dignity and was scared of the consequences.

In addition, Luna feels that she should not have started getting involved in premarital sexual activities. "Sometimes I feel like I shouldn't have started, I feel the sins and know that it is wrong", she said. Luna disclosed that she often falls back into those moments of intimacy with her partner despite being consciously aware of the sin.

Intan, on the other hand, revealed her feelings of regret after doing it and added that sex is addictive. Like Luna, Intan also specified that she continues to act in fornication even after feelings of regret. This can be identified as a guilty pleasure that the Muslim youth exhibits and practices.

b) Individuals feel happier after involving in premarital sex.

According to Maya, she feels gratified after her involvement in premarital sex. She expressed that she is really happy with her relationship, "I'm really happy with my relationship now. How your partner treats you during moments of intimacy provides an insight into how they actually are as a person, and from ours, I can tell that my partner prioritises me and how comfortable I am during those moments". Maya voiced no sense of regret.

According to Adrien, he feels way happier than before his engagement in premarital sex. He added that he is sure enough that his partner is his own for a lifetime, and that it is okay to act upon it.

Ikhwan, however, became addicted to sex. That made him become eager to try it with other people with a sense of excitement.

Based on Roy Naga, he feels happier after having premarital sex as his relationship became more intimate. He added that he felt accountable for taking the virginity of his partner. He believes that he will commit to her his whole life.

Despite having a sense of regret, Luna also feels happier after engaging in premarital sex because of how her relationship with her partner became more transparent and intimate. "We connect deeper now", she said.

Conclusion remark:

Based on the interview session, the researchers have found that there are more individuals who feel happier after their involvement in premarital sex when compared to the ones who feel a sense of regret. Those who expressed regret are conscious of being in a religion that prohibits the forbidden act. Being aware that the action is wrong is a lawful remark. It signifies that the individual still has faith in Islam. The Prophet SAW said, "If a person commits a sin, yet is aware that Allah is watching, then Allah forgives him, even if the person does not [explicitly] ask for forgiveness." Conversely, referring to the literature review, when compared to teens that are not sexually active, teenage boys and girls who are sexually active are significantly less likely to be happy and more likely to feel depressed

(Kirk Johnson, 2003). This statement definitely differs from what has been found in this study which state individuals feel happier after engaging in premarital sex.

RQ3: WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TOWARDS YOUNGER ONES THAT ARE THINKING OF INVOLVING OR ALREADY INVOLVING IN PREMARITAL SEX?

a) Have a stronger faith in religion

Younger generations nowadays always take it lightly on the importance of having a strong faith in Islam. Three of the informants have suggested the younger generations to practice religious matters as it will protect oneself from getting involve with premarital sex. “The more you sin, the harder life gets”, said Luna. Youth especially students should focus on their studies and put it as their first priority. Luna also said, “Know your self-worth. You wouldn’t want to be worried about pregnancy when you are supposed to be worried about your studies.”

Moreover, Alia stated that getting involved with premarital sex is a waste of time and losing virginity to someone in a haram way is way worse. However, if it has happened, those experience can be an impactful lesson for them to change into a better version of themselves.

According to Intan, she stated that it is okay to have a partner before marriage, however setting limits and boundaries are important as sinners will be haunted with the feeling of guilt on the things that had done for the rest of their lives.

The informants believed that sex after marriage is better. In a nutshell, three of the informants have suggested that having faith in religion is a good way to prevent from involving in premarital sexual activities.

b) Do not be easily influenced by peer pressure

Peer pressure is what made someone would try new things. Same goes to premarital sex activities, it can also be influenced by peer pressure. The most important thing is to not easily get influenced by peer pressure. These age ranges are often easily affected by their surroundings.

According to Luna, she said, "Do not feel pressured that you need to be doing things that other people do." Even though it is exciting to try out of curiosity, do not be fooled thinking that following every action made by peers are cool.

Similar to Luna, Adrien also came up with an opinion to not get influenced by friends. Roy Naga stated that being a virgin does not make one any less cool and which in fact, being a virgin means self-respecting.

c) Developing self-control into one's self

Having self-control has been highly suggested in preventing and minimizing premarital sexual activities. This has been agreed by most of the informants who have involved themselves in the act. "Know your limits in haram relationships. The more you sin, the harder life gets. Be patient, know your self-worth and wait until you are married. You wouldn't want to be worried about pregnancy when you are supposed to be worried about your studies" said Luna.

Based on Adrien, she stated that the most important thing is to not get influenced by friends. She also added, "You need to have stronger self-control and discipline." To be in this world you need strong self-control to avoid you into premarital sex.

Meanwhile, Ikhwan believes that the community should encourage early marriage to prevent this from happening. He also added parents should control the youngster on the usage of social media in daily life.

According to Roy Naga, he stated: "to those who are thinking of doing it because of peer pressure, being a virgin doesn't mean you are not cool, it means you respect yourself."

Alia stated that anyone who is thinking to do it should limit themselves by thinking of their parents, dignity and religion. They should never waste time and virginity to someone who is not worth it and save it for their partner after marriage. However, if it has happened, people can change. Those experience give them a lesson.

Lastly, according to Intan limiting one's self and setting boundaries will aid in the prevention and minimization of such activity. She also added "It's okay to have a partner however set your boundaries. In short, practice your religion as it will keep you safe."

d) Implementing sex education in Malaysia's education system

According to Maya, Instead of prevention of premarital sexual activities, she stated that such effort would only go to waste, as premarital sex will always bound to happen regardless the amount of prevention that has been done. Therefore, the informant has suggested that it is more efficient to implement sex education in the syllabus to educate the society so that the negative effects of sexual activities could be dodged, thus making sexual activities safe.

e) Priorities in life must be set first

According to one of the informants, Luna, she stated that it is better to set priorities straight and be patient until marriage. “You wouldn’t want to be worried about pregnancy when you are supposed to be worried about your studies”, she expressed.

Based on Alia, she said to not waste the time of youth and set priorities right. Losing virginity to someone useless is not worth it. It is better to save it for your partner after marriage.

Adding to that, Intan expressed that it is better to skip it and focus on the better things in life. “Focus on your goals and priorities. Distract yourself and don’t think of it yet”, she stated.

f) Encourage early marriage

Based on Ikhwan, he said the community should encourage early marriage to prevent this from happening. It could help in reducing the numbers of unwanted pregnancies and children born out-of-wedlock. However, marriage should not just be the only option as a solution to curbing premarital sex. Early marriage must be done within the legal minimum age of Malaysia according to Shariah laws.

Conclusion Remark:

Referring to the literature review, one way to prevent premarital sex among Muslims youth is to always put religion in the heart. When compared to what the informants have stated, they cannot run from the religious perspective that marriage between a man and a

woman is a must before they want to involve in a sexual relationship. Based on the Al-Quran, pre-marital sex is called as zina, which is fornication. Allah SWT has said in the Al-Quran, "Do not near adultery, surely it is an indecency and an evil way of fulfilling sexual urge." Besides, premarital sex is one of the biggest sins in the religion of Islam.

Another way to prevent premarital sexual activities, an informant suggested that it is better to implement sex education to educate society, so they are more aware of the consequences of not having safe sex. According to Dyson (2010), schools need to take an active role in providing written communication about what will be covered in sexuality education programs and be open to meet with those parents who express concern. "The Malaysian government has suggested introducing sexual education in schools" (Siti Syairah and Ruzianisra, 2014). The implementation of sex education in schools and institutions could save younger generations from having the thought and intention in involving premarital sex activities.

CONCLUSION

In final consideration, premarital sex among the Muslim youth in Malaysia is an issue that needs to be settled with proper action and care. Being a taboo topic in this country, it is time for minds to be opened with a new mindset and a fresh perspective in hopes of building a better nation. This study concludes that premarital sex occurs through the influences of media, peers and the construct of love and lust. The Ministry of Multimedia and Communications must make an effort in banning pornography sites and restrict sexual content. Other than that, peer pressures of sexual activities can be overcome by being assertive and staying to self-principles. Moreover, being in love is not wrong but boundaries must be set in terms of the right and wrongs of Islam. This research has also found that the Muslim youth in Malaysia either feel a sense of regret or feel happier after engaging in premarital sex.

Further suggestions to curb this issue for an individual are to have a stronger faith in religion and develop a sense of self-control. No matter what, if a person wants to have sex before marriage, they are going to have sex before marriage. Therefore, the best thing that can be done is to implement sex education in the school syllabuses so the youth understands what safe and consensual sex is.

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