



The Perception of Premarital Sex Among Students in a Religious Moral Based University

Hansel Teo Sze Yong¹, Amanda Simon²

Faculty of Education, Asia Pacific International University, Thailand

Hanselt86@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Previous studies have shown that premarital sex is prevalent among youth in schools and universities. Most institutions use methods such as rules, seminars, or sex prevention programs to help prevent students from engaging in premarital sex. Not many institutions have used religious moral development activities to prevent premarital sex among young people. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between religious moral development on perception of premarital sex among students in a religious based university in Thailand, and to also explore the factors that shape students' perceptions of premarital sex.

The research design of this study was quantitative, non-experimental and descriptive, using the survey method of data collection. Permission was granted from the university research committee for distribution of the survey through the university intranet, and the data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The total number of participants was 103 undergraduate students from the international programme.

The findings of the study suggest that most university students are against sex before marriage. Moral development activities taught them not to have premarital sex. Participants responses showed that the factor that most impacted perceptions of premarital sex was the internet. The findings also suggested that movie/television viewing, is an important factor that shapes perceptions of premarital sex. The result show that moral development activities and perceptions of premarital sex are related, however it was a weak correlation ($r=.03$). Moral development activities may have a small influence on students' perceptions of premarital sex. There is a need for improvement of moral development activities such as the implementation of more discussions on premarital sex to help students understand the value of sex. Future research in this area could use qualitative approaches to examine the factors that impact perceptions of premarital sex, and regression analysis to investigate the influence of moral development on perceptions of premarital sex.

Keywords: Collective worship, Moral development, Morality, Premarital sex, Sexual activity

INTRODUCTION

Empirical studies (e.g. Gyan, 2018; Christopher and Frandsen, 1990; Chiao and Yi, 2011) have focused on strategies to reduce premarital sex but not many have incorporated the impact of

religious moral development on sexual behavior. There is therefore a lack of research on religious moral development and the way in which it influences perceptions of premarital sex. This study addresses this gap in the literature by investigating the perceptions of premarital sex among students in a religious moral based university.

The prevalence of premarital sex has increased over the years. In 2002, 34% of American women aged 18–24 years were involved in sexual activity and it has increased to 41% in 2006–2010 (Martinez, Copen, and Abma, 2011; Abma, Martinez, and Dawson, 2004; Abma and Martinez, 2017). According to Finer and Zolna (2016), 75% of unintended pregnancies occur among American girls 15 to 19 years old and adolescent pregnancies account for about 15% of all unintended pregnancies worldwide due to premarital sex. In 2013, there were 110,000 cases of abortion among unmarried young girls aged 15 to 19 years old (Kost, Maddow-Zimet, Arpaia, 2017). To add to this, there has been an increase of HIV and STI rates among young teens in the 15-24 years range. Nearly 2.7 million are infected with HIV worldwide (UNDP, 2010) and CDC reported that 19.7 million cases of STIs among American young people aged 15 to 24. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

According to Focus on the Family (n.d), factors associated with premarital sex among American adolescents were: alcohol and drugs use; limited parental monitoring; frequent family relocations; only one parent in the household; early steady relationship among adolescents; and peer pressure. This peer pressure can influence how young people dress, what kind of music they listen to and what types of behavior they engage in, including behaviors such as using drugs and alcohol, and engaging in sex (Wells, n.d). Most young people are often challenged with strong social, peer and cultural pressure to engage in premarital sex (Alemu et al., 2017; Sieving, Eisenberg, Pettingell, and Skay, 2006).

Young people are also highly affected by sexual practices displayed on the internet or in the media. For example, it is common for movies to show hugging, kissing and sex scenes. Influences from social media such as adult video and pictures of nude people also influence young people. Because of the prevalence of these scenes, youth explore the type of behavior shown on the movies (Collins et. al., 2004). Asekun-Olarinmoye, Asekun-Olarinmoye, Adebimpe, and Omisore (2014) discovered that sexual content is prevalent on television. The influence of media portrayals of sexual attitudes and expectations to young people at a critical developmental stage, affects them in such a way that they begin to normalize or take part in behaviors which they otherwise would not take part in. Lastly, some young people want to

show off to their peers that they had sex with multiple people to gain respect and popularity. These young people can influence others to do the same (Bauermeister et al., 2009).

According to Bragg and Buckingham (2002), the use of internet influences adolescent sexual attitudes. Bragg and Buckingham found that adolescents were more permissive towards sex because of internet access exposure to Sexual Explicit Media (SEM) or pornography or nudity on the web. Arulogun, Ogbu, and Dipeolu (2016) found that the high prevalence of internet use was associated with higher permissive sexual behavior among adolescents. Owens, Behun, Manning, and Reid (2012) stated that because of easy access to the internet, young people who view SEM through the internet had developed unrealistic sexual values and beliefs.

Despite the powerful influence of peers, the media and the internet, Tant (2011) suggested that religious moral development could reshape young people behavior and attitudes towards premarital sex. Moral development focuses on emergence, change, and the understanding of morality from adolescence to adulthood. Morality develops and is influenced by an individual's experiences and their behavior when faced with moral issues. Morality concerns an individual's growing sense of what is right and wrong (Homiak, 2019). Moral development is thus a process through which appropriate attitudes and behaviors towards other people in society are developed, based on social and cultural norms, rules, and law (Wells, n.d). Kanzal, Subikshalakshmi, and Goswami (2016) stated that schools could be effective resources in implanting moral values in children. Through the teaching of these values, children can be supported in developing and reflecting upon capacity for moral judgement and their values and the youth can be taught values, making better choices, and the practice of good behavior.

Lamb (1997) strongly argues for an integration of moral development and sex education curricula. Lamb stated the benefit of moral development is focusing on primary values that would be taught not only for sexual behavior, but also in relation to the general treatment towards people. Lamb noted that moral development could change the behavior and attitudes towards premarital sex among young people, and would also encourage them to treat others with respect, which would be of benefit to the society.

This study has been conducted in a Private university in Thailand that emphasizes the importance of religious moral principles. The University is against premarital sex, and only supports sex within marriage. In the context of this institution the Christian belief is that sex before marriage is a sinful act towards God. This value is based on the bible and the concept that when people who are not married engage in sex, it is "fornication". The University has strict rules on student relationships and physical contact, such as no holding hands, hugging,

and kissing on and off campus. There are separate male and female dormitories, and a 10pm curfew for students living on campus. The university wants to maintain the Christian image, and students who commit wrongful sexual behavior, particularly premarital sex, are going against the university's Christian values and beliefs.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of premarital sex in an international religious University among students in Thailand. The reason of conducting this study was to know how religious moral development activities on campus influence students' perception of premarital sex. Since premarital sex is prevalence among young people, it would be interesting to know the perception of premarital sex among international students in one of Thailand religious international University, and to find the major factors that contribute perception of premarital sex, also to investigate whether or not religious moral development was related to perception of premarital sex.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to describe, analyze, and evaluate the perception of premarital sex in a religious based University. The study also includes the investigation of the relationship between Moral development activities and perception of premarital sex. The study is based on the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions levels of students pertaining on premarital sex?
2. How often do students attend moral development activities on campus?
3. To what extent have students' perceptions of premarital sex been influenced by the moral development activities on campus?
4. What are the key factors that have impacted student's perceptions of premarital sex?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prevalence of premarital sex amongst young people

In many countries, premarital sex is a common practice among young people. Based on the study of Fatusi and Blum (2008) in Nigeria. It was found that among 2,070 young people ages between 15-19 years old, 40% were sexually experienced and 53% engaged in premarital sex in the south, and 25.2% from the North. In India, on the slum of Delhi and Lucknow, it was discovered that 75.3% of young people engaged in premarital sexual activity. In Malaysia, 47.2% of the young girls age 12 to 14 years old engage in premarital sex (Ghani et al, 2014). Peltzer and Pengid (2015) found that 76.7 of adolescents reported engaging premarital sex in the region of Central America. Finer (2007) reveals that 74% of young American had engaged

in premarital sex. Lastly, in Thailand, Podhisita Xenos and Varangrat (2004) discovered that 95.6% male and 31.4% female reported to engaged in premarital sexual behavior, aged between 15 to 24 years old.

The reason for prevalence of premarital sex among young people is the attitudes towards sex. China, Wang et al (2007) found that 60% of young people held favorable attitudes towards premarital sex and agreed they could have sex if they wanted to or if they fell in love. In Nepal, 32.4% of the respondents mentioned that premarital sex is appropriate, 48% engaged in sex because of desire, and among young people, 31.4% wanted to experience sex (Bhatta, Koirala and Jha, 2013). In Hong Kong, it was found that 63.8% of youth held liberal attitudes toward premarital sex, and 60% held conservative attitudes toward casual sex and multiple sex partners (Yip et. al., 2013).

It is essential to know the prevalence of premarital sex among young people, this give a board understanding that premarital sex is common among youths in many country. The study is related because it also helps to understand to behavior and attitudes towards premarital sex among youth.

Factors that impact on premarital sexual activity

Exploring the factors that influence premarital sex in different countries. Wong et al (2009) study reveals that the major factors that impact premarital sexual activity among young people in Malaysia were peer pressure and permissiveness regarding sex. Chi et al (2012) found that the major factors of premarital sexual behavior was watching pornography, spending time on the internet and talking with friends about sex among young people in China. In Cambodia, the factors that influence premarital sex are associated with family, peer, school, and community. was found that for both male and female, drugs use and peer pressure are associated with premarital sexual behavior in Cambodia (Yi et al, 2010). Hurissa et al (2014) found that 39.7% of young people engaged in premarital sex between 15-19 years old. They discovered that falling in love, peer pressure, desire and alcohol were the factors that contribute to premarital sex.

Examining the factor of Sexual Explicit Media (SEM). Brown and L'Engle (2009) and Kraus and Russell (2008) stated exposure to SEM influence premarital sexual behavior among young people due to accessibility to the internet. Habesha et al (2015) stated that easy access SEM through the internet shapes young people's perceptions of sex. Findings from a study conducted by Lou et al (2012) suggest that young people learn sex from the internet and media. Lou et al

stated that higher levels of premarital sexual behavior were found among young people viewing SEM and that young people learn about sex what they see it on the internet and engage in premarital sexual behavior.

Exploring the factor of family environment and parental monitoring. Markham et al (2003), Henrich et al (2006), Manlove et al (2012), and Dittus et al (2005) found that family environment is related to premarital sex among youths. Markham et al findings indicate that students who perceived high levels of family connectedness were less likely to engage in premarital sexual activity. Other studies by Suwarni et al (2015) Donenberg et al,(2002), Bryant (2002) and Mehrotra et al (2013) suggest that parental monitoring is associated with premarital sex among youths. They stated that with less parental monitoring, youths are more likely to engage in premarital sex. Higher parental monitoring was associated with less sexual activity among youths.

Factors that associated with premarital sex was important in this study. It is find the cause that changes the young people perception of premarital sex. The study shown that factors such as peer pressure, exposure to sexual explicit media, family environment that influence with premarital sex perception among young people.

The interrelation of moral development and religious values

Moral development consists of creating an appropriate environment for incorporation of components of social morality into the student's personality structure which leads to the implementation of proper moral conduct. Moral development and religious values are related because religious values strengthen moral knowledge and moral action (Manea, 2014). According to Kuar (2015) moral development and religion have the same concept of influencing how young people think, feel, and act regarding issues of right and wrong. Kaur explained that historically moral teachings have been central to all religions. For instance, historically since the time of the Bible, moral teachings have been the central of Christianity and the Bible is its core, a book of ethical guidance ("Biblical Ethics: An Introduction", n.d). Moral development is therefore associated with religion.

In this research, the university religious moral development activities are used as a form of collective worship. Collective worship is where people are given an opportunity to worship God within a particular faith as such Christianity or Islam ("Collective worship and school assemblies", n.d). Collective worship such as dorm worship, morning worship, and assembly is part of moral development activities on campus.

Impact of Moral development activities on premarital sex

Exploring religious moral development on premarital sex. Researchers found that religion has a significant positive and negative correlation with premarital sex (Opayemi, 2011; Penhollow et al, 2007; Ghaffari et al, 2015). Penhollow discovered that regular religious service attendance and a degree of religious feeling at religious service were associated with lesser premarital sexual activity among college students. McCree et al (2003) and Ghaffari et al (2015) stated that religious involvement is a protective factor from premarital sexual behavior among young people. Penhollow et al (2007), Helm et al (2009), and Regnerus (2005) explained that a higher religious involvement were associated with less premarital sexual behavior among young people.

The literature review has suggested that premarital sex is prevalent among young boys and girls in different countries. The discussion of the prevalence of premarital sex among young people, as an issue, is essential to this study, because it gives an insight into their perceptions of premarital sex. According to the research featured in this section, factors such as, peer pressure, exposure to sexual explicit media, and family environment are important factors that influence young people's perceptions. This literature review also suggests that religious moral development is related to premarital sexual attitudes among young people and could influence the perception of premarital sex among them. Young people who regularly attend religious moral development have less permissive towards sex. Furthermore, researchers stated that religious involvement is associated with less premarital sexual behavior among youths and is related to perceptions of premarital sex. This literature review provides an important social context for this study.

METHODS

The design of this study was quantitative non-experimental descriptive, using the survey method. The quantitative design was ideal to examine students' perceptions of premarital sex and to investigate any correlations between the involvement in moral development activities and perceptions of premarital sex. The research method used was online survey, the quantitative online survey was a structured self-completion questionnaire. The online quantitative survey is a preferred method for data collection in this study because it keeps participants anonymous and it was convenient for participants to complete the survey anytime. The purpose of this method was to collect relevant data based on the study. The data was

analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to calculate descriptive and correlation data.

Sampling

The population for this study was students studying on the international programme, approximately 400 students in total. The sample size for the study was calculated using the following equation devised by Yamane (1957), $n =$ calculated sample size, $N =$ total number of population, and $e =$ allowable error. In this research, the margin of error was 8% of the sample size; the sample size will be 110 of the population.

$$n = \frac{400}{1 \times 400(0.08)^2} = 110$$

The sample was drawn from the population by convenience sampling. The online survey was distributed through the online survey through the university intranet to all students on the international program. Students could then choose whether or not to take part. The reason this sampling technique was chosen is because it eliminates bias by giving all members of the population an equal chance to participate. However, perhaps because of the sensitivity of the research, only 103 students responded to the survey.

Table 1. Description of the sample of university students

<i>Demographics of University students</i>					
Gender	Male	Female			
	57 (55.3%)	46 (44.7%)			
Nationality	Africa	Asia	Australia	Europe	South America
	6 (5.8%)	93 (90.3%)	1 (1%)	2 (1.9%)	1 (1%)
Status	Dating	Married	Single		
	21 (20.4%)	6 (5.8%)	76 (73.8%)		
Age	16-20	21-24	25-29		30above
	30 (29.1%)	53 (51.5%)	14 (13.6%)		6 (5.8%)
Religion	Buddhist	SDA&other	Others		No religion
	12 (11.7%)	Christian	1 (1%)		2 (1.9%)
		88 (85.4%)			

The total number of respondents is 103 (100%). The numbers of male and female respondents were almost equal with male respondents being 55.3% of the sample and female respondents being 44.7%. The chart shows that the vast majority (90.3%) of the participants were from

Asia. Most of the participants were unmarried, 73.8% of the respondents were single and 20.4% dating. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 16 and 24 with half of all respondents being aged between 21-24 years old at 80.6%. Most of the respondents (85.4%) classed themselves as Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) or 'other Christian'.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was divided in to 5 sections: demographic data, perceptions toward premarital sex, participation in religious moral development activities, the impact of religious moral development activities on perceptions of premarital sex, and factors that impacted premarital sex. Apart from the demographic data, each of the aforementioned sections contained a series of statements to which participants had to respond by choosing one of the options on a 5 point Likert scale. The final section asked participants about the factors that influenced their perceptions of premarital sex. This section contained an open question so that participants could write their personal opinions of the factors that influenced their perceptions of premarital sex. responses given within this section give further insight into the key influencers of student perceptions and the exact means by which perceptions are shaped (please see appendix number 5 for the full questionnaire).

Validity and reliability

The section of the questionnaire that focused on perceptions of premarital sex was adopted from Adhikari and Adhikari (2017) named "Premarital sexual behavior among male college students of Kathmandu Nepal". The original questionnaire was given to experts to test its validity. Modifications were made according to experts' feedback. The validity was calculated using Cronbach Alpha coefficient and a score of 0.7 was obtained.

The sections of the questionnaire that were focused on Moral Development Activities Participation and the impact of Moral Development Activities on Premarital Sex Perception were self-constructed. Measurement was in the form of responses such as Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The (IOC) index of item-objective congruence devised by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977) was used to test the validity. It was given to 5 experts within the University and ammendments were made according to their feedback. These experts assessed each item and overall, the questionnaire was given a validity coefficient score of more than 0.5. After the IOC was signed, the questionnaire was send to the University research committee and was approved.

Data Collection

After permission from the research committee was granted for distribution of the survey. The survey link was given to the university administration, and the link was sent to all undergraduate students within the international program, through the university intranet.. participants simply had to fill in the questionnaire online and click the submit button which sent the questionnaire back to the researcher. within this process, participants had no contact with the researcher or anyone else involved with the research, this approach was particularly appropriate for this study, given the sensitivity of the subject matter.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using statistical software: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to test the percentage and frequency, and correlation analysis is used to test the relation between moral development activities attendance and perception of premarital sex. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data on the factors that impacted premarital sex among students. Thematic analysis is widely used method for analyzing qualitative data and is a foundational method of qualitative data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

RESULTS

This section will explore the results of the study relating to each research question. it will begin by outlining the percentages of participants who agreed and disagreed with the relevant statements and will then document the correlation analysis between morel development activities and perceptions of premarital sex.

1. What are the perceptions of AIU students on premarital sex?

Table 2 Shows frequency and percentage of student’s responses that reveal their perceptions of premarital sex.

Table 1. Perception of Premarital sex Among Students

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
A woman should be virgin at marriage.	4(3.9%)	10(9.7%)	25(24.3%)	28(27.2%)	36(35%)
A man should be virgin at marriage.	4(3.9%)	12(11.7%)	29(28.2%)	24(23.3%)	34(33%)
Neither a man nor woman should have premarital sex.	7(6.8%)	8(7.8%)	32(31.1%)	25(24.3%)	31(30.1%)

Premarital sexual relationships should be absolutely prohibited.	6(5.8%)	10(9.7%)	34(33%)	20(19.4%)	33(32%)
Sexual relation before marriage is a normal phenomenon because it is a kind of biological need.	24(23.3%)	19(18.4%)	32(31.1%)	20(19.4%)	8(7.8%)
Premarital sexual relationships should be acceptable because it can help to select an ideal wife/husband.	36(35%)	27(26.2%)	23(22.3%)	10(9.7%)	7(6.8%)
Pre-marital sexual relation is acceptable if a “couple” fall in love.	36(35%)	26(25.2%)	23(22.3%)	14(13.6%)	4(3.9%)
The premarital sexual relation is acceptable if a “couple” practice safe sex.	34(33%)	19(18.4%)	23(22.3%)	21(20.4%)	6(5.8%)
The premarital sexual relation is acceptable if he/she has only one sexual partner.	32(31.1%)	23(22.3%)	23(22.3%)	15(14.6%)	10(9.7%)
The premarital sexual relation is acceptable if the “couple” plan to marry in the future.	28(27.2%)	20(19.4%)	22(21.4%)	20(19.4%)	13(12.6%)

In terms of students’ perceptions of premarital sex in a religious based University, generally most of the students are against sex before marriage. The results indicate nearly 60% of students’ are against premarital sex. More than 50% disagreed that premarital sex is acceptable for relation purposes such as selecting an ideal spouse, if couple practice safe sex, and if he/she has only 1 sexual partner. But 32% agreed with the premarital sexual relation statement “if couple plan to get marry in the future”, and only 46.6% disagreed with this statement. The findings also indicate that almost 30% of the students remained neutral for every statement, maybe due to the sensitivity of the topic.

2. How often do students attend moral development activities on campus?

Findings show in Table 2 show the frequency and percentage of attendance on moral development activities amongst students on campus.

Table 2. **Moral Development Activities on campus**

	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always
Assembly	5(4.9%)	6(5.8%)	7(6.8%)	34(33%)	51(49.5%)
Chapel	1(1%)	3(2.9%)	5(4.9%)	18(17.5%)	76(73.8%)

Church Service	6(5.8%)	7(6.8%)	13(12.6%)	29(28.2%)	48(46.6%)
Dorm Worship	17(16.5%)	13(12.6%)	12(11.7%)	39(37.9%)	22(21.4%)
Family Group	21(20.4%)	16(15.5%)	11(10.7%)	27(26.2%)	28(27.2%)
Sabbath School	9(8.7%)	13(12.6%)	21(20.4%)	21(20.4%)	39(37.9%)
AY Program	42(40.8%)	22(21.4%)	20(19.4%)	13(12.6%)	6(5.8%)
Vesper	7(6.8%)	3(2.9%)	12(11.7%)	34(33%)	47(45.6%)
Festival of Faith	7(6.8%)	6(5.8%)	11(10.7%)	27(26.2%)	52(50.5%)
10 Days of Prayer	15(14.6%)	12(11.7%)	9(8.7%)	34(33%)	33(32%)

The findings suggest that least 75% or more of students regularly attend most of Moral Development Activities. Dorm Worship and Family Group was the least well attended activity; attended by nearly at 25% of participants, but 50% or more attend regularly. The findings also indicate that 40.8% of students “Never” attend AY Program and only 18.4% of the students attend regularly. Chapel was the most-well-attended moral development activity, with 73.8% of students “Always” attending and 17.5% “Often” attending.

3. To what extent have students’ perceptions of premarital sex been influenced by the moral development activities on campus?

Statements in the 3rd section of the questionnaire pertained to participants own assessments of the extent to which their participation in moral development activities had impacted their perceptions of premarital sex. The findings shown in **Table 4** are the descriptive results of the responses selected for each statement. .

Table 3. The impact of Moral Development Activities on perceptions of Premarital sex

Moral development activities have taught me...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
To view sex as sacred to marriage.	5(4.9%)	8(7.8%)	27(26.2%)	39(37.9%)	24(23.3%)
To value sexual abstinence before marriage.	5(4.9%)	5(4.9%)	21(20.4%)	48(46.6%)	24(23.3%)
I should respect my body and keep it pure for marriage.	4(3.9%)	2(1.9%)	18(17.5%)	43(41.7%)	36(35%)
I should respect others and help them keep their bodies pure.	3(2.9%)	3(2.9%)	22(21.4%)	39(37.9%)	36(35%)
I should control my sexual desires until marriage.	2(1.9%)	8(7.8%)	23(22.3%)	35(34%)	35(34%)
Sex is important and that of should not be taken lightly.	5(4.9%)	1(1%)	20(19.4%)	45(43.7%)	32(31.1%)
The importance of controlling sexual thoughts.	2(1.9%)	2(1.9%)	28(27.2%)	43(41.7%)	28(27.2%)

Sex is not only about physical intimacy but also spiritual and emotional.	3(2.9%)	5(4.9%)	22(21.4%)	42(40.8%)	31(30.1%)
To avoid sexual activity with a partner in a relationship.	6(5.8%)	4(3.9%)	20(19.4%)	42(40.8%)	31(30.1%)
Premarital sex is unholy	3(2.9%)	8(7.8%)	21(20.4%)	38(36.9%)	33(32%)
sex is God's gift to be used in marriage, not before marriage.	5(4.9%)	3(2.9%)	20(19.4%)	36(35%)	39(37.9%)
Premarital sex is a sinful in a sight of God.	5(4.9%)	2(1.9%)	28(27.2%)	30(29.1%)	38(36.9%)

Results indicate that nearly 70% or more agreed that have been taught not to have sex before marriage in Moral Development Activities and 20% or more remained neutral. Only less than 10% of students disagreed with the statements that have been taught premarital sex in Moral Development Activities. Maybe this is because students did not regularly attend any of the Moral Development Activities.

1. What are the key factors that have impacted student's perceptions of premarital sex?

The findings shown on **table 5** were generated from the final section of the questionnaire where participants were asked to select the key factors that has influenced their perceptions of premarital sex. The table displays the frequency and percentage of participants who selected the various factors listed.

Table 5. Factors that impacted student's perception of premarital sex

<i>Factors that impacted student's perceptions of premarital sex</i>	
Internet	34(33%)
Movies/Television	29(28.2%)
Other	29(28.2%)
Influence from friends	8(7.8%)
Drugs/Alcohol	3(2.9%)

The key factors that impact students' perceptions of premarital sex, the results indicate that internet is the biggest factors at 33%. The second biggest factors were "Movies/Television" and "Other" such as family, church, desire, western culture, and community influence mention by the participants, being both at 28.2%. The results also indicate that "Influence from friends" (7.8%) and "Drugs/Alcohol (2.9%) were the least factors that impact the perception of premarital sex.

In the final section of the survey, respondents had a chance to choose to give a more detailed explanation of how specific factors have impact their personal perception of premarital sex in their own words. Only 46% of participants completed this section and most of these participants give general responses that were not related to their own personal opinions or experiences, this was probably due to the sensitivity of the topic. The qualitative statements of participants will be discussed in more detail within the discussion section.

Correlation between attendance at moral development activities and perceptions of premarital sex

The following table displays the correlational analysis the table shows the correlation coefficients for the correlations between the overall attendance score for each moral development activity and the overall scores gained for each of the statements pertaining to students perceptions of premarital sex.

Table 6. **Correlation Analysis**

Correlation coefficients between moral development activities and perception on premarital sex. (n=103)

Program	PM1	PM2	PM3	PM4	PM5	PM6	PM7	PM8	PM9	PM10
Assembly	.28*	.32**	.14	.14	-.05	-.03	-.04	-.10	-.12	-.12
Chapel	.23*	.27**	.12	.16	.07	.06	.03	-.12	.03	-.15
Church Service	.22*	.33**	.18	.26**	-.16	-.12	-.29**	-.30**	-.29**	-.37**
Dorm Worship	.20*	.24*	.08	.29**	-.12	-.09	-.35**	-.25*	-.22*	-.23*
Family Group	.17	.15	.17	.24*	-.10	.01	-.21*	-.19	-.26**	-.32**
Sabbath School	.30*	.31**	.22*	.30**	-.19	-.09	-.25*	-.31**	-.20*	.30**
AY Program	.19	.16	.12	.30**	-.05	-.17	-.30**	-.25*	-.33**	.34**
Vespers	.28*	.31**	.16	.24*	-.18	-.15	-.25*	-.32**	-.26**	.37**
Fest of Faith	.32*	.32**	.20*	.34**	-.08	-.15	-.21*	-.29**	-.18	.30**
Ten days Prayer	.19	.30**	.21*	.36**	.25**	-.15	-.35**	-.40**	-.39**	.40**

The null hypothesis states: “There is no relationship between moral development activities attendance and perceptions of premarital sex among international students”. The correlation analysis found that with the first 4 statements, there is positive correlation between moral development activities attendance and perception of premarital sex. For the last 6 statements,

it was found that there was a negative correlation between moral development activities and perception of premarital sex. However, for the statement that suggest that premarital sexual relationships should be acceptable because it can help to select an ideal wife/husband, I was found that there was no correlation between any moral development activities and perceptions of premarital sex. Overall, it was found that moral development activities and perception of premarital sex was weakly correlated.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to find the perceptions of premarital sex among students in a religious moral based University. It aimed to investigate the following 4 questions:

1. What are the perception levels of students pertaining to premarital sex?
2. How often do students attend moral development activities on campus?
3. To what extent have students perceptions of premarital sex been influenced by the moral development activities on campus?
4. What are the key factors that have impacted students perception of premarital sex?
5. Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between involvement in moral development activities and perceptions of premarital sex.

The null hypothesis is related the following research question “To what extent have students’ perceptions of premarital sex been influenced by moral development activities on campus?” The finding suggested that up to 60% of students perception is against sex before marriage. This could be because nearly 75% of students attended most of moral development activities, which may have resulted in most students having a negative perception of premarital sex or it also could be that because most (90%) of participants are Christian, they are generally against premarital sexual activity because of their religious beliefs. According to Podhisita et. al. (2004), attitudes towards premarital sex among young people in Thailand, shows most youths had more permissive attitudes towards sex, but the study was not conducted in a religious based area. Up to 30% remained neutral towards premarital sex, this indicates that it could be that because of the sensitivity of the topic, that students felt uncomfortable to respond because of cultural or their personal beliefs.

The findings suggest that students’ perceptions of premarital sex could be influenced by moral development activities. Nearly 70% of students have been taught not to engage in premarital sex in moral development activities, it could be one of the reasons that most students were less

permissive towards sex before marriage or it might be that students followed the values and principles of the University by attending most of the moral development activities (Helm et al, 2009). At least 30% had a neutral stance towards premarital sex, this might be because some students didn't regularly attend moral development activities or disagreed with the values and principles of the University, it could also be the case that there is not enough discussion on premarital sex in moral development activities. In previous research, it has been stated that students who regularly attended religious moral development activities had more discussions about sex before marriage, that influenced perceptions of premarital sex (Regnerus, 2005; Burdette and Hill, 2009). There is a significant relationship between moral development activities and perceptions of premarital sex, found by Opayemi (2011) and Ghaffari et. al. (2015). But, in this study the findings suggest that there is a weak correlation between moral development activities attendance and perceptions of premarital sex, indicating that moral development activities may have a small impact on students perception towards premarital sex.. According to Penhollow et al (2007) findings suggest that regular religious involvement has a significant influence on perceptions of premarital sex among young people.

The findings from the final sections of the questionnaire suggest that the factor that most contributes to perceptions of premarital sex is the internet. This finding was similar to those of Brown and L'Engle (2009) and Habesha et al (2015) who found that that internet was the major factors that influenced young people perceptions of premarital sex. The findings also suggest that Movie/Television is an important factor that contributes to perceptions of premarital sex at 28.2%. Findings from Ward and Friendman (2006) suggested that media is an important factor that could influence the perception of premarital sex among youth. Interestingly, other findings (Markham et al, 2003; Henrich et al, 2006; Suwarni et al, 2015; Romer et al, 1999) found family environment as an important factor affecting perception of premarital sex. This study did not look at the role play by family environment in shaping perception of premarital sex. It would be interesting to see whether family environment does play a role in this setting.

In the open question there were 5 factor categories: "internet", "Movie/Television", "Drugs and Alcohol", "influence from friends", "other". In the categories "Other" participants mentioned the factors that impacted perception of premarital sex, such as: family, church and cultural factors, but only a few shared their personal opinions. The following analysis will only focus on internet and Movie/Television factors because many participants shared comments which related to these factors in particular.

Within the responses related to the internet, the theme of 'power' was predominant. The participants suggested that internet had the power to cause individuals to think and act in certain ways. This is shown in the following statements:

Participant 2:

“ The internet has a wide variety of information that causes one’s mind to be influenced by worlds perception.

Participant 19:

“internet is the most influential. People nowadays believe in everything the internet says specifically Goggle. And if the internet says it’s normal to have sex, then people will assume it’s normal since everyone on the internet is doing it”.

Internet was the most popular factor among the categories that impact sexual behavior. participant statements suggested that the internet has the power to change premarital sex perception because it is influential and it is able to normalize certain forms of sexual behavior. Participants seem to be suggesting here that information from the internet can influence individuals to have premarital sex. These responses correspond with findings from a study conducted by Habesha et. al who imply that there is much information regarding sex on the web, which has the power to change the mindset of young people about sex. Participants in this study had very little discussion on sexual behavior with parents or in school, which led them to search for sexual information online. Furthermore another participant mentioned that adult content such as pornography that is widely available on the web, causing young people to assume that premarital sex is normal among young people.

Participants also suggested that the internet has a wealth of information and is open and available to everyone which also connects to the issue of the internet being very powerful. This is shown in the following statement:

Participant 27:

“the internet is the major reason that leads to all other existing factors. Since everything can be searched for, people usually have a tendency to find interesting things which could satisfy their physical and emotional needs. Also, all the facts and video about sex can be found on the internet.”

This participant’s statement is similar to the findings of Kraus and Russell (2008) who found that internet was a major factor because of access to the web. Their findings suggested that

because of accessibility to the internet, young people can view SEM such as pornographic videos and information related to sexual activity. Kraus and Russell further stated that the internet promotes and sells SEM which causes young people to change their attitude towards premarital sex.

In the analysis of respondents comments Movie/Television was shown to be the second most popular factor. The key theme within this category was the normalizing of sexual activity. Analyzing the statements, it seems that frequency and openness of sexual activity in movies and on television contribute to premarital sexual activity among young people. This is shown in the following comments:

Respondent 1:

“often the movies will show the scenes of a couple is having premarital sex before marry, and the couple later on still have a blessed marriages. Since it is show by the tv, then the audience who are watching will have a mindset that premarital sex is fine because tv always teach us like this way.”

Respondent 2:

“Movies or dramas seem to have no problem with this sexual relationship so it could influence people”

Respondent 4:

“Dramas, movies are showing too much of romantic scene that only should be done after marriage”

The respondents' comments suggest that there is an openness of sexual activity in the media. Openness and frequent sexual content contribute to normalizing premarital sexual behavior, young people who watch movies or dramas often tend to believe that premarital sex is normal among young people. The finding is similar to Ward and Friedman (2006), they stated that the media exposed many sexual activities in movies and tv shows and that frequent watching influenced young peoples' sexual behavior, because the media normalizes sex as common activity

Conclusion

More than 50% of the participants were against sex before marriage in the religious based University investigated. Most of the students had been taught to value sex before marriage. Moral development activities might have a small impact of students' perception of premarital sex because the findings suggests that moral development activities and perception of

premarital sex are related, but the correlation is weak ($r=.03$). However, moral development activities might appear to have a small influence on perceptions of premarital sex. The internet is a major factor that contributes to perceptions of premarital sex, and the results also indicate that Movies/Television is one of the important factors that impact participants' perceptions.

Implications

There is a need of improvement of moral development activities so that students would want to regularly participate. Moral development activities should incorporate more discussions about sex before marriage that could help students to understand the value of sex. The University should also take note of the any factors that influence perceptions of premarital sex. The factors that influenced students' premarital sex perception must be implemented into discussions within moral development activities.

Recommendations for future research

Future research could investigate how religious moral development activities influence perceptions of premarital sex among young people using regression analysis, this would be beneficial for investigating the extent to which religious moral development influence perception of premarital sex among young people in a religious University. Qualitative research would also be helpful in examining in detail, the factors that impact perceptions of premarital sex, because it may give a deeper understanding of the factors that influence perceptions of premarital sex, and how religious moral development activities changes perceptions about sex.

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APPENDIX

Perceptions of premarital sex among undergraduate students in a Christian moral based university

About the research:

This study will investigate the perceptions of pre-marital sex amongst students on a Christian university campus and the factors that shape these perceptions. You are being asked to fill in this survey simply because you are an undergraduate student on the international program and for no other reason. If you are willing to take part, please tick the boxes below before filling in the survey. Your participation will be very much appreciated.

Please tick the following boxes to show that you are willing to take part in this study:

- I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the details of the study above and I understand my role will be in this research.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason, up to the point of submitting the form.
- I understand that the information I give will be kept confidential and will be safeguarded.

I agree to the researcher processing the information which I supply, for purposes connected with the Research Project as stated above.

Withdrawal from the research:

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please send an email stating that you would like to withdraw, to the following email address: hanselt86@gmail.com

1. Demographics:

1. **Gender:** Male Female
2. **Nationality:** America Africa Australia
 Asia Europe North America
 South America
3. **Status:** Single Married Dating
4. **Age:** 16-20 21-24 25-29
 30 above
5. **Religion:** Christian Buddhist SDA & Other Christian
 No religion Others

2. Please indicate how often you attend each of these campus activities

	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always
Assembly					
Chapel					
Church Service					
Dorm Worship					
Family Group					
Sabbath School					

AY Program					
Vespers					
Festival of Faith					
10 Days of Prayer					

4. Please “select” the appropriate level that reflect you opinion about each statement: **1=** Strongly Disagree, **2=** Disagree, **3=** Neutral, **4=** Agree, and **5=** Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Moral development activities have taught me to view sex as sacred to marriage					
2. Moral development activities have taught me to value sexual abstinence before marriage					
3. Moral development activities have taught me that I should respect my body and keep it pure for marriage					
4. Moral development activities have taught me that I should respect others and help them keep their bodies pure					
5. Moral development activities have taught me that I should control my sexual desires until marriage					
6. Moral development activities have taught me that sex is important and that of should not be taken lightly					
7. Moral development activities have taught me the importance of controlling sexual thoughts					
8. Moral development activities taught me that sex is not only about physical intimacy but it is also spiritual and emotional					

9. Moral development activities taught me to avoid sexual activity with a partner in a relationship					
10. Moral development activities taught me that premarital sex is unholy					
11. Moral development activities taught me that sex is God’s gift to be used in marriage, not before marriage					
12. Moral development activities taught me that premarital sex is a sinful in a sight of God					

3. Please “**select**” the appropriate level that reflects your opinion about each statement: **1=** Strongly disagree, **2=** Disagree, **3=** Neutral, **4=** Agree, and **5=** Strongly Agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. Neither a man nor women should have premarital sex					
2. A woman should be virgin at marriage					
3. A man should be virgin at marriage					
4. Premarital sexual relationships should be absolutely prohibited					
5. Sexual relation before marriage is a normal phenomenon because it is a kind of biological need					
6. Premarital sexual relationships should be acceptable because it can help to select an ideal wife/husband					
7. Pre-marital sexual relation is acceptable if a “couple” fall in love					
8. The premarital sexual relation is acceptable if a “couple” practice safe sex (using a condom)					
9. The premarital sexual relation is acceptable if he/she has only one sexual partner					

10. The premarital sexual relation is acceptable if the “couple” plan to marry in the future					
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5. What are the key factors that have influenced your perceptions of premarital sex?

- Internet
- Movies and Television
- Drugs /alcohol
- Influence of friends
- Other: _____

Please give explanation of your answer to the question above

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason, up to the point of submitting the form.