



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN
A SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA***

CHAN WAN LING

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**FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN
A SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA**

By

CHAN WAN LING

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Science**

December 2014

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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December 2014

Chairman : Ismi Arif bin Ismail, PhD
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This study used the Theory of Planned Behavior to explore university students' intention to engage in premarital sexual behavior. Student engagement in the context of this study referred to the engagement of premarital sexual behavior. The factors being studied are attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control.

This study adopted a correlational survey research method involving 375 university students from a selected university in Malaysia, respondents were selected through stratified cluster sampling. Analyses employed in this study are descriptive analysis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression. Results showed that 10.7 percent of the respondents have had sexual intercourse experience before. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis concluded that all the three factors investigated in the study, which attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are associated with respondents' premarital sexual behavior intention. Among the factors, attitude appeared to be the strongest predictor for premarital sexual behavior intention. This conclusion was obtained through Multiple Regression test. Overall, Theory of Planned Behavior is proven to be a suitable model to explain premarital sexual behavior for youth in Malaysia.

Results of this study highlighted the importance of designing appropriate sex education or sexual and reproductive health program as an intervention effort to improve sexual health among Malaysian university youth. Theory of Planned Behavior can be used as a reference in designing the program. Researcher also recommends for replication of study to be done in the future in order to understand deeper about Malaysian students' premarital sexual prevalence and factors associated with the behavior.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

**FAKTOR BERKAITAN DENGAN PENGLIBATAN PELAJAR DALAM
SEBUAH UNIVERSITI SWASTA TERPILIH DI MALAYSIA**

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menerokai niat pelajar universiti untuk melibatkan diri dalam kelakuan seks sebelum berkahwin dengan menggunakan Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang. Penglibatan pelajar dalam kajian ini merujuk kepada penglibatan dalam kelakuan seks sebelum berkahwin. Antara faktor-faktor yang dikaji ialah sikap, norma subjektif dan pengawalan tingkah laku.

Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan tinjauan korelasi yang melibatkan 375 pelajar universiti daripada sebuah universiti terpilih di Malaysia, responden kajian ini dipilih melalui persampelan berstrata kelompok. Analisis yang digunakan dalam kajian ini berbentuk deskriptif, analisis korelasi Pearson, analisis regresi berganda. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa 10.7 peratus responden pernah menjalin hubungan seks sebelum ini. Analisis korelasi Pearson membuat kesimpulan bahawa ketiga-tiga faktor yang dikaji, iaitu sikap, norma subjektif dan pengawalan tingkah laku adalah berkaitan dengan niat untuk menjalin hubungan seks sebelum berkahwin dalam kalangan pelajar universiti. Antara tiga faktor ini, sikap pelajar merupakan peramal niat kelakuan seks sebelum kahwin yang paling kuat. Kesimpulan ini diperolehi melalui analisis regresi berganda. Secara keseluruhan, Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang dibuktikan sebagai sebuah model yang sesuai untuk menerangkan kelakuan seks sebelum kahwin di kalangan belia di Malaysia.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Sex is always a topic of interest among the younger generation. The advancement of information technology is opening the young people towards more and more sex related information, making the topic a common issue of discussion. This is a good sign where people are talking about sex more openly, but on the other hands, they might be taking it less seriously. The activity that was once set within the boundaries of marriage is now acceptable outside of marriage, it is permissible between couples and friends, and even strangers. It is viewed as an activity to express love between couples, it is also viewed as a leisure activity. In short, it has become a norm among the university students (Khalfani, 2007). These are definitely wrong concepts that are developing in the minds of the younger generation.

But sexuality might still be a forbidden topic when it comes to Asian countries including Malaysia. According to the observed culture, Malaysia is considered to have a more conservative attitude toward premarital sexual behaviours (Okwun, Siraj, & Okwun, 2012; Wong, 2012b). Nevertheless, there are a lot of premarital sexual behaviors reported among the young people in Malaysia (Okwun et al., 2012). Traditional perception towards sex, is that sex is something to be done within the boundaries of marriage. But there seems to be a shift towards being morally neutral about engaging in premarital sexual behaviour (Wells & Twenge, 2005).

We need to find out more about the current scenario of premarital sexual involvement among the young people and also the factors associated to it, so that we can come out with specific precaution steps to change the situation for the betterment of the young

1.2 Background of the Study

Adolescent is the stage of life where the young people reach sexual maturity, and curious about the topic sex. University students, aged between 17-24, are at the transition from late adolescent to young adulthood (Yalcin, Aricioglu, & Malkoc, 2012), this is the stage where they have both the curiosity and freedom to explore their sexuality. It is also a stage when someone reaches sexual maturity, a transitional point to maturity (United Nation, 1997).

In the Malaysia culture, adolescents are attached to home until high school period. Upon their entry to university, private or government, they are required to leave their home and adapt to an independent life. According to Newman *et al.* (2007), moving into a brand new academic environment might cause negative consequences. When they are away from home, without the tight watch from their guardian, they start to take

freedom in their own hands, this is when risky sexual behaviors started to take place. This is further supported by another study where there is an increase of premarital sexual behavior rate among college men, may be because of a greater independence from their families and there is an increasing access to female around them (Adhikari & Tamang, 2009). A study among the Korean college students supports that university students are more likely to endure the risk of risky sexual behavior compared to individuals in other stages of life (Cha, 2005). It is because of the freedom from parental supervision and the restriction from school that they are experiencing for the first time.

In the recent trends of society, less than 25 percent of people agree that premarital sex is wrong. In 2008, a study conducted in 24 countries included in the research (Yalcin, 2012). This is happening because they do not have a right attitude towards sex. Following the rapid development both economically and socially in the country, research of adolescents premarital sexual behaviors are increasing in Malaysia, but still lots more studies need to be done to highlight the problem.

1.2.1 Statistics on Premarital Sexual Behavior Worldwide

There is an observation that premarital sexual behavior is increasing globally. This change is supported by the statistics on premarital sexual debut in countries around the world, highlighting that the situation has become more and more alarming. It has now become a global issue, not only a problem worth discussing in countries with high HIV / AIDS infection. A study conducted in Tanzania, with the purpose to find out the relation between the HIV and AIDS information with the changing sexual behavior among university students has shown that as high as 25 percent of youth had their first sex experience before the age of 15 years (Mosha & Manda, 2012). The same study also revealed that 93 percent of the students are now still sexually active with their partners. In Taiwan, 22.4 percent of youth had sex by the age of 20 (Chiao & Chun, 2011). Another study focused on African American young teen girls showed that 12 percent of the young girl with a mean age of 12.45 has already had sex (Doswell, Braxter, Cha, & Kim, 2011). In Nepal, 39 percent of male college students aged between 15-24 are already sexually experienced, and more than half of them have had more than one sexual partner (Adhikari & Tamang, 2009). Looking at India, 32 percent of male and 6 percent of female aged from 15 to 19 has already sexually debuted (J. Hindin & Hindin, 2009). Going into Korea, the scenario is not any better. 50 percent of male and 12 percent of female have already experienced sex before marriage, this percentage is drawn from a population of youth aged between 18 to 25 (Cha, Doswell, Kim, Charron-Prochownik, & Patrick, 2007).

1.2.2 Statistics on Premarital Sexual Behavior in Malaysia

A study done in 2008 by the Institute of Public Health Malaysia showed an increase of premarital sexual activity in the country itself (IPH, 2008). Aside from that a few other studies have shown increase in premarital sexual behavior rate in the country (Lee, Chen, Lee, & Kaur, 2006; Low, 2009; Rahman et al., 2011; Siti Norazah Zulkifli &

Low, 2000) It is a recognized truth that early sexual debut will lead to risky sexual behaviors among the youth (French & Dishio, 2003; Chi & Chin 2011). Although involvement of young people in premarital sexual behaviors in Malaysia is relatively lower compared to other countries (Lee et al., 2006), there is still a need to conduct an in depth study on the current scenario.

A study to find out about the knowledge, attitudes and sexual behaviors related to HIV or AIDS prevention among Malaysian adolescents that is done in 2009, showed in their findings that a minority of 6.1 percent students are already sexually experienced with an average age of sex debut of 14.8 years (Rampal, 2010). This shows an increase compared to a study done in 2006 in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, the findings indicated that 5.4 percent out of the total respondents aged from 12-19 have had premarital sex (Lee et al., 2006). Lee *et al.* in their study, found that the involvement of young people in premarital sexual behavior seems to increase in Malaysia throughout the years as only 1.8 percent of respondents reported having sexual experience back in 1996 (Lee et al., 2006). Another study done in 2000 on a group with average age of 18.8 revealed a higher percentage of respondents involved in sexual intercourse, as high as 12 percent (Siti Norazah Zulkifli & Low, 2000).

1.2.3 Consequences of Premarital Sexual Behavior

Youth sexuality studies found in Malaysia are usually discussing about the disease of HIV or AIDS, but premarital sexual behavior among young people brings greater negative consequences than just the disease. Due to the inadequate sexual knowledge and sexual education level, the young people in Malaysia are facing greater risk of multiple sexually transmitted diseases (STD) that they are not aware of, included HIV or AIDS, unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortions, babies dumping, cybersex, multiple partners, forced sex and ineffective use of contraception (Adhikari & Tamang, 2009; French & Dishion, 2003; Lee et al., 2006; Low, 2009; Mosha & Manda, 2012). The tendency to use condom during the first intercourse is very low among the younger generation (Adhikari & Tamang, 2009), there is a research in Malaysia reporting that 90 percent of schooling female students (n=629) who are sexually experienced were not taking any precaution methods (Low, 2009). There are more statistics supporting this worrying observation, a 57.8 percent sexually experienced adolescent (n=136) reported not using condom during their last sexual intercourse (Rampal, 2010), this increased the risk of the mentioned behavior.

1.2.3.1 AIDS / HIV Contraction

Premarital sex is well known for increasing the risk of HIV or AIDS contraction. It is common that when people discuss about premarital sex, HIV and AIDS is the first concern raised, but it is important to acknowledge that premarital sex is more damaging than just HIV or AIDS. Lee *et al.* (2006) mentioned in their study that young people are often engage in premarital sex without safety precautions, which leads to greater risk of contracting HIV or AIDS.

A worldwide scenario showed that young people are more vulnerable to this disease, there is an observation that young people aged from 15-24 years contributed half of all the new HIV / AIDS infections (Rose, Dick, & Ferguson, 2006). In Malaysia alone, the number of HIV/AIDS infected people reached 84,630 in the early years. 11, 234 patients died from AIDS and more than 90 percent of the infected individuals are aged from 20-49 years old (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2009). Although most of the infected cases are due to injecting drugs user, according to the report mentioned just now, up to 71.1 percent are injecting drugs users. But that does include a big amount of HIV cases that are infected due to heterosexual transmission, and statistics showed that the percentage has increased from 4.9 percent in 1990 to 28.1 percent in 2008, which is nearly one-third of the new HIV / AIDS cases in Malaysia. This is definitely a worrying scenario. The main factor contributing to the HIV or AIDS among young people is early sexual initiation (Rose, 2006). In the study, Rose (2006) discovered that serious misconception still exist, although 94.8 percent of respondents in her study transmission and preventive measures was still low. In the study by Rampal among the young people in Malaysia, knowledge regarding HIV / AIDS is weak and serious misconceptions continue to exist in the country. (Rampal, 2010).

1.2.3.2 Unwanted Pregnancies, Abortion and Baby Dumping

According to the 2004 National Demographic and Health Survey, there are many females involved in sexual activity without any contraception or preventive measure, and do not have the intention to be pregnant (Low, 2009). This will lead to unwanted pregnancies and further bringing abortion into the picture. The more worrying situation is when abortion is not the choice they have in dealing with unwanted pregnancies, the final option will be baby dumping, this is another critical social problem observed in the country recently (Low, 2009). Statistics have shown that in every ten days, one baby abandoned in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia (Ang, 2007). Not only in Malaysia, the rising rate of abortion among younger generation caused by premarital sexual behaviour is also observed in many Asian countries. China, South Korea, Vietnam and Japan are some examples of countries that shown this trend are mentioned in a study on abortion in 2008 (Sedgh, Singh, Henshaw, & Bankole, 2011).

1.2.3.3 Marital Dissolution

Entering into a family life when both the parents are not ready will leave serious implications like limited educational and employability opportunities for the young unprepared parents (Martin, Martin, & Martin, 2001). And undeniable, both male and female who get married due to teen pregnancy face greater financial and marital challenges (Doswell et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2001). Another paper suggested that premarital sexual behaviour of adolescent do contribute to marital dissolution. Adolescent sexual debut in the early age is a determinant for marital dissolution, it is discovered that it may bring upon changes to the attitudes and beliefs of the young people towards marriage and sex in their later life (Paik, 2011). In the same research, the author discovered that most of the female adolescent that have had sex were not completely willing, the partial unwillingness later contributed even greater in affecting marital dissolution (Paik, 2011).

entrance into marriage and family life, this is definitely a worrying scenario (Martin et al., 2001).

1.2.3.4 Other Consequences

Another interesting findings about premarital sex is that it is shown to be associated with other problem behaviours like smoking or drinking (Chiao & Chun, 2011). Early sexual debut seems to be increasing the likelihood of substance use, externalising behaviour and delinquency behaviours (French & Dishion, 2003). This risk is especially obvious among those who started to have sex earlier, research shown that they are more likely to engage in sexual intercourse under the influence of alcohol or drugs preceding years (Sandfort, Orr, Hirsch, & Santelli, 2008). A longitudinal study proved that early initiation in sex is a predictor of poor academic performance, poorer relationships with parents, lower interest in religion, greater chance of involving in deviant and criminal behaviour and higher need for independence in life (Peterson, 2004).

All these evidences are strong enough to highlight the risk of premarital sexual behaviours, the earlier the sexual debut, the higher the risks facing the well-being of youth both psychological and physiological (Kincaid, Jones, Sterrett, & McKee, 2012). It even increased the risks in HPV infection which in turn will increase the risk of cervical cancer among the female, due to cervical immaturity of the young people (Fatusi & Blum, 2008). Timing of sexual initiation is always associated to long term sexual health outcome (Sandfort et al., 2008).

1.2.4 Factors Associated with Premarital Sexual Behavior

1.2.4.1 General Factors

consequences as reported earlier. Knowing the factors would definitely be a good step in finding out the cause and coming up with solutions. Many researchers have shown their concern in identifying the factors contributed to early sexual debut and premarital sexual behaviors. Among the factors associated with the behavior are perceived peer
Chun, 2011). There is a very thorough review done in 2007 that extracted the factors associated with adolescent sexual behavior. The findings showed that the most significant predictors are intention, perceived norms, time alone at home, self efficacy and attitudes (Buhi & Goodson, 2006).

Other research also highlighted among the same set of factors. A study in Taiwan concluded that perceived peer pressure is the most significant factor that leads to premarital sexual behavior, the next factor is attitude and experience in the behavior (Chiao & Chun, 2011). The study also highlighted that there is no gender difference in the tendency to engage in premarital sex. Another study done on African American teen girls reported that mother norms and attitudes seem to be factors contributing to this risky behavior (Doswell et al., 2011). Mother being an influential factor for

adolescents to engage in premarital sex is supported by another study in Taiwan that suggested that mother-adolescent relationship highly influence sexual behaviors among female adolescents (Lou & Chen, 2009). In Nepal, researchers found out that peer pressure is still the main contributing factor that encourages premarital sex (Adhikari & Tamang, 2009).

1.2.4.2 Related Studies in Malaysia

Looking at factors in local Malaysia studies, there are quite some common factors too. One particular study done in 2007 listed down some reasons related to premarital sex for youth in Malaysia, which includes to have fun, it is a part of natural urge, out of curiosity, tension and pressure from family, school work and also because they are away from family, this has opened the door for them to be involved in mentioned risky behavior (Low, Ng, Fadzil, & Ang, 2007). Looking into another paper done in 2006, it concluded that being away from parents, the influence of alcohol, drugs and other substance abuse, and also gender played a role in being the factors for premarital sex (Lee et al., 2006). Lastly, another paper done earlier in year 2000 also listed quite a few living arrangement, being away from parents, and peer pressure or the influence of social interaction (Siti Norazah Zulkifli & Low, 2000).

Thus, it is important to find out the level of involvement of university students in premarital sex and to understand the factors that will determine whether or not they will be involved in premarital sexual behavior. This understanding will later contribute in developing effective programmes to delay sexual initiation until marriage. Seems like in Malaysia, most studies regarded being away from parental control is the main factor to provide freedom to the young people in trying out risky behavior like premarital sex. Thus, they are most likely facing the problems.

1.2.5. Intention to Engage in Premarital Sexual Behavior

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action, intention is the main determinants for behavior, it is a very reliable predictor for behavior (Ajzen, 1988). Theory of Reasoned Action proposed that human beings are rational beings and are able to make systematic use of information available to them in making a decision (Ajzen, 1988). People will usually consider the consequences of a particular behavior before deciding whether or not to engage in it, and intention is believed to be the immediate determinant of behavior. (Esnil, 2000) (Lajoie, 2000).

Behavioral intention is an indication of how hard one is willing to try and how much effort one is planning to put in to perform a specific behavior (Walker, 2004). Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior offered a potentially useful

framework for risk-taking behavior, generally, they are broad enough to apply to behavior. (Walker, 2004)

Gilbert-Cronan (2000) and Buhi (2006) summarized in their studies that most research related to sexual activities have utilized TRA and TPB in the model and intention appeared to be stable predictor to sexual behavior.

In one study by Sherren and Abraham (2003) about the temporal stability of intention and the intention-behavior relation, intention explained 52 percent of the variance in behavior. Although there are arguments that good intentions, on their own seem not sufficient enough to change behavior, but findings from the same research paper suggested that stable intentions are very likely to be converted into action. (Sheeran & Abraham, 2003)

A study to measure intention was done by Esnil (2000) targeted a group of participants aged from 18 to 25, found out that 67 percent of the variation in intention is explained by all the construct of TRA, making the theory a strong and suitable model in studying intention in sexual behavior among youth. And the final result showed that intention is the best predictor of sexual behavior. (Esnil, 2000)

1.3 Problem Statement

As discussed earlier in the chapter, it is undeniable that the level of premarital sex involvement is shooting up in most of the countries. This act has become something so common that even if you are engaging in it, it seems like just a norm in the society. It is a recognized truth that early sexual debut will lead to risky sexual behaviors among the youth (French & Dishio, 2003; Chi & Chin 2011). Although involvement of young people in premarital sexual behaviors in Malaysia is relatively lower compared to other countries (Lee, Chen, Lee & Kaur, 2006), there is still a need to worry, a need to conduct an in depth study on the current scenario. The inadequacy of sufficient sexual education among the young people is opening them toward greater risk of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV / AIDS, unsafe abortion, unplanned pregnancy, babies dumping, and ineffective use of contraception (Adhikari & Tamang, 2009; French & Dishion, 2003; Lee, Chen, Lee & Kaur, 2006).

In Malaysia, there were only few studies conducted that have studied the involvement of premarital sex among the young people in the countries, even lesser is done to look into the premarital sexual intention of youth. Most of the studies showed a relatively low percentage in the involvement. Comparing the two most recent studies found that were targeted at youth with an average age of 15 year old, there is a slight increase in the percentage. In the year 2006, there was 5.4 percent of youth that has sexually experience (Lee et al., 2006). After 4 years, in 2010, the number rose to 6.1 percent (Rampal, 2010). The low percentage in premarital sex engagement might be under reporting, as the topic of sex is still considered a taboo in the country (Low et al., 2007). Another study done by Kamaruddin and his team, showed that there is as high as 15 percent of premarital sex engagement, but sadly the paper is unpublished (Rahman et

al., 2011) involvement in premarital sex (Siti Norazah Zulkifli & Low, 2000), this high with average age of 18.8. Youth averagely aged 18.8 is the group that has entered into university, especially for those who were just starting their pre-tertiary education. The observation here is that entering into the university seems like a transition that is opening them to the opportunity to engage in this risky behavior. So there is a high need to conduct a study after 13 years, to compare the percentage of premarital sex engagement among university students. The statistic will be important to determine when will be the right time for educative program to intervene.

In summary, the young people are engaging in premarital sex without being aware of the negative consequences it might bring (Siti Norazah Zulkifli & Low, 2000), this is definitely something worth worrying.

As discussed earlier, university students are at a higher risk to premarital sexual behaviour due to the transition of environment and increasing of freedom in lives (Adhikari & Tamang, 2009; Cha, 2005). Thus, it is crucial to discover the level of involvement of university students in premarital sex and to understand their attitudes towards premarital sexual behaviors as this will determine whether or not they will be involved in the behaviors (Halpern-Felsher, 2009). Knowing all these consequences of premarital sexual behavior that are greatly affecting the youth nowadays, it is more worrying when we find out about how many of them are actually doing it. In the context of Malaysia, most studies concluded that being away from parental control is the main factor to provide freedom to the young people in trying out risky behavior like premarital sex. Thus, premarital sex is a right move as they are most likely facing the problems. In order to understand the situation and provide effective help to them, we need to dig down to the root of the problem, what are the factors that lead them to engage in this risky behavior. Knowing the specific factors contributing to this risky behavior is ultimately important in order to design the right program that would solve the problem.

For the purpose of this study, research is interested to measure the intention of students to engage in premarital sex instead of behaviour using the model of Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Ajzen and Fishbein. According to the Theory of Reasoned Action, intention is the main determinants for behavior, it is a very reliable predictor (Boggess, 2004; Sheeran & Abraham, 2003; Walker, 2004). Behavioral intention is an indication of how hard one is willing to try and how much effort one is planning to put in to perform a specific behavior (Walker, 2004), it is a very telling predictor of behavior. Study by Esnil (2000), Sherren and Abraham (2003), intention appeared to be a strong predictor leading to behavior. Gilbert-Cronen (2000) and Buhi (2006) concluded that intention is a stable predictor of sexual behavior among youth after summarizing a number of studies. In order to design a prevention program for the youth in Malaysia, researcher believes that it is more appropriate to look into intention rather than behavior as it will be too late if behavior is already done. Prevention is always better than cure.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the involvement and level of intention to engage in premarital sexual behaviour among university students?
2. Is there a significant relationship between sexual attitude towards premarital sexual behaviour, subjective norms affecting premarital sexual behaviour, and perceived behavioral controls with the intention to engage in premarital sexual behavior among university student?
3. Which of the factor appear to be the strongest predictor of intention to engage in premarital sex?

1.5 Research Objectives

2. To identify the involvement of university students in premarital sexual behavior.
3. To identify the level of intention to engage in premarital sexual behavior among university students.
4. To determine the relationship between sexual attitude towards premarital sexual behavior with the intention to engage in premarital sexual behavior among university students.
5. To determine the relationship between subjective norms affecting premarital sexual behavior with the intention to engage in premarital sexual behavior among university students.
6. To determine the relationship between perceived behavioral control towards premarital sexual behavior with the intention to engage in premarital sexual behavior among university students.
7. To examine the strongest predictor contributing to intention to engage in premarital sex.

1.6 Hypotheses of Study:

- H1: There is significant relationship between premarital sex attitudes and premarital sex intention.
- H2: There is significant relationship between premarital sex subjective norm and premarital sex intention
- H3: There is significant relationship between premarital sex perceived behavioral control and premarital sex intention.
- H4: The strongest predictor contributing to premarital sex intention is premarital sex attitude.

1.7 Significance of the Study

1.7.1 Contribution to Theory

In this study, researcher will adopt Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991) and Fishbein (1980). The rationale behind the decision of using Theory of Planned Behavior instead of other theoretical framework is supported mainly by a review done Buhi and Goodson in 2006 that summarized 69 studies between the year

1996 to 2005. From the study, the most significant predictors are intention, perceived norms, time alone at home, self efficacy and attitudes (Buhi & Goodson, 2006), and all the variables in Theory of Planned Behavior are concluded as significant predictors, further strengthening that Theory of Planned Behavior is a very suitable theory in behavioral study. In fact, the decision to engage in premarital sex or not is a volitional control (Cha, 2005), thus the extra component of Theory of Planned Behavior, perceived behavioural control is worth to be investigated. Theory of Reasoned Action has been used by many researchers in social psychology study since more than three decades ago but mostly in the western countries and African countries. Theory of Planned Behavior as the extension theory has also been widely used in this field of study. In Asian context, studies about premarital sexual behaviors among young people have been conducted in Korea and also Taiwan using Theory of Planned Behavior, and findings showed that the theory is significant in predicting young people engagement in premarital sexual behaviors (Cha, 2005; Chiao & Chun, 2011). A similar framework will be developed in this research to study premarital sexual behaviors among university students in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, majority of the studies related to youth sexuality are exploratory study without using a theory (Lee et al., 2006; Low, 2009; Low et al., 2007; Rahman et al., 2011; Rampal, 2010; S. Zulkifli & Wong, 2002; Siti Norazah Zulkifli & Low, 2000). So this is one of the few studies to have used the theory, and it will support the relevancy of Theory of Planned Behavior for Asian countries and especially in the context of Malaysia in explaining youth sexual behavior.

1.7.2 Contribution to Practice

As highlighted earlier, there is insufficient sex education or program in Malaysia. Sex education covered in school are more biological based and even that, the students have a very low level of knowledge on sexual related knowledge included knowledge on HIV and AIDS, considered as one of the major and most common sexual-related problem. Basically, there is no sex education for the youth in Malaysia besides what might be carried out based on the youth own religion. But there is a big group of youth who does not attend any religious meeting, thus excluding themselves from this very important information. The significance of this study is that it highlighted the need for a theory based sex education program for Malaysian university students. Mentioned in one local study, it is important to understand how the young people make their decisions whether or not to engage in premarital sex so that intervention effort can be put in to reduce the negative outcomes that are affecting our youth nowadays (Low, 2009). Thus, the theory used in this study will further strengthen and support the need to improve the practice of providing sex education program for Malaysian youth.

1.8 Assumptions

This study is aimed to discover the level of involvement of university students in premarital sex and also study the factors associated with it. All these conclusions will be made based on the response from the participants of the survey. Thus, in this study, we assume that the respondents are 100 percent honest in answering the sensitive questions in the questionnaire. It is also assumed that the respondents are able to

understand the questions before answering. As the main focus of the study is to discover the factors associated to premarital sex, the study will be using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). There will also be an assumption that the theory used will be able to explain and predict unive U V L W \ V W X G H Q W V ¶ L Q Y R O Y H P H Q W L Q S U

1.9 Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. First of all, the sensitivity of the questions might create discomfort among respondents. Some might find the questions overly direct in asking about sexually related topics. Confidentiality of respondents is highly assured as the questionnaire does not require the respondent to write their name and contact details, basically, there is no way where anyone can trace any of the respondents. But still, there is a possibility that the respondents are not completely honest in their answers. This is unavoidable due to the fact that sex is still a very conservative topic in the context of Malaysia. Especially those who came from rural areas, they are possible to be seen as the group with higher possibility to not answer the questionnaire honestly.

The second limitation involved is that the respondents might not be able to understand the terms used in the questionnaire and thus lead to inaccurate answer. Some of the terms used in the questionnaire are very technical terms which are not commonly used in everyday conversation. Though there is a list of definition to explain the few important terms attached in the beginning of the questionnaire, still we cannot deny the chance of misinterpretation. Besides the use of uncommon terms in the questionnaire, W K H U H V S R Q G H Q W V ¶ (Q J O L V K O D Q J X D J H O L W H U D F \ P L J K W misinterpretation. Majority of the respondents are Chinese that are educated using Chinese language in their past education.

This study is limited to the university students in Malaysia, excluded another important group of young people which are the out-of-school youth. In fact, they are predicted to be the more risky group of young people to be involved in premarital sexual behavior. But it is not easy to be reached as they are not gathered under a roof like the university students.

Lastly, the target respondents for the study are university students in private education institution. The study did not include university students in the government university. This might reduce the representativeness of the findings in applying to the university students in Malaysia.

1.10 Operational Definitions

1.10.1 Premarital Sexual Behavior

Conceptual Definition:

It is defined as physical contact between two individual that involves sexually arousing act, which might be leading to orgasm and intercourse that are done out of the boundary of marriage. It is not purely a physical act, it should be viewed as a

social affair that is highly guided by the social values and social acceptance across cultures.

Operational Definition:

Premarital sexual behavior involves behaviors ranging from kissing, touching, petting, masturbation, oral sex, anal sex and vaginal sex. It is believed to be a progressive behaviour, beginning with self-stimulation and will be further extended to involve another individual.

1.10.2 Intention

Conceptual Definition:

Intention refers to a willful plan to perform certain behaviour. It is sometimes interpreted as motivation, a conscious plan of decision to perform a behavior. Also the primary determinant of the actual behaviour.

Operational Definition:

In this context, intention is a wilful plan to engage in all types of premarital sexual behaviours ranging from kissing, touching, petting, masturbation, oral sex, anal sex and vaginal sex (Doswell et al., 2011). It is explained as the function of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control toward the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). It is a very telling predictor of early sex initiation, thus having very practical influence in the designing and practicing of intervention efforts (Doswell et al., 2011).

1.10.3 Attitudes

Conceptual Definition:

Attitude is the favorable or unfavorable feelings one has toward a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It is also measured by the perceptions on whether a specific action will produce positive or negative outcomes (Halpern-Felsher & Reznik, 2009). It is about the affective domain of how they view the behaviors.

Operational Definition:

Attitude in this context is referring to premarital sexual behaviour attitude. Premarital sexual attitude is relevant to their acceptance towards premarital sexual intercourse, which is also termed as sexual permissiveness. It is about whether someone perceives having premarital sexual behaviour will generate more positive or negative outcome.

1.10.4 Subjective Norms

Conceptual Definition:

Subjective norms are the perceived approval for performing the behaviour by other social pressure perceived by one individual whether to engage in certain behaviour or not. Sometimes it is also referred to the belief of other referent group about a specific behavior, or it can be explained by the term social pressure (Ajzen, 1991).

Operational Definition:

It is the perceived social pressure from significant others including parents and friends to engage in intimate sexual practice ranging from kissing, touching, petting, referents for young people when it comes to sexual decisions.

1.10.5 Perceived Behavioral Control

Conceptual Definition:

Perceived behavioral control is similar to the belief that one can control over his or her behavior, which is also referred to as self efficacy (Ajzen, 1991). It is an estimation on how well an individual is able to cope with a difficult situation (Wulfert & Wan, 1995). It is sometimes referred to as a barrier to action.

Operational Definition:

Perceived behavioural control is whether the adolescent believe that they can abstain from engaging premarital sexual behavior, including kissing, touching, petting, heavy petting, vaginal sex, oral sex and anal sex when they are tempted. It is a protective factor in engaging in safer sex, in resisting peer pressure and in remaining abstinent.

1.11 Summary

Premarital sex has always been a controversial topic of discussion in all around the world. There is a shift to being morally neutral in looking at this issue. It is difficult to judge whether it is right or wrong, in fact, it is a concern about personal ethics that can be very subjective. But looking at the negative consequences that come along with this behavior, it is undeniable that something needed to be done to bring awareness to the society. The inadequacy of sufficient sexual education among the young people is opening them toward greater risk of multiple sexually transmitted diseases (STD) that they are not aware of which included HIV or AIDS, unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortions, babies dumping, cybersex, multiple partners, forced sex and ineffective use of contraception (Adhikari & Tamang, 2009; French & Dishion, 2003; Lee et al., 2006; Low, 2009; Moshia & Manda, 2012).

In Malaysia, the number of young people engaging in premarital sex is running higher based on the limited studies conducted. This is also a trend that similar to other countries worldwide. There is a high need to provide information for the young people before they decide to engage in this risky behavior that might bring them long term negative consequences that they are not aware of. Many studies also focused on discovering the factors associate to premarital sex among young people. In Malaysia, the major factors listed down are being away from family or parental control, attitudes toward premarital sex and also peer influence. These factors are similar to what that contributes to premarital sex in other countries too.

All these information are needed to highlight how severely the issue has become, and how it is affecting our young people nowadays. Attention should be given in designing and conducting sex education program to the youth in Malaysia as a measure to reduce the risk and harms following the risky behavior. Thus, there is a great need for this study to be conducted in Malaysia.

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