

## Perception of the iTaukei and Indo-Fijian Women on Pre-Marital Sex

Rosalie Muertigue\*

Department of Social Studies, University of Fiji, Fiji

### Review Article

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#### \*For Correspondence:

Rosalie Muertigue, Department of Social Studies, University of Fiji, Fiji, Tel: +6796640600;

E-mail: rosaliem@unifiji.ac.fj

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### ABSTRACT

Human nature explains that man has an inborn appetite for sex. Teenagers today are vulnerable to committing sexual acts. The study aimed to examine the perceptions of the Indo-Fijian and iTaukei women on the practice of pre-marital sex. The paper also identified the factors that affect the respondents' perception on premarital sex. A descriptive design of research was utilized in the study. The survey questionnaires were distributed to 10 iTaukei and 10 Indo-Fijian females as respondents. The study was conducted at the University of Fiji. The results of the study revealed that iTaukei and Indo-Fijian women have different perception on premarital sex. There are many factors that affect their perception such as religion, mass media, educational attainment, friends and family background. The research showed that students need some information on comprehensive sex education to minimize the problem of teenage pregnancy, abortion, promiscuity and sexually transmitted diseases.

### INTRODUCTION

Human nature and life explains that man has an inborn appetite for sex. Human sex is not confined to genitals or even to purely physical contact. Dr. Agustin Fuentes a famous Psychologist mentioned human sex can be discuss over the phone, while dancing, over a well cooked meal, in one's mind, as well as physically between two (or more) people. For humans, sex is a seriously complicated and totally bio-cultural act. It is never just about biological processes, ever. Sex for human beings, in addition to being biological and social, is deeply cultural and thus extremely psychological.

Teenagers today are vulnerable to committing sexual acts. Practicing any sexual activity at an early age, may lead to social problems such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. One of the peer challenges of the teenagers are facing is the practice of premarital sex. It is defined as sexual activity practiced by people who are unmarried. The traditional culture forbids the practice of premarital sex and it was considered as a sin to several religions. A woman should remain virgin until she gets married. Virginity is the only precious gift that a wife can offer to the husband on their first night of marriage. However, in the nineteenth century it was gradually accepted mostly in Western societies. One disadvantage of premarital sex as revealed in one study that many women have lost their interest in having sexual intercourse with their partner after marriage as they have got fed up and tired of having intercourse with the same partner even before marriage. In some cases, there are also some males who have witnessed the same issues very frequently. And also several health related issues which may occur during premarital sexual intercourse. There may be problems during the period of life after marriage such as loss in erection, getting fulfilled quicker than usual and several other similar issues that are related to intercourse which occurs either before or after marriage affecting the future marriage life.

Man is created as sexual animal; sex is an essential element of being human for the preservation of human species. There are many factors that affect one's perceptions depending on their age, gender, educational background and social norms. Moreover, people have different views on the morality of sexual intercourse between unmarried couples. Some

people based it on their religion and cultural practices in the society. Some strongly disapproves while some regards marriage is completely optional. Many evidences presented regarding negative effects of premarital sex. Various researches are presented relating to this issue indeed, this has proven a lot of things. This issue needs an attention from the parents and other responsible persons. The study on Trends in Premarital Sex in United States, 1957-2003 concluded that majority of the Americans are having sex before marriage <sup>[1]</sup>. In fact in the data presented by Palatino <sup>[2]</sup> revealed that almost 20% of high school students are practicing premarital sex without using any contraceptives.

The Bible teaches us not to engage in any forms of sexual intimacy before marriage. The society found it morally wrong to have sex without the benefit of marriage. St Augustine on his account about the relationship between men and women, pointed out that sex is important because it has always been included in God's plan. People will set standards based on their personal values. Sexual intercourse is defined as the transference of the semen into the vagina. Sex is a personal choice and sexual involvement entails personal responsibility. Parental guidance and involvement is necessary in dealing adolescent stage.

Premarital sex is forbidden in some Muslim countries, despite of strict laws. Many are still involved in premarital sex. Fiji is a country occupied with multicultural system, the Indo-Fijian and iTaukei people. These two groups have different views on sex and marriage. One of the social problems that Fiji is facing nowadays is teenage pregnancy and the increasing number HIV/AIDS victims. This research will provide some information about human sexuality to minimize the problem of teenage pregnancy, abortion, promiscuity, STD, HIV and homosexuality. As a social science lecturer in University of Fiji, I have observed students in this prestigious institution need more information on human sexuality and exposure to formal sex education. The University of Fiji has not offered any social sciences courses that focus on human sexuality and sex education and based on my research this is the first study conducted in Fiji regarding the perception on premarital sex.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study will examine the perceptions of the Indo-Fijian and iTaukei women on the practice of premarital sex. Specifically, it tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the iTaukei and Indo-Fijian women on premarital sex in terms of the following:
  - Psychological aspect
  - Social aspect
  - Moral aspect
2. What are the factors that affect the iTaukei and Indo-Fijian women's perception on premarital sex?

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to:

- Find out the perception of the Indo-Fijian and iTaukei women on the practice of premarital sex; and
- Determine the factors that influence Indo-Fijian and iTaukei women's perception on the practice of pre-marital sex.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teenage pregnancy is one of the social problems that Fiji is facing nowadays. This problem arises because of lack of information on sex related issues and due to the influence of social media and other social factors. Teenagers are not aware of the negative consequences of practicing premarital sex. Providing enough information could help these young teenagers to avoid experiencing unwanted pregnancy and suffering from sexually transmitted diseases. The findings of this study would be of great importance to everyone. The results of the study would benefit the following:

#### Parents

This would help the parents understand and guide their children to become a responsible person.

#### Teachers

This would help them to be aware of the sex related issues that the students are facing and finding some appropriate interventions.

### Students

This would help them understand the nature of human sexuality and be cautious in dealing sexual relationships. This would equip them enough knowledge on sex related issues and may answer their misconceptions.

### School administrators

This would help them formulate policies and programs that will help minimize the problem of unwanted pregnancy and other sex related problems.

### Future researchers

This study would serve as a reference for future researchers especially in Fiji as a source of information as this would be the first research study conducted.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Sex** is a pleasurable act between two opposite individuals
- **Perception** it refers to the insights of the iTaukei and Indo-Fijian women
- **Premarital Sex** the practice of sexual intercourse between two individuals who are not legally married
- **Indo-Fijian** Fijians of Indian descent
- **iTaukei** native Fijians
- **Sexual Intercourse** the transference of semen into the vagina

## METHODOLOGY

The study will utilize the descriptive survey method. The respondents of this study are the 10 iTaukei and 10 Indo-Fijian female students of University of Fiji who voluntarily participate in the research. Samples are chosen purposively, who have some information related to sex and human sexuality. In depth interviews are also conducted to iTaukei and Indo-Fijian girls, parents, religious figures and guidance counsellor to obtain more information necessary in this study. The researcher prepares a self-made questionnaire in gathering the data. The questionnaire is composed both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The researcher conducted a pilot study to ensure that the instrument used is appropriate for the collection of data. The respondents of the pilot study are chosen with the same characteristics of the target population to ensure validity and reliability of the instrument. The collected information from the respondents will be analysed by using the descriptive and inferential statistical measure.

This research paper will focus only on the perception of the iTaukei and Indo-fijian women on the social, moral and psychological aspect of pre-marital sex. The study is limited to the bona fide students of University of Fiji. Being descriptive in nature, the number of respondents is quite limited since it is expected that the participants may have some hesitations to cooperate in the study. Hence, it is a part of the limitation for the researchers to construct generalizations. Furthermore, the researcher is also interested to find out the factors that affect their perception on pre-marital sex. Since the study will use human participants in examining the perception of the iTaukei and Indo-Fijian women towards pre-marital sex, the researcher will make sure to address the ethical issues in carrying out this research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondents' age, religion, ethnicity and civil status

A total of 20 female respondents are drawn from this study. The respondents' age ranged from 18 years old to 21 years old with a mean age of 19. With regards to religion, majority (60%) of the respondents is Christian and 40% are Hindus. All respondents are single. The finding implies that the respondents are already in the late adolescent stage. In terms of ethnicity, 50% of the respondents are iTaukei and 50% of the respondents are Indo-Fijian which means Fijians of Indian descent.

### Factors that influence the iTaukei and Indo-Fijian women's perception on premarital sex

Based on the survey conducted, majority of the respondents obtained their information or knowledge about pre-marital sex from the internet. Most of them are avid viewers of YouTube. Few respondents reveal that they learn through reading magazines and watching movies. The finding shows that students in University of Fiji are already aware of the factors that affect their perception on premarital sex. This implies further that students need proper information dissemination on premarital sex to promote a health-living and free from sexually transmitted disease. Few respondents revealed that they get the information from their friends especially for iTaukie women who are very expressive and demonstrative of their

feelings. This result was highlighted by the study of Sieving et al. [3] that adolescents' lives are highly influenced by their friends. The societal changes effect on the perception of the teenagers' involvement in romantic and sexual talk. Understanding the consequences of positive imitation of sexual intercourse may have implications for the adolescent health. Friends may sometimes provide an inaccurate information on sex related issues which lead to sexual risk behavior. The research findings indicate that the perception of both iTaukei and Indo-Fijian women are shaped by a combination of factors such as internet, movies, magazines and friends. These findings further analyze, that the growth of internet has both a positive and negative impact on the young minds of the students. According to Chavez [4], premarital has been accepted since the start of sexual revolution in 1960 that is why teenage pregnancy has been increasing now a day. On the same study, she noted that parents play a big role in preventing teen sex.

### **Respondent's perception on psychological aspects of premarital sex**

This study found out that majority of the respondents agreed that engaging in premarital sex can contribute to emotional problems. According to the account of one respondent, losing one's virginity is the most painful and to some girls, sex for the very first time can leave a very emotional feeling. Some women are regretting after sex which leads to depression. However, the study of Meier [5] finds out that only few adolescents who engaged in their first sexual experiences exhibited negative changes in mental health, and the changes that were relatively small.

*"Girls who have sex at a young age relative to the norms of their peers, experience a significant increase in depression, while those who have sex "one time" or later than the majority of their peers do not experience significant effects".[5]*

Few respondents explain during the interview that women are affected psychologically than men because of the potential result like pregnancy and social shaming. But on the other hand, the article of Weiss [6] discusses that sex in young adulthood is normal and common and acceptable in the later years in life. He further explains that premarital sex cannot contribute depression if both partners are sexually happy and satisfied during the sexual act. The idea was also supported by SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the US as cited by Meier [5], analysis that mental health of most adolescents is simply not affected by first sex.

### **Respondents' perception on the moral aspect of premarital sex**

Among the iTaukei women promoting abstinence before marriage is not already practiced. All iTaukei respondents agreed that a relationship will last when there is physical intimacy involved. In the Christian community, the church teaches everyone the sacredness of sex and abstinence is highly promoted for the unmarried ones. However, in this paper majority of the Indo-Fijian respondents assert that chastity is very important, sex before marriage is the best choice to avoid committing fornication according to the Catholic view. Indo-Fijian women are still keeping the values of conservatism in their minds. They are highly devoted to their religion and their perspective on premarital sex is not morally acceptable in Fiji. The participants significantly stressed out that sex outside marriage is a sin. Some studies reveal that premarital sex also contributes a high percentage of divorce chances in the future and damaging in so many ways. Moreover, during the in-depth interview with the Indo-Fijian parents, the reason for dis agreeing the practice of premarital sex because it was against the teachings of their religion. This finding was supported by the study of Bocar and Perez [7] that students have inherited the values of conservativeness from the old generation in spite of living in the modern world. Several studies have proven that parents can help influence the decision-making of their adolescent children on sexual matters.

### **Respondents' perception on the social aspect of premarital sex**

The result of the study shows that iTaukei women viewed premarital sex as socially accepted in the Fijian community as long as both parties agreed and consent each other. According to their views it is normal for some people to feel disinclined to attach moral judgment onto other actions that have different practices. Sex education is very important to minimize the risk of cases of teenage pregnancy, unwed motherhood and sexually transmitted infections. iTaukei women also elaborated that since divorce is legal in Fiji then premarital sex should be acceptable. However, [8] reveals in his study that the practice of premarital sex may contribute to family's social shame and dishonor which may lead to social exclusion. The perception of the Indo-Fijian women on the social aspect is different. They perceived sex as sacred and it is not for fun. According to the Indo-Fijian respondents the youth today are not aware of the consequences after having sexual intercourse. In Fijian society, premarital sex still not the subject for discussion among family members and it is still forbidden for the unmarried ones. Most respondents are aware of the dangers of premarital sexual experience that may lead to emotional problem. Although majority of the respondents are quite open to the use of contraceptives in preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

## **CONCLUSION**

The practice of premarital sex is an individual choice; it is the decision of the parties to engage on it. The result of the study shows that Indo-Fijian and iTaukei women have different views on premarital sex. The respondents' ethnicity, religion and cultural beliefs are the factors that affect their perception. The iTaukei women considered premarital sex acceptable in the society while Indo-Fijian women still promoting abstinence of sex before marriage. Based on this finding, the youth today need the necessary information for them to be safe once they become sexually active. Comprehensive sexuality education is necessary for the young people to protect their health and well-being. The students can think critically about sexuality and relationships which can help them develop a good decision making skills that they can use throughout their lives.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the conclusions, the following are recommended:

- Parents need to monitor the behavior of their children all the time. They played a critical role in shaping the teenager's perception on sexual matters. An open communication between a parent-teenager must be highly practiced among family members to provide appropriate sexual behavior.
- Since there is no comprehensive sex education program in the university, the students must be provided with the proper knowledge on sex education through symposiums or seminars.
- The students in the university should be educated on the risks of engaging in pre-marital sex.
- The school should strengthen its roles in guidance and counseling to the students by promoting moral values.
- Encourage the teachers to openly talk to their students regarding sex related issues and provide proper guidance in dealing teenage behavior.

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