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## The Factors Affecting Decisions Not to Engage in Premarital Sex Among Maritime First-Year Students in Cebu, Philippines

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### ABSTRACT

Premarital sex can be both fulfilling and detrimental to college students. Studies were conducted on the factors that induced premarital sex among college students. However, no study has been conducted yet, regarding maritime students-based factors affecting premarital sex decisions in the Philippines. The objective of this study is to provide the general public, especially the student-readers, an idea of the extent of the factors affecting decisions not to engage in premarital sex among maritime first-year students in Cebu, Philippines. Three hundred sixty maritime first-year students were selected from the University of Cebu maritime department of S.Y. 2020-2021. A descriptive-quantitative method of research without experimentation was utilized. Systematic random sampling was used to establish the sample size. A modified survey questionnaire adopted from the study was used as the main instrument. Percentages and frequency counts were used to calculate and interpret the data. Results revealed that most respondents were not involved in premarital sexual activities. The major factors affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sex are family values, followed by religious doctrines. The results of the study will also enrich literature in as much as it will give numbers and facts as bases to the Philippine Commission for Higher Education, college institutions, and ethics teachers in the Philippines to promote the use of books and the creation of teaching materials that tackle more lessons on sexuality, family and religious values to reinforce the Filipino maritime students for the present and future moral challenges.

### INTRODUCTION

This simplified study is intended for the general public, including the student-readers. The hypotheses were also simplified to avoid complications. Calculations only involved frequency counts and percentages for easy understanding.

Standpoints, especially on the morality of premarital sex, are not singular but diverse (Widmer *et al.*, 1998). Several perspectives must be considered. One culture may consider it wrong, like the majority of Muslims (Saharso *et al.*, 2023) and Christians (Tukker, 2013), while other progressive groups and individuals may encourage sexual permissiveness (Ajiboye *et al.*, 2014 & Majumdar, 2018). Traditional moral norms on sex have safeguarded the values of family and personal relationships (Gao *et al.*, 2012). Sexual permissiveness, especially on premarital sex, can produce more negative impacts on college students than positive ones, as mentioned by authors cited in the literature review. No study has been conducted yet, regarding maritime students-based factors affecting premarital sex decisions in the Philippines. Hence, there is a need for a study that will explore the factors affecting the decisions not to engage in premarital sex among maritime students as reinforcement for their preparation for future moral challenges. The implicit numbers and facts of this study to contribute to the body of knowledge are the following: 1) gathering the identified negative effects of premarital sexual activities from various articles; 2) reaffirming family values and religious norms as avenues

to strengthen students' decisions; and 3) rejecting the idea that peers, personal readings, social media, and school greatly affects college students' moral decision makings. It should be recommended to concerned authorities the creation of more sex-education materials appropriate to Filipino maritime students and the general public as well.

### Statement of the Problem

This study explored the factors affecting decisions not to engage on premarital sexual activities among maritime first-year students in Cebu, Philippines. Specifically, this study sought to determine the following:

1. To determine the factors affecting the respondents' decisions not to engage in premarital sexual activities in terms of:

- 1.1. family values;
- 1.2. peers' influences;
- 1.3. personal readings;
- 1.4. religious doctrines;
- 1.5. social media exposures; and
- 1.6. school learnings.

2. To determine the frequency of the respondents' engagement in premarital sexual activities to support the non-engagement contention.

### Hypotheses

The frequency count of the respondents' engagement on pre-marital sex would be very high and that peers and social media would receive the highest votes as the major

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factors affecting the respondents' non-engagement in premarital sexual activities.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Views concerning premarital sex may vary from different perspectives and research results. Premarital sex is punishable for Muslims as prescribed in the Quran (Faisal *et al.*, 2022). Christianity, in general, condemns premarital sex as a sinful act (Kubo, 1980). One study suggested that in order to achieve better premarital sex behavior life, one must have a good emotional relationship with peers (Wijaya *et al.*, 2018). Another study was conducted on the rate of premarital sex in urban and rural areas in India. Results revealed that more rural youth rarely received sex education engaged in premarital sex than those in urban areas (Banahatti & Barker, 2015). In a study among secondary students in Pokhara Sub-Metropolitan City Nepal, premarital sex is more likely engaged by those who had discussed sexual matters with friends than those who had not. A higher possibility of having premarital sex is also observed in those exposed to pornography (Adhikari *et al.*, 2018). Among Indian respondents, Majumdar's study inspects changing perceptions towards sex before marriage. He observed that premarital sex has become more common. Then he concluded that it is important to create policies to lessen the transmission of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the presence of sexual permissiveness, especially in premarital sex (Majumdar, 2018). In the study conducted by Lawal & Idemudia, they concluded that preventive measures should give more attention to alcohol abuse as the major cause of premarital sex (Lawal & Idemudia, 2018). Premarital sex has many negative effects also. Two bad effects are unwanted pregnancy (Ma *et al.*, 2009) and health problems (Shrestha, 2019). Forced premarital sex will result in mental depression (Abdissa *et al.*, 2017) and guilt (Sack *et al.*, 1984). It would encourage youths to have multiple partners (Adama & Ejih, 2021). It also affects self-esteem, educational aspirations, religiosity, and attitudes toward school (Plotnick, 1992). Premarital sex also hastens the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (Centers for Disease Control, 1991).

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research Design**

This study used a descriptive-quantitative survey method of research without experimentation (Maulina & Sari, 2022). It was necessary to assess first the extent of the frequency of the respondents' engagement in premarital sex to establish relevance in assessing the factors affecting

their decisions not to engage in premarital sexual activities. The findings are quantitatively calculated and analyzed qualitatively for statistical relevance. The process of this study covered the preparation of transmittal letters and questionnaires, the data gathering, and the presentation of the data, which included statistical treatment, analysis, and interpretation.

**Research Environment**

This study was conducted at the University of Cebu Maritime campus. The University is privately owned. The population of the maritime students enrolled in this Institution is predominantly male. The school type is private, its religious affiliation is non-sectarian, and the term structure is by semester. The school is located in Mambaling, Cebu City, Philippines.

**Population and Sample**

The respondents of this paper were the 360 first-year male students of the University of Cebu maritime department last school year, S.Y. 2020-2021. Random systematic sampling was used to determine the sample size (Bhardwaj, P. (2019).

**Research Instrument**

This research used a modified survey questionnaire adopted from the study. The questionnaire was designed to quantify the extent of the level of manifestation of the respondents' engagement and the extent of the factors affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sex.

**Data Gathering**

The director of the University of Cebu Maritime Department received the letter of permission to inquire about the population of first-year maritime students. The survey was done the same day in the randomly picked maritime students' classrooms. The researchers retrieved the questionnaires, and then the data were recorded.

**Statistical Treatment**

Some readers, those without a background in statistics, may need help understanding complicated tables and formulas. To accommodate more readers from different educational backgrounds, simple frequency counts and percentages are enough to determine the respondent's engagement and the factors affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sexual activities. Frequency counts of the respondents' engagement and the factors affecting decisions not to engage in premarital sexual activities were calculated. The respondents answered a five-point

**Table 1:** The Scale Used to Measure the Respondents' Engagement on Premarital Sex

Score	Range Mean	Category	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.20 – 5.00	Always	if the engagement was constant
4	3.40 – 4.19	Many Times	if the engagement was repetitious
3	2.60 – 3.39	Sometimes	if the engagement was less repetitious
2	1.80 – 2.59	Once	if the engagement was done one time only
1	1.00 – 1.79	Never	if there was no engagement

Likert scale interpreted as Always (5), Many Times (4), Sometimes (3), Once (2), and Never (1). Results were interpreted based on the scale shown below:

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Extent of the Respondents' Engagement on Pre-marital Sex

In this section, the data collected regarding the frequency counts of the respondents' engagement with premarital sex were tabulated and interpreted. Frequency counts, and percentages were tabulated to determine the extent of respondents' engagement with premarital sex. Table 2 presents the frequency of respondents' engagement with premarital sex. The first column is the scores to choose

**Table 2:** The Frequency of the Respondents' Engagement on Premarital Sex

Score	Verbal Description	Frequency	Percentage
5	Always	33	9.2
4	Many Times	22	6.1
3	Sometimes	61	16.9
2	Once	62	17.2
1	Never	182	50.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100.0</b>

from, with the corresponding description in the second column. The third column displays the frequency or number of those who voted for each verbal description, followed by the percentage in the fourth column.

Out of the 360 respondents, 182 or 50.6% answered 'never' which is the highest in frequency rank, followed by 62 or 17.2% as second from the highest, 61 or 16.9% as third in rank, 33 or 9.2% as fourth in rank and 22 or 6.1% as the lowest in frequency in rank. Data revealed that most respondents were never engaged in premarital sex. This will give relevance to the next assessment, which is the extent of the factors affecting the respondents' decisions not to engage in premarital sexual activities. The respondents are still conservative when it comes to premarital sex. Indeed, it is noted that Filipinos generally are religious (Abad, 2001), and that is why premarital sex is still considered an offense against God, as it is condemned in the Bible (O'Rourke, 1976). The media, curiosity, and the lack of sex education are the main causes of premarital sex (Sejati *et al.*, 2021). Premarital sex is one of the new things that teenagers would try. For want of fun and experience, they tend to satisfy their curiosity with premarital acts. The media also strongly influences teenagers (Sondak & Hiola, 2021). Pornographic materials are very accessible from various sites, which again contributed to increasing their sexual drives (Sari *et al.*, 2021). In a Filipino family, it is unusual for parents and children to talk about sex because it would be an embarrassment (Kiwang, 2016). If such education is often neglected in the family, it is also true in schools. If sex education is not given much importance, those who

lack sex education will be more curious and eventually would seek gratification in premarital sex (Okah *et al.*, 2023). The parents, schools and the government must work hand in hand to establish guidelines to provide sex education and sexual knowledge to teenagers so that their curiosity about sex will be satisfied. Again, many negative effects of premarital sexual activities were enumerated in the literature review section.

### The Extent of the Factors Affecting the Respondents' Decisions not to Engage in Premarital Sexual Activities

In this section, the data collected regarding the factors affecting the respondents' decisions not to engage in premarital sexual activities were tabulated and interpreted. The proposed six (6) factors that affect respondents' decisions are the following: family values, peers' influences, personal readings, religious doctrines, social media exposures, and school learning. To determine the

**Table 3:** The Scale Used to Measure the Factors Affecting the Respondents' Decisions not to Engage in Premarital Sexual Activities

Score	Range Mean	Category
5	4.20 – 5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.40 – 4.19	Agree
3	2.60 – 3.39	Uncertain
2	1.80 – 2.59	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.79	Strongly Disagree

above factors, frequency counts and percentages were computed, which were interpreted using the Likert scale in 5 points: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Uncertain (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Agree (1).

From Tables 4 to 9, the first columns comprise the scores, the second are verbal descriptions, the third are frequency counts, and the last are percentages. Each factor with the corresponding data will be interpreted and discussed immediately after each table, including possible works of literature significant to the factor.

### Family Values

Family is where each one conventionally has the opportunity to grow. This is where the first experiences of learning language, customs, beliefs, and morality occur.

**Table 4:** The Frequency of the Respondents' Choice of the Family Values Factor

Score	Verbal Description	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strongly Agree	106	29.44
4	Agree	158	43.89
3	Uncertain	42	11.67
2	Disagree	44	12.22
1	Strongly Disagree	10	2.78
	<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Family is the first venue where a person learns what is right and wrong. Shown in Table 4 are the frequencies of the respondents' choice of 'family values' as a factor affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sex.

Data revealed that most respondents agreed and strongly agreed on family values as the factor influencing their ethical standpoints; hence 158 voted to agree with the highest frequency. One hundred six votes followed for strongly agree. This implied that family in the Philippines is still the number one inculcator of values to the Filipino youths today despite the prevailing technological progress and progressive ideas that threaten family's sacredness. For Geminiano, the Filipino family is sustained by several values passed from generation to generation. He suggested that hiya, or shame in English, is one significant trait in forming sexual attitudes among Filipinos (Geminiano, 2015). Hiya is beneficial for controlling unhealthy sexual behaviors. For example, a shy Filipino is scared of being caught engaged in premarital sex. Culturally, a Filipino engaged in premarital sex is tantamount to destroying the image of the family. Undeniably, when it comes to sexuality, Filipinos are conservative, except for a few youngsters who cannot control their passions due to their exposure to the media and the bad influence of peers. Further, higher levels of parental control and stronger parent-child relationships may decrease the risk of premarital intercourse (Tsala & Kuate 2012)

**Peers' Influences**

It has been established in the lives of men and women that unless one is born with a disability, one will always have that sense of belongingness to the same societal

**Table 5:** The Frequency of the Respondents' Choice of the Peers' Influences Factor

Score	Verbal Description	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strongly Agree	16	4.44
4	Agree	40	11.11
3	Uncertain	43	11.94
2	Disagree	170	47.22
1	Strongly Disagree	91	25.28
	<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100.0</b>

group based on age, gender, and status. Shown in Table 5 are the frequencies of the respondents' choice of the 'peers' influences' as a factor affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sex. Out of 360 respondents, 170 voted to disagree at the highest frequency. This revealed that most respondents disagreed with the idea that their friends have influenced them much concerning what is right and wrong, especially about premarital sexual activities. As previously mentioned, family and religious factors affected much of their standpoints. That is why it is not always true that peer pressures always influence the members of a peer group. A result of a study on peer influence on sexual behavior confirmed that not all youth

are equally susceptible. However, girls are less likely to be susceptible to social pressure regarding sexual behavior than boys (van de Bongardt *et al.*, 2015).

**Personal Readings**

In reading, we gain a large percentage of learning, ranging

**Table 6:** The Frequency of the Respondents' Choice of the Personal Readings Factor

Score	Verbal Description	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strongly Agree	5	1.39
4	Agree	14	3.89
3	Uncertain	24	6.67
2	Disagree	145	40.28
1	Strongly Disagree	172	47.78
	<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100.0</b>

from facts, concepts, principles, and information about reality and morality. Shown in Table 6 are the frequencies of the respondents' choice of the 'personal readings' as a factor affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sex. Out of 360 respondents, 172, the highest in number, strongly disagreed that they have shifted from the traditional ethical standpoints because of reading many articles, blogs, and books about sex. One hundred forty-five votes for disagreeing, followed. This implied that personal readings did not greatly influence the ethical standpoints of the respondents. Reading is important, but only some things we read are important. Reading is important because a person is built up by spoken and written words (Davis, 2016). What we are now is the result of the words we read and hear from our surroundings. In other words, our character and standpoints were developed through reading and hearing words. Indeed, personal readings contributed much to the formation of a person's mind, but not all that one heard or read should be regarded as important. The mind can sort out information, so a person absorbs all the information. Only those applicable or important to our life in each given situation should be applied, especially in ethical decisions.

**Religious Doctrines**

Religion is one area needed by almost all human beings to find answers to such questions regarding spiritual realities

**Table 7:** The Frequency of the Respondents' Choice of the Religious Doctrines Factor

Score	Verbal Description	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strongly Agree	88	24.44
4	Agree	156	43.33
3	Uncertain	40	11.11
2	Disagree	63	17.5
1	Strongly Disagree	13	3.61
	<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100.0</b>

vis-a-vis our existence and that of morality. Shown in Table 7 are the frequencies of the respondents' choices of the 'religious doctrines' as a factor affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sex.

Of the 360 respondents, 156 votes, the highest, agreed that catechism classes, recollections, and priests' homilies have convinced them that premarital sex is immoral because these are forbidden implicitly and explicitly in the Bible. Table 7 shows that most first-year maritime students at the University of Cebu have chosen religion as the next factor influencing their ethical standpoints. This implied that religious orientation is also very influential in forming ethical values among Filipinos, especially among the first-year maritime students of U.C. Catholics and Protestants leaders are very active in the Philippines. Parishes in Cebu, for example, are never dull, with seminars, retreats, and recollections for almost everyone to attend. Undeniably, schools in the Philippines, even public schools, would never run out of retreats and recollections for students. Graduation rites are always coupled with a Holy Mass. That is why students always learn a lot from religion, and sex education is one of those they should have learned. In the formation of conscience and character, religion plays an important role. A huge barrier to the development of personal harmony and one's spirituality is the lack of control over sexual desire. Premarital sex also hinders religious groups, communities, and family relationships (Kainz, 2015).

### Social Media Exposures

With technology and the advent of the internet, children are immersed in some form of social media. Instagram, FB, and Twitter are just a few of the many platforms that affect the moral development of youth nowadays. The time spent online will eventually influence users' personalities

**Table 8:** The Frequency of the Respondents' Choice of the Social Media Exposure Factor

Score	Verbal Description	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strongly Agree	0	0
4	Agree	18	5
3	Uncertain	110	30.56
2	Disagree	162	45
1	Strongly Disagree	70	19.44
	<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100.0</b>

and characters. Shown in Table 8 are the frequencies of the respondents' choice of 'social media exposures' as a factor affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sex.

Of the 360 respondents, 162 voted 'disagree' as the highest frequency. Data revealed that most respondents disagreed with the idea that they were more inclined to believe in whatever they read and watch on social media, especially about sex. This implied that social media has less to do with the respondents' ethical standpoints. Ironically, the world today is pervaded by social media, yet the respondents

denied its influence on their standpoints. It is fast and easy to use the websites and download the application so that the user can share materials and information over the internet. Again, even today, most Filipino families are still religious and conservative (Cotas-Girard *et al.*, 2022). This will explain why Filipino respondents did not consider social media as the major factor in their moral decision-making, especially regarding premarital sex. Social networks can be addictive (Cheng *et al.*, 2021). Most people may check and interact on social media almost every day. Most users are no longer aware of how much time they spend online. Amazingly, the respondents have avoided premarital sexual temptations amidst their exposure to social media.

### School Learnings

Although learning is not confined to schools, for the sake of formality and systematic learning, everyone is entitled to go to school (Azorin, 2020) and learn different subjects, including the morality of sex (Francis, 2019). Shown in Table 9 are the frequency counts of the respondents'

**Table 9:** The Frequency of the Respondents' Choice of the School Learnings Factor

Score	Verbal Description	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strongly Agree	5	1.39
4	Agree	27	7.5
3	Uncertain	111	30.83
2	Disagree	181	50.28
1	Strongly Disagree	36	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100.0</b>

choice of 'school learnings' as a factor affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sex.

Of the 360 respondents, 181 voted 'disagree' as the highest frequency. This revealed that most respondents disagreed with the idea that they have learned more from schools about the ideals and ways to avoid falling into premarital sexual activities. The main reason students did not learn much from the school regarding sexual education is that the Philippine educational system still lacks the appropriate teaching materials, for that matter, and many teachers still lack the necessary training to teach sex education in the classroom. If, until today, we are seeing teenage pregnancy increasing, something is not working well in the educational system. Comprehensive Sexual Education in the Philippine Department of Education is not fully aligned with the standards a panel of experts developed. However, teachers have not been fully trained on the appropriate approach to deliver age-specific Comprehensive Sex Education (Zulu *et al.*, 2019) within the K to 12 curricula (Geronimo, 2016). Sexual education does not promote promiscuity as others have claimed, but it is designed to delay sex among young students. In other words, it should be implemented fully in the country to help reduce teenage and unwanted pregnancies. If the Philippine Department of Education and the Philippine Commission on Higher Education fully

implemented sex education in schools with appropriate materials and trained teachers, we would see a different result.

What is the highest factor affecting the respondents' decisions not to engage in premarital sex? The answer should be based on the factor with the highest number of 'agree' or 'strongly agree,' which is 'family values' followed by 'religious doctrines.' The factors that received the highest number of 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' votes would mean that these factors did not largely influence the

respondents to disengage with premarital sexual activities. These are school learnings, peers' influences, social media exposures, and personal readings. It remains up to this day that family values reinforced by religious doctrines can become the formidable forces to strengthen students in preparation for their future moral challenges, especially on the negative effects of premarital sex. Sexually Transmitted Diseases, unwanted pregnancy, health problems, mental depression, multiple partners, guilt, low self-esteem, low educational performance, and low religiosity can be

**Table 10:** Summary of the highest votes for each factor arranged from 'strongly agree' down to 'strongly disagree'

Factors	Verbal Description	Frequency	Percentage
Family Values	Agree	158	43.89
Religious Doctrines	Agree	156	43.33
School Learnings	Disagree	181	50.28
Peers' Influences	Disagree	170	47.22
Social Media Exposures	Disagree	162	45
Personal Readings	Strongly Disagree	172	47.78

lessened or avoided if students, parents, and ethics teachers know the risks of premarital sex.

### CONCLUSIONS

The frequency count of the respondents' engagement with premarital sex is very low. The major factors affecting their decisions not to engage in premarital sexual activities are family values and religious doctrines. The hypothesis that a large percentage of respondents would engage in premarital sexual activities is rejected. The other hypothesis that peers and social media would receive the highest votes as the major factors affecting the respondents' moral decision-making regarding premarital sexual activities is also rejected. Filipino families are still conservative, which is the ultimate source of Filipino values. Religion is the second source of moral relevance in as much as the Philippines is the only Christian country in Asia. Although many hostile Spaniards colonized the Philippines long ago, they were instrumental in planting the seed of Christian values in the land; otherwise, Filipinos could have retained their pagan ways. Social media, peers, school, and personal readings undeniably contributed to Filipino youths' moral development. Nevertheless, family and religion are still the major influencers of the respondents' standpoints on the contention that premarital sex is immoral. Based on the findings of the paper, the following are recommended: college ethics teachers should give importance to the topics on sexuality or sexual moral issues and their effects on Filipino youths; the Philippine Department of Education and the Philippine Commission on Higher Education should promote the development of Ethics books that will include topics on sexuality; and researchers and professionals should develop more instructional materials on sexual ethics.

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