

Perceptions of Values Education Students on Premarital Sex

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Abstract: This qualitative study explores the perceptions of Values Education students in Tacloban City, Philippines, regarding premarital sex (PMS). Anchored in Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the research investigates how social, cultural, religious, and media influences shape students' attitudes and behaviors. Using purposive sampling, twelve participants were selected for semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth insights into their definitions of premarital sex (PMS), perceived contributing factors, and proposed strategies for intervention. Findings reveal a spectrum of views, ranging from traditional religious condemnation to more liberal perspectives that emphasize consent, emotional readiness, and personal responsibility. Influential factors identified include peer pressure, family dynamics, exposure to digital media, and inadequate sexual guidance. Participants recommended the integration of comprehensive, values-based sex education that combines ethical instruction with accessible, culturally sensitive, and student-centered learning materials. The study highlights the importance of updating Values Education curricula to reflect both moral foundations and the evolving realities faced by Filipino youth. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on adolescent sexuality, moral education, and educational policy in conservative yet rapidly evolving societies.

Keywords: *Premarital Sex; Values Education; Adolescent Sexuality; Social Learning Theory; Qualitative Research; Philippines.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Change is a natural part of society, influencing norms, behaviors, and attitudes over time (Andrews & Stalick, 1997). Perhaps the most hotly contested societal change is the changing view of sexuality in various cultures. As social norms continue to evolve, it becomes more critical to understand the implications of premarital sexual relationships.

Premarital sex was once highly stigmatized. Since the 1920s, however, it has become increasingly common, especially among women. Research has shown that 75% to 80% of Americans had had vaginal sex before the age of 22 (Sex and Society, n.d.). In Western nations, delaying marriage until after 21 was the norm in the 1950s, and premarital chastity was less of a focus. As of 2002, 77% of Americans reported having sex by the age of 20, of which 75% had had premarital sex, according to figures from the National Survey of Family Growth. Likewise, 91% of women born between the years 1949 and 1978 had premarital sex by the age of 30, as opposed to 82% of women born between 1939 and 1948.

A UNICEF (2001) poll showed that in 10 out of 12 countries with available information, a total of two-thirds or more adolescents had already become sexually active. Research also puts the influence of peer pressure among the factors that prompt boys as well as girls to engage in premarital sex. Average rates were as high as 29% of boys and 23% of girls in several nations reporting that they were sexually active, including practicing premarital sex (Regassa et al., 2016).

Compared to most of the Western nations, the US has traditionally understood teen sexuality to be a communal issue and not an inherent aspect of human nature (Crockett et al., 2006). Its worldview is one based on values and possible consequences, including underage pregnancy and STDs. Meanwhile, the constantly liberalizing attitude of the mass media towards sexuality usually contradicts such conservative inclinations, prompting adolescents to integrate ambiguous and oppositional messages related to sexuality into their lives (Crockett et al., 2006).

Family and cultural history also have a large influence on how adolescents react to sexuality. Evidence has shown that poor parental guidance makes it more likely for

adolescents to engage in risky sex, as they might not be able to draw right boundaries without proper support (Setyoningrum & Liyanovitasari, 2021).

Beliefs rooted in religion and culture also heavily determine premarital sex attitudes. Most religions such as Christianity and Islam, see premarital sex as a moral offense (Crockett et al., 2006; Minhath et al., 2021). In a Pew study on global attitudes toward premarital sex in 2014, striking differences in views on premarital sex were found. Across Muslim-majority nations like Malaysia, Jordan, and Pakistan, more than 90% of the respondents deplored premarital sex (Hayes, 2013). Attitudes in Western Europe, however, are much more liberal. In Spain, Germany, and France, less than 10% of the population disapproved of premarital sex, which indicates liberal social movements that have reconfigured social norms since the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s (Wong, 2012).

The Philippines, which is traditionally conservative and religious, has experienced dramatic changes in social attitudes, thanks to the impact of social media and globalization. YouTube and Facebook, for instance, expose young Filipinos to multiple cultural viewpoints, leading to more liberal attitudes towards relationships and sexuality. Yet, even with these influences, the Catholic Church continues to be a powerful influence in shaping Filipino values and societal norms (Castillo et al., 2021).

Statistical information mirrors such changing trends. In 2002, merely 16% of young women and 31.2% of young men in the Philippines indicated that they had participated in premarital sex. In 2012, these rates climbed to 28.7% among women and 35.5% among men. According to the Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS5) survey (2021), it was determined that among males and females aged 15-24 in Eastern Visayas, 24.1% and 16.2%, respectively, had had premarital sex. Among those 20-24, the percentages were even higher: 41.9% of men and 30.6% of women indicated that they had had premarital sex. Positively, 72.5% of men and 71.4% of women who had engaged in premarital sex indicated that they had used protection during their first sexual experience, showing some awareness about safe sex.

The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) has expressed alarm over rising teenage pregnancy rates in Eastern Visayas, where 7% of teen girls have already given birth. In Central Visayas, 11,686 teenage pregnancy cases were documented in 2022, a 7.4% jump from the year before. CPD identified several factors contributing to adolescent sexual activity, including peer influence, social media exposure, easy access to explicit content, and the need for intimacy. Additionally, poverty has emerged as a significant driver of premarital sex, often leading to unintended pregnancies, school dropouts, and early marriages (Okah et al., 2023; Kaiser Jan Fuentes & Kaiser Jan Fuentes, 2024).

In today's digital age, adolescents face greater exposure to diverse perspectives on premarital sex, making them more vulnerable to engaging in early sexual activity (Shrestha, 2019). Despite numerous studies on students' perceptions of

premarital sex, there had been a lack of research specifically focusing on Values Education students in Tacloban City. Most previous studies had been conducted in specific regions, limiting a broader understanding of the issue in the Philippine context.

To address this knowledge gap, the study investigated the attitudes of Values Education students regarding premarital sex. Understanding their perspectives provided valuable insight into the factors that shaped their attitudes and behaviors. These findings informed the development of more effective interventions, policy guidelines, and educational programs.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The research aimed to investigate the views of Values Education students on premarital sex in the Philippines by identifying the most significant factors that influenced premarital sexual activity, as perceived by the participants. Specifically, it intended to answer the following questions:

- How do Values Education students define premarital sex?
- What are the factors that Values Education students view as causing the rise in premarital sex?
- What strategies do Values Education students believe are effective methods of dealing with the problem of premarital sex?
- What teaching materials may be introduced in order to better implement Sex Education (SE)?

➤ *Scope and Limitations*

This research aimed to investigate the views of Values Education students at a university in Tacloban City regarding premarital sex in the Philippines. Employing an exploratory qualitative design, the study utilized purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews as instruments for data collection. The sample consisted of approximately twelve participants, who were carefully selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria established by the researchers. This selection process ensured that participants possessed sufficient knowledge and understanding of premarital sex, enabling them to provide relevant insights and meaningful data for the study.

The general objective of this study was to understand how Values Education students perceived premarital sex and to examine the factors that shaped their attitudes toward it. Although the research aimed to offer valuable insights, the researchers acknowledged several potential limitations that may have posed challenges during the study:

• *Time Constraints*

The researchers faced limited time due to academic and non-academic obligations, which may have affected both data collection and analysis.

• *Limited Sample Size and Generalizability*

Since the study focused solely on Values Education students, the findings may not be generalizable to students in other fields who might hold different perspectives on premarital sex.

- *Scheduling Challenges*

Data collection was contingent on participants' availability, which sometimes required adjusting interview schedules to accommodate them.

- *Language Barriers*

Communication difficulties between researchers and participants may have led to potential misinterpretations or misunderstandings during interviews.

- *Transcription Difficulties*

Language issues may also have affected the accuracy of transcriptions, requiring additional effort to ensure precise interpretation of the data.

Despite these limitations, the research was designed to uphold the reliability and validity of its findings through careful participant selection, systematic data collection procedures, and rigorous analytical methods.

➤ *Theoretical Framework*

This research is based on Social Learning Theory (SLT), which offers a wide theoretical framework for analyzing premarital sexual behavior. Developed by Albert Bandura, SLT illustrates those behaviors, including sexual ones, are acquired through observation, imitation, and social interaction. Adolescents especially acquire their sexual attitudes and habits through observing peers, family, and media influences. Their behavior is influenced by significant factors such as attention, motivation, attitudes, and emotions (Hogben & Byrne, 1998). Environmental conditions also play a substantial role in the decision-making process of adolescents in premarital sex. Being exposed to well-rounded sexual education and having an enabling environment has the potential to influence attitudes toward sexual behavior, towards making informed and responsible decisions (Balassone, 1991). Moreover, social norms and peer influence can facilitate or discourage premarital sex, pointing to the influential role played by social surroundings (Hogben & Byrne, 1998). Cognitive processes are also important in sexual decision-making. Adolescents make decisions after interpreting what is observed and expecting the possible outcomes of sexual activity. Their sexual experience, relationship, and social acceptance expectations result in either risk-taking or risk-reduction approaches to premarital sex (Williamson, 2017). Although SLT sheds light on how sexual behaviors are acquired, it needs to be noted that biological and emotional factors also contribute to sexual decision-making among adolescents.

This research applies Social Learning Theory to examine the way students' perceptions of premarital sex are influenced by different social sources, such as peers, mass media, and educational programs. The four central stages of SLT are highly applicable in comprehending how such perceptions are developed:

- *Attentional Phase:*

Students notice attitudes and behaviors towards premarital sex in their peer groups and through media exposure, which can influence their perceptions.

- *Retention Phase:*

Premarital sex information is retained and reinforced through educational discussions or moral development exercises.

- *Reproduction Phase:*

Students can reproduce observed behaviors, like premarital sex, based on their attitudes and peer influences (Naibaho & Kusumiati, 2024).

- *Motivation Phase:*

Social reinforcement—approval or disapproval from peers, family, or teachers—can be a determinant of students' choices about premarital sex.

While Social Learning Theory underscores social influences, it is also necessary to acknowledge the part played by individual moral values and beliefs. Students can resist peer pressure because of robust personal convictions and moral principles (Teo & Simon, 2019). This framework underscores the significance of Values Education in developing critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and moral responsibility among students. Utilizing Social Learning Theory, this research aimed to contribute meaningful insights to educators and policymakers in designing more effective programs to promote awareness, responsible decision-making, and a deeper understanding of moral values related to sexual behavior.

➤ *Significance of the Study*

The analysis of this study's results offered valuable insights into students' attitudes toward premarital sex and served as a foundation for initiating discussions on this important social issue within schools and communities. The findings contributed to a better understanding of the interplay between education, personal values, and social norms, helping to develop more effective and integrated approaches to educating young people on sexuality and morality. Specifically, the study will contribute and be beneficial to the following:

- *Students.*

Values Education students will be enriched by this research through acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to tackle intricate moral and societal problems. The research will assist in promoting responsible, ethical, and respectful conduct, guiding students to make informed choices on sexuality and relationships.

- *Parents.*

The research will give parents an understanding of how their children view premarital sex, enabling them to guide, communicate with, and assist their children more effectively. Parents can promote open communication regarding relationships, sexuality, and personal values, enabling adolescents to make responsible and informed decisions.

- *Faculty Members.*

With an understanding of students' views on premarital sex, the teaching methods can be enhanced by the faculty members, as well as clearing up sexual education and values misconceptions. It will also allow teachers to establish a

more conducive learning environment by informing students of the facts, counseling, and referral sources on sexual health and relationships. This research can also help match the curriculum with institutional values goals for values education so that students are given proper moral and ethical education.

- *Administrators of Schools.*

School administrators will be able to assess whether the existing values education curriculum adequately addresses such sensitive topics as sexual behavior, relationships, and ethics. The results can assist administrators in making informed choices regarding revising or enhancing educational programs, counseling services, and extracurricular activities for the moral and social development of students. In addition, the research can help administrators foster a safe, respectful, and value-based school community, where students are adequately equipped to make ethical life choices.

- *Curriculum Developers.*

This study will help curriculum developers assess whether the existing curriculum adequately addresses students' needs and experiences regarding sexuality and relationships. The findings can guide the integration of accurate, up-to-date information on relationships, ethics, and sexual behavior, enabling students to make informed and responsible choices. Additionally, curriculum developers can use the study's insights to identify gaps in the current curriculum and refine teaching strategies to better align with the school's values education objectives.

- *Policy Makers.*

The research will help policymakers determine if current policies regarding sexual education and values education adequately respond to the concerns of adolescents. The results can bring to light the necessity for revised guidelines on sexual education, counseling, and policy incorporation in school curricula. The research will also give policymakers insights into larger societal trends and issues, enabling them to enact evidence-based policies that provide students with proper education, guidance, and support in managing moral and social dilemmas.

- *Future Researchers.*

This research will be a useful guide for future researchers who are interested in investigating students' attitudes towards premarital sex. By offering basic information and data, this research can be used to inform further studies on adolescent sexual behavior, values education, and the effects of cultural and societal factors. Future research can build on these findings by investigating other student populations or other factors that affect adolescent decision-making.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review presents a thematic synthesis of existing literature on premarital sex in the Philippines, with emphasis on sociocultural factors, behavioral influences, consequences, and the role of values education. It also highlights research gaps addressed by the present study.

➤ *Premarital Sex in the Philippine Context*

Premarital sex remains a deeply debated issue in the Philippines, shaped by entrenched cultural and religious norms. The country's predominantly Roman Catholic population, comprising 78.8% as of the 2020 Census, reinforces abstinence and moral conservatism, while Islam, constituting 6.4% of the population, similarly prohibits sexual activity outside marriage (Catholics for a Free Choice, 2004; Hayes, 2013). These religious ideologies contribute to societal stigma, particularly affecting women, by promoting ideals of virginity and moral purity (Lacson et al., 1997; Chant, 1997). Nonetheless, recent decades have witnessed a generational shift. A 2013 University of the Philippines survey revealed that 32% of Filipino youth reported premarital sexual activity—an increase from 18% in 1994—suggesting a transformation in social norms and sexual behavior (Burki, 2017; Xenos, 1997; Habito et al., 2019).

➤ *Determinants of Premarital Sexual Behavior*

Adolescence is marked by heightened risk-taking and exploratory behaviors, making it a critical period for the emergence of sexual activity. Sensation-seeking tendencies, peer influence, and inadequate cognitive-emotional regulation have been linked to increased vulnerability to premarital sex (Shrestha, 2019; Larsen & Luna, 2018; Dallas et al., 2023; Shastan et al., 2021). Family dynamics also play a pivotal role. Adolescents from households with higher socioeconomic status and parental education tend to receive greater supervision and guidance, reducing engagement in risky behaviors (Gipson et al., 2013). Conversely, absentee parenting, particularly due to overseas employment, correlates with increased exposure to external influences. Media and urban exposure further normalize liberal sexual values, especially through internet content and peer environments in urban settings (De Jose, 2013; Chiao, 2010).

➤ *Consequences of Premarital Sexual Activity*

Premarital sex can result in significant personal and societal consequences. Adolescent pregnancy remains a critical public health and social issue, often interrupting educational trajectories and limiting economic opportunities (Habito et al., 2019). The rise in sexually transmitted infections (STIs), despite increased awareness efforts, reflects ongoing gaps in preventive behavior among Filipino youth (Gunchi et al., 2018). Beyond physical health, adolescents—particularly young women—frequently encounter psychological distress, social stigma, and disrupted familial relationships due to the moral condemnation surrounding premarital sexual conduct (Lacson et al., 1997; De Jose, 2013).

➤ *Values Education as a Preventive and Developmental Tool*

Values education is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in shaping adolescents' ethical reasoning and decision-making processes. It emphasizes self-regulation, moral development, and respect for social norms. Studies indicate that adolescents who receive consistent parental and values-based education are more likely to delay sexual initiation (Karofsky et al., 2001; UNESCO, 2018). When integrated with Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), values education enhances not only sexual health awareness but also

emotional intelligence and critical thinking (Ulusoy & Dilmaç, 2012; Santelli et al., 2006).

➤ *Effectiveness of the Values Education Program*

The effectiveness of values education has been validated across multiple educational levels. In early childhood, it contributes to psychosocial and cognitive development, including empathy, social skills, and problem-solving abilities (Akbaş & Korkmaz, 2014). At the primary level, curricula designed around universal values such as benevolence foster students' moral and behavioral competencies (Demirhan İşcan & Senemoğlu, 2009). Among university students, values education enhances ethical reasoning and moral maturity (Ulusoy & Dilmaç, 2012). Additionally, embedding values education within broader pedagogical strategies improves both academic performance and holistic student development (Lovat & Clement, 2008; UNESCO, 2018). These findings underscore the significance of values education in nurturing responsible, socially aware individuals.

➤ *Research Gap and Rationale*

While a growing body of literature addresses premarital sex among Filipino youth, there remains a limited understanding of the perspectives of college students enrolled in Values Education programs, particularly in regional contexts such as Tacloban City. Prior research often focuses on general adolescent populations or urban centers, leaving localized experiences and culturally grounded insights underexplored. This study responds to that gap by examining the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of Values Education students regarding premarital sex. In doing so, it aims to inform more context-specific, culturally responsive, and ethically grounded interventions.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Design*

This research utilized an exploratory research design to examine issues that are new, ambiguous, or little understood. This design is best suited for generating preliminary insights and creating a foundational knowledge of a problem before carrying out more detailed research. Exploratory research is often utilized when little literature exists on a subject, thus making it crucial for the identification of prominent themes, the narrowing of research questions, and the creation of a direction for subsequent studies. Exploratory research seeks to deepen one's knowledge of a somewhat unknown phenomenon through the creation of descriptive data (Cargan, 2007). As opposed to the presentation of irrefutable findings, this technique paves the way for another round of questioning. It aids researchers in forming questions, learning the factors affecting them, and familiarizing themselves with the matter in question.

This study, in particular, will discuss exploring how students of Values Education view the increasing incidence of premarital sex in the Philippines. Using the exploratory research method, researchers will have access to extensive data and understand the underlying forces shaping these attitudes. This type of research allows in-depth consideration of participants' thoughts, opinions, and feelings, providing

substantial insights into what they believe. Moreover, using this approach ensures that both the participants and the researchers become cognizant of the increasing frequency of premarital sex and its impact on society.

➤ *Research Locale*

The participants of this study were selected Values Education students under the College of Education in one of the universities in Tacloban City. The study was conducted in a university located at P. Paterno Street, Tacloban City, 6500, Philippines. A university that offered Values Education programs provided an ideal setting for the study in many ways. This university offered programs that were more engaged and specifically designed to address ethical, moral, and social issues. By offering this kind of program, it fostered an environment that was open, respectful, and supportive of thoughtful discourse, which is essential in addressing sensitive topics such as premarital sex. It was a setting that provided students with the tools and frameworks needed to delve into such topics. It also offered researchers the opportunity to explore how education could shape students' perceptions and attitudes in dealing with critical societal issues.

➤ *Participants of the Study*

The participants of this study were twelve selected Values Education students from a university in Tacloban City. This sample size enabled a rich and nuanced understanding of the discourse on premarital sex while remaining manageable for qualitative analysis. Data saturation, defined as the point where no new themes or insights emerge (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012), was considered in determining the number of participants. According to Creswell (2013), twelve participants are often sufficient to achieve saturation in exploratory qualitative research.

Inclusion criteria required that participants: (a) were enrolled in Values Education students; (b) had awareness of premarital sex; and (c) possessed basic knowledge and understanding of the topic. Exclusion criteria included: (a) lack of awareness of premarital sex; (b) unwillingness to share knowledge; (c) unavailability for interviews due to prior commitments; and (d) a history of spreading misinformation, which could compromise data reliability and skew results.

➤ *Research Instruments*

The researchers employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Semi-structured interviews, described as a "conversation with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984), combined predetermined open-ended questions with the flexibility to explore emerging themes in greater depth.

The process began with clearly defined research objectives focused on understanding the cultural, social, and personal factors influencing premarital sex in the Philippines. An interview guide was developed to encourage open discussion, with questions addressing participants' views on relationships and societal norms related to sexual behavior. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to

ensure demographic diversity in terms of age, gender, and socioeconomic background.

Ethical protocols were strictly followed, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and fostering a non-judgmental environment. Interviews were conducted in private settings, beginning with general questions and gradually moving to more sensitive topics. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes for accuracy. Data were analyzed using narrative and discourse analysis to uncover patterns and insights. Cultural sensitivity was upheld throughout by respecting participants' beliefs and avoiding intrusive questioning, ensuring both the ethical integrity and depth of the data collected.

➤ *Sampling Procedure*

This study utilized purposive sampling, a non-random technique in which participants were intentionally selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. This method was appropriate for qualitative research, as it enabled the selection of individuals capable of providing rich and meaningful insights into the topic of premarital sex.

Participants were chosen according to predefined criteria aligned with the study's aims, such as age, cultural background, and socioeconomic status (Andrade, 2020). This targeted approach allowed the researchers to gather focused data efficiently while ensuring that participants possessed relevant knowledge or experiences. Given the sensitivity of the topic, purposive sampling also ensured that only individuals willing and able to discuss premarital sex were included, fostering open and informed discussions.

Overall, this sampling strategy aligned with the study's goal of exploring the prevalence and perceptions of premarital sex within the Philippine context, enhancing both the depth and reliability of the data collected.

➤ *Data Gathering Procedure*

This study aimed to gather data on premarital sex through face-to-face, individual interviews conducted in Tacloban City. Prior to data collection, the researchers prepared and distributed communication letters to potential participants. These letters introduced the study, explained its purpose, and outlined its objectives. Participants were provided with consent letters and forms detailing the study's scope, significance, their roles, and the request for permission to participate and be audio-recorded.

Consent forms included sections for participants to indicate agreement or refusal and to sign accordingly. Interviews were scheduled based on participant availability and conducted either within the school or in a location of their choice to ensure comfort and convenience. Participants were informed that interviews would be audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. A semi-structured interview format was used, guided by a set of open-ended questions. Researchers, acting as interviewers, asked follow-up questions when necessary to explore emerging themes. Participants retained the right to skip any questions they

found uncomfortable. Interviews were conducted privately, with only the researchers present unless the participant requested otherwise.

This method allowed for a thorough and nuanced understanding of premarital sex in the Philippine context, ensuring the collection of credible, in-depth, and reliable qualitative data.

➤ *Ethical Considerations*

Recognizing the sensitivity of the topic, the researchers implemented a comprehensive set of ethical measures to safeguard participants' identity, rights, and well-being throughout the study.

• *Informed Consent:*

Participants were provided with a formal letter of consent and a consent form approved by the research adviser. These documents outlined the study's purpose, procedures, and participant rights. Participation was voluntary, and individuals retained the right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

• *Respect for Autonomy:*

The researchers ensured participants were approached with respect and fully informed about the study, their rights, the anonymization process, and data protection measures. No coercion or manipulation was used, and participants were free to make independent decisions regarding their involvement.

• *Risk Management:*

As the study involved discussing sensitive issues related to premarital sex, participants were informed of potential emotional discomfort. They were encouraged to skip any questions they found distressing or to withdraw at any point. This approach minimized psychological risks and respected individual boundaries.

• *Beneficence and Non-Maleficence:*

The researchers prioritized minimizing harm and maximizing benefits. Participants' names were anonymized (e.g., "Participant 1") to protect their identity. Language used in all study materials was carefully reviewed to maintain respect and dignity. While no financial compensation was offered, participants received tokens of appreciation for their time and contribution.

• *Use of Deception:*

No deception was employed. All data collected were used solely for research purposes and kept strictly confidential.

• *Conflict of Interest (COI):*

Any potential conflicts of interest were disclosed to maintain transparency and protect research integrity. Rapport and trust were established through respectful engagement and assurance of confidentiality.

• *Data Integrity:*

The researchers committed to honest and accurate data reporting. No data manipulation occurred, and all analyses

were conducted with methodological rigor to ensure reliable findings.

- *Intellectual Property:*

Proper citation and acknowledgment of all referenced works were observed, upholding academic integrity. Any dissemination of findings adhered to ethical publishing practices.

- *Cultural Sensitivity:*

Cultural beliefs, values, and backgrounds of all participants, including those from minority groups, were respected. The study was conducted in a culturally appropriate and inclusive manner.

- *Ongoing Monitoring:*

The research process was continuously monitored to identify and address any emerging ethical concerns, ensuring the protection and well-being of all participants.

- *Research Dissemination:*

Findings were prepared for dissemination through reputable academic journals in fields such as child development, public health, and internet safety. Dissemination efforts aimed to ensure accessibility, accuracy, and responsible communication of results to both scholarly audiences and the general public.

➤ *Data Analysis*

Upon completion of data collection, the researchers conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis using narrative analysis and discourse analysis to explore participants' experiences and the socio-cultural meanings attached to premarital sex.

Narrative analysis was employed to examine how participants structured and conveyed their personal stories, emphasizing the thematic, structural, and contextual

dimensions of their narratives (Sandberg, 2022; James, 2023). This approach enabled the identification of recurring themes, such as motivations for engaging in premarital sex, emotional responses, familial and religious influences, and social pressures. As used in prior studies in fields such as education and criminology, narrative analysis provided insight into how individuals interpret and make sense of their lived experiences (Cowger & Tritz, 2019; Sandberg, 2022).

Discourse analysis was used to investigate the broader linguistic and cultural frameworks shaping discussions of premarital sex. This method explored how language reflected and reproduced social norms, moral judgments, and power relations, particularly in distinguishing between premarital sex as a moral issue versus a modern, autonomous choice (Ostermann & Sjöstedt, 2022). Discourse was understood as more than language—it was treated as a social practice through which meaning is constructed, identities are negotiated, and cultural values are communicated.

By integrating both analytical approaches, the study uncovered the dynamic interplay between personal narratives and prevailing societal discourses. This dual-method strategy provided a nuanced understanding of how cultural, religious, and social constructs influence individual attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions regarding premarital sex in the Philippine context.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study through narrative analysis and discourse analysis. The data were collected from twelve participants who are students enrolled in Values Education. Their narratives provide insights into their understanding, influencing factors, strategies, and suggestions regarding premarital sex and sex education.

➤ *Definitions and Perspectives on Premarital Sex*

Table 1 Definitions of Premarital Sex by Participants

Participant	Definition
P1	Sexual activity outside God's covenant of marriage
P2	Sexual contact before marriage, influenced by beliefs
P3	Acceptable if done safely
P5	A healthy and meaningful choice when consensual and respectful
P8	A personal choice carrying emotional, physical, and moral responsibilities

The participants' views on premarital sex demonstrate a division of moral frameworks, generally corresponding with two prevailing paradigms: religious-moral absolutism and personal ethical relativism. Participants like P1 and P2 viewed premarital sex through a theological and culturally rooted perspective, labeling it as a breach of divine law or established moral standards. P1's reference to "God's covenant" embodies a biblically based viewpoint that sees sexual relations as holy solely within marriage, aligning with Regnerus (2007), who describes sexual moralism—a paradigm where religious identity acts as a determinant for sexual conduct. P2 supported this perspective, while also recognizing that moral evaluations are influenced by wider cultural and social dynamics, echoing Yip's (2005) assertion

that sexual ethics in religious youth arise where spiritual teachings meet societal norms.

In contrast, P3, P5, and P8 expressed an autonomy-centered, liberal ethical framework, viewing premarital sex as a valid and responsible personal decision when based on informed consent, emotional maturity, and mutual respect. P3's focus on safety corresponds with public health discussions that value harm reduction and sexual health more than moral judgment (Fine & McClelland, 2006). At the same time, P5 and P8 highlighted the emotional and ethical.

Obligations associated with intimacy, aligning with Lamb's (2001) concept of moral sexual subjectivity, where young people take into account not just physical safety but

also ethical relationships and internalized beliefs when making sexual choices.

The terminology utilized by participants—words like “sin,” “covenant,” and “immoral” contrasted with “consensual,” “responsible,” and “emotional readiness”—reveals the simultaneous presence of conservative and progressive beliefs in modern youth sexual ethics. This discursive duality, as indicated by Giddens (1992), illustrates the state of reflexive modernity, in which people must manage conflicting moral languages in developing intimate

relationships. The results indicate that teenagers' perceptions of premarital sex are not uniform but are instead dynamic, negotiated, and varied, influenced by the interaction of religious beliefs, cultural background, peer pressure, and self-reflection (Tolman & McClelland, 2011). Instead of embracing rigid ideological positions, young people seem to create blended ethical systems that mirror the moral intricacies of sexuality in a globally interconnected, value-diverse community.

➤ *Factors Perceived to Cause the Rise in Premarital Sex*

Table 2 Common Factors Identified

Factor	Participants Referencing It
Peer pressure	P3, P9
Media/Social Media Influence	P1, P2, P3, P5, P8
Family Upbringing	P2, P4, P5, P6, P9
Lack of Guidance	P6, P8
Personal Curiosity	P8

The participants consistently identified external and social influences as significant factors shaping attitudes toward sex. Many cited media and social platforms as key drivers in promoting liberal views on sex, often depicting it as routine or glamorous. Peer influence was also highlighted as a catalyst for experimentation, while families were seen as playing a crucial role in either protecting or enabling individuals, depending on the quality of communication. The participants' language reveals a critical perspective on modern media, with terms like “normalize,” “glamorize,” and “expose” suggesting concerns about its impact.

Participants linked the rise in premarital sex to a complicated mix of external social, cultural, and interpersonal factors, showcasing a nuanced grasp of how broader systems influence personal conduct. The frequently referenced primary reason was the effect of media and social media platforms (P1, P2, P3, P5, P8), which participants argued results in the normalization and trivialization of premarital sex by portraying it as typical, appealing, and emotionally unimportant. This perspective aligns with Vandebosch and Eggermont's (2012) research, which indicates that repeated exposure to sexually suggestive media encourages permissive behavior by reinforcing sexual scripts that separate intimacy from long-term commitment or ethical considerations. Similarly, Brown and L'Engle (2009) highlight the role of entertainment media in shaping adolescents' sexual expectations concerning intercourse, often hastening the onset of sexual activity by endorsing unrealistic ideals. Peer pressure was noted as a significant factor (P3, P9), reinforcing Prinstein and Dodge's (2008) argument that peers significantly influence adolescents' risk-taking behaviors through both direct coercion and subtle social modeling. Pressure to conform to peer standards, especially in increasingly lenient youth cultures, can slowly

erode personal limits, particularly when there is a lack of encouraging adult supervision. Likewise, several participants pointed out family backgrounds (P2, P4, P5, P6, P9) as either a risk or protective influence, contingent on effective communication, parental examples, and the transmission of values.

This aligns with Miller's (2002) research, which emphasizes that effective communication between parents and children about sex serves as a protective factor that reduces risky sexual behavior and postpones initial sexual experiences. In contrast, lack of direction (P6, P8) and personal curiosity (P8) were identified as internal or developmental risks exacerbated by institutional silence, cultural restrictions, and ineffective sexuality education (Kirby, 2007; UNESCO, 2018). Terms selected by participants, “normalize,” “glamorize,” and “expose”, reveal a critical perspective on contemporary media and cultural dynamics, suggesting that young people are not mere recipients of influence but engaged interpreters navigating conflicting messages. The examination of discourse uncovers the conflict between traditional moral frameworks and contemporary liberal ones, illustrating what Arnett (2004) refers to as bicultural navigation, in which adolescents endeavor to reconcile inherited principles with global secular beliefs. The challenge in understanding highlights the interplay of social dialogue, family dynamics, and friendships, all contributing to the development of sexual choices. Ultimately, the findings indicate that premarital sex is not merely a matter of personal decision but is instead a socially ingrained occurrence, influenced by interconnected factors such as media consumption, social relationships, cultural values, and deficiencies in youth development policies.

➤ *Strategies to Address the Problem of Premarital Sex*

Table 3 Proposed Strategies

Strategy	Examples or Justification
Conducting symposiums/forums	Promotes awareness and open dialogue (P1, P3)
Integration of spiritual values	Emphasized by religious participants (P1, P6)
Strengthening values education	Moral guidance and decision-making (P2, P5, P8)
Peer support systems	Empowers students to make informed choices (P7, P8)
Comprehensive sex education	Covers consent, emotional readiness (P2, P5, P8)

The participants outlined a multi-faceted array of strategies to address the issue of premarital sex, reflecting a holistic perspective that combines moral growth, peer assistance, and suitable education for their age. The suggested strategies demonstrate an understanding that the sexual choices of adolescents stem from a combination of ethical reasoning, social influence, and cognitive growth. For instance, P1 and P3 recommended open symposia and official forums to create secure spaces for exploration and reflection. Allen (2005) supports the idea that participatory spaces are essential for cultivating critical sexual literacy, enabling young individuals to move from silence and stigma to informed agency. Supporting this, P1 and P6 emphasized the integration of spiritual values, a religious teaching approach designed to anchor sexual ethics in theological principles. Regnerus (2007) emphasizes that religious frameworks can influence adolescents' views on sexuality, especially when presented respectfully rather than through coercion (King & Boyatzis, 2004). Moreover, P2, P5, and P8 emphasized the need for values education to be strengthened, which is consistent with Kohlberg's (1981) moral development theory, highlighting that moral decision-making comes not only from adhering to rules but from internalized moral reasoning. The implementation of peer support systems (P7, P8) was also recognized as an essential resource in promoting shared guidance and accountability. According to Ryan (2000) and Bell (2005), peer-led programs are

particularly effective in reinforcing positive behavior standards and fostering identity growth through communal experiences.

Participants advocated for comprehensive sex education (CSE) (P2, P5, P8) that includes not only biological aspects but also consent, emotional development, personal boundaries, and ethical relationship principles. Kirby (2007) and UNESCO (2018) affirm that effectively structured CSE programs significantly influence the reduction of sexual risk behavior and enhancement of sexual health outcomes by equipping students with both knowledge and socio-emotional skills. The language used by participants—including terms like "awareness," "open discussion," "responsible decisions," and "maturity"—suggests an educational approach oriented toward both spiritual contemplation and practical understanding. The blending of religious and secular rhetoric reflected the shift toward pluralistic education, where moral, cultural, and scientific viewpoints coexist within a unified curriculum. Habermas (2006) contends that education in pluralist societies must address multiple worldviews without prioritizing any single ideological standpoint. Participants' recommendations reflect this ethos, advocating for a comprehensive, inclusive, and context-aware approach that acknowledges the complex moral landscape of adolescent sexuality and promotes thoughtful, value-driven choices.

➤ *Suggested Teaching Materials for Sex Education Implementation*

Table 4 Recommended Materials

Material	Reason for Recommendation
Digital media (videos, forums)	Engages tech-savvy learners (P3, P5, P6)
Biblical or spiritual texts	Appeals to faith-oriented students (P1, P6)
Case studies/scenarios	Encourages reflection and discussion (P7, P9)
Infographics and posters	Simplifies complex ideas (P4, P8)
Guest speakers/Peer educators	Builds connection and trust (P3, P8)

Participants stressed the importance of creating educational content that is relevant, relatable, and interactive. Many favored the use of multimedia tools that reflect real-world scenarios, acknowledging the diversity of learners' backgrounds and experiences. This approach indicates a recognition of the need for inclusive and adaptable educational materials. By incorporating both faith-based resources and contemporary digital content, educators can cater to the diverse needs of students.

The language used by participants to describe these materials reveals an emphasis on accessibility and emotional resonance. Terms such as "engage," "reflect," "connect," and "simplify" highlight the importance of creating content that

resonates with students on a personal level. This learner-centered approach prioritizes empathy and comprehension over doctrinal instruction, allowing students to develop a deeper understanding of the topic.

The study's findings indicate that Values Education students hold diverse yet insightful views on premarital sex, shaped by factors such as religion, culture, and personal experiences. While some students adopt a traditional stance, others take a more pragmatic approach, reflecting the complexity of this issue. The influence of media, family, and peers plays a significant role in shaping students' behavior and attitudes toward premarital sex.

Ultimately, students advocate for comprehensive, values-driven sex education that is supported by engaging and relatable materials. To effectively address this sensitive issue, educators must employ a balanced strategy that respects moral frameworks while equipping learners with the knowledge and skills to make informed choices. By acknowledging the diversity of students' experiences and perspectives, educators can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters healthy decision-making and personal growth.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Premarital sex remains a delicate and multidimensional issue among Filipino youth, especially within the context of Values Education. This research explored how students interpret, respond to, and engage with this subject. It revealed a rich and multifaceted understanding shaped by a convergence of personal, cultural, moral, and educational influences. Their voices offer not only a mirror to prevailing societal influences but also a window into the personal conflicts and cultural transitions they navigate daily. Values Education students' definitions of premarital sex reveal more than just academic understanding. They reflect deep-seated values, religious beliefs, and evolving personal ideologies. Some participants strictly define it through a moral or spiritual lens, echoing teachings from the home and church. Others choose a more liberal viewpoint, expressing that premarital sex, when grounded in love, respect, and consent, can be part of a healthy relationship. These contrasting interpretations highlight a tension between inherited values and contemporary realities, a kind of moral crossroads where tradition meets autonomy.

Cultural forces emerged as powerful shapers of perception. Media and social media play a significant role in normalizing sexual behavior, often portraying it as casual, consequence-free, and emotionally detached. Exposure to such content, coupled with peer influence and a lack of open family dialogue, creates an environment where Values Education students feel confused, pressured, or unprepared. Interestingly, many of them see themselves as more reactors than initiators, caught in an internal struggle for agency amidst powerful external forces. Despite this struggle, these students are not without vision. They express a strong preference for proactive, compassionate, and education-driven approaches to address premarital sex. Open discussions, whether in the classroom, at home, or among peers, are viewed as essential. Many called for non-judgmental spaces where questions can be asked, and concerns can be shared. Instead of fear-based teaching, values education students want guidance that informs and empowers. The language they use, "safe space," "understanding," "respect," signals a generational shift toward a more dialogic and human-centered model of Values Education.

Regarding instructional content, Values Education students advocated for the integration of comprehensive sex education (CSE) that includes topics such as sexually transmitted infections, contraceptive methods, consent, and emotional preparedness. They also suggest the use of

multimedia tools, real-life case studies, and digital platforms that align with their daily experiences and learning styles. This need for updated educational resources does not imply a rejection of moral education. Rather, these students envision a balanced curriculum, one that respects traditional values while acknowledging the psychological and emotional dimensions of sexual decision-making.

The overarching message from this study is clear: students want to be heard, not just taught. Their perceptions of premarital sex are not static; they are shaped by lived experience, internal reflection, and external pressures. The findings of this study suggest that Values Education students are navigating a complex intersection of tradition and modernity. While they continue to be influenced by moral and religious values, they also exhibit a strong preference for education that is inclusive, informed, and empathetic. A reimagined Values Education must rise to meet this call. The importance of reimagining Values Education is not merely as a vehicle for moral instruction but as a comprehensive platform for personal development. In doing so, educators can empower students to make ethical and informed choices about sexuality and relationships, grounded in both knowledge and values. Such an approach respects the integrity of tradition while making room for dialogue, development, and self-discovery.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and results of this study, here are the following recommendations:

➤ *To the Department of Education:*

- Integrate Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) into the Values Education curriculum. This integration should include not only biological and health-related content (e.g., STIs, contraception, consent) but also psychological, emotional, and ethical dimensions of sexual decision-making.
- Promote teacher training programs that focus on delivering sex education through a humanistic, respectful, and non-judgmental approach. Teachers should be equipped to handle sensitive topics with empathy and professionalism.
- Develop age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and inclusive instructional materials that balance traditional Filipino values with contemporary issues faced by the youth.
- Encourage family-school collaboration in shaping young people's understanding of sexuality, with initiatives that help parents and guardians engage in open, values-based conversations at home.

➤ *To the Teachers:*

- Create safe, inclusive, and judgment-free classroom environments where students feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics related to sexuality and relationships.
- Incorporate multimedia tools, real-life scenarios, and digital content that reflect the lived experiences of today's youth and resonate with their ways of learning.

- Foster dialogic teaching methods where students can explore differing viewpoints and engage in reflective thinking, rather than relying solely on didactic moral instruction.
- Respect students' diverse perspectives and acknowledge the evolving nature of their values and beliefs without compromising core educational objectives.

➤ To the Future Researchers

- Explore the long-term impact of Values Education interventions on students' sexual decision-making and personal development.
- Investigate parent-student communication dynamics on topics of sexuality to better understand intergenerational influences and gaps.
- Expand research across diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts in the Philippines to capture broader patterns of youth perceptions and values.
- Examine the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies or content delivery models (e.g., digital storytelling, peer education, role-playing) in promoting informed, ethical decision-making among students.

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Created as a helpful teaching material, our pamphlet empowers youth with facts, values, and informed choices — supporting the better implementation of sex education and promoting responsible decision-making among adolescents.

**Know the facts.
Own your choices.
Protect your future.**

Sex education provides essential knowledge that promotes healthy relationships and informed choices about sexual health and well-being among adolescents.

More Information

Perceptions of Values Education Students on Premarital Sex

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Leyte Normal University
Tacloban City

Perceptions of Values Education Students on Premarital Sex
Based from the study



**Understanding
Premarital Sex:
Sex Education for
Young People**

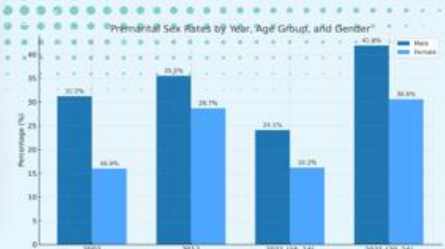
What Is Premarital Sex?

Premarital sex is defined as consensual sexual activity between individuals not married to each other.

Perspectives vary:

- some view it as a moral or religious issue; others see it as a personal choice based on consent, love, and responsibility.

Key Statistics (Philippines)



Year	Age Group	Male (%)	Female (%)
2000	15-24	20.2%	16.9%
2013	15-24	25.3%	19.1%
2015 (15-24)	15-24	22.1%	17.2%
2021 (15-24)	15-24	27.8%	20.4%

The Role of Values and Sex Education

- Values Education develops ethical thinking and responsible behavior.
- Sex education equips young people with accurate knowledge, promotes responsible decision-making, and fosters moral values.
- Sex education must cover:
 - Consent
 - Contraceptives
 - Emotional readiness
 - STIs and safe sex


Why It Matters

Premarital sex is becoming increasingly common among Filipino youth.

- Influences include social media, peer pressure, family dynamics, lack of guidance, and poverty.
- Without proper education, it can lead to teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, emotional distress, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

What Influences Youth?

- **Media & Social Media** normalize and glamorize sex.
- **Peers** may pressure others to conform.
- **Religion and cultural values** strongly shape beliefs.
- **Curiosity and hormonal changes** during adolescence contribute.
- **Lack of open family discussions** results in misinformation.



What Students Recommend:

- Conduct symposiums and open forums on sexuality.
- Integrate spiritual and moral values with facts.
- Strengthen school-based values education and peer support systems.
- Use modern teaching tools:
 - Videos, infographics, and case studies
 - Guest speakers and digital platforms
 - Faith-based resources (for religious learners)

Sources: Crockett et al. (2006), Dallas et al. (2023), Setyoningrum & Lijanovitasari (2021), Gipson et al. (2013), Shrestha (2019), Larsen & Luna (2018)