

# EXPERIENCE IN PREMARITAL SEXUAL INTERCOURSE AMONG UNMARRIED YOUTH IN INDONESIA: AN ANALYSIS OF INDONESIA DEMOGRAPHY AND HEALTH SURVEY (IDHS) 2012

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## ABSTRACT:

**Background:** According to the 2010 Indonesia Population Census, 26.7% of Indonesia's population is aged 10 to 24 years; this means that the country has around 64 million youth. The large number in this age group clearly requires serious attention and treatment of all sectors responding to youth's issues. When young people have little information and knowledge about reproductive health and sexuality, they may not be able to protect themselves from risky behavior. The negative impact upon youth resulting from premarital sexual intercourse may include unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortions that endanger the lives of youth themselves.

**Methods:** This study employed secondary data from the Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey (IDHS) 2012. A total of 10,861 unmarried men and 8,816 unmarried women aged 15 to 24 years old were selected for analysis.

**Results:** Premarital sexual intercourse is found to be more common among unmarried males (12.4%) compared to unmarried females (1.9%) in Indonesia. Age, attitude toward women's virginity, risky behavior, and having friends that have had sex before marriage are strongest predictors of premarital sexual intercourse among both unmarried males and unmarried females in Indonesia. Education and place of residence, sexuality and reproductive health knowledge, and discussing about sexual matters with friends are also strong predictors of premarital sexual intercourse among unmarried males but not among unmarried females in Indonesia.

**Conclusions:** The study indicates premarital sexual intercourse committed by unmarried youth in Indonesia is affected by personal and environmental factors. The findings also suggest that sexuality and reproductive health education should be provided formally in schools and universities, with more programs focused on university students due to the finding that more older youth (20-24 years) committed premarital sexual intercourse. In addition, family willingness to create open communication is another point that should be taken into account by involving parents and family members to be exposed with Sexuality and Reproductive Health (SRH) information. Therefore, adequate life skill education for youth and family is strongly recommended.

**Keywords:** Premarital sexual intercourse, Sexuality and reproductive health, Youth, Indonesia

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## INTRODUCTION

According to 2010 Indonesia Population Census, there are about 26.7 per cent of the population aged 10 to 24 years, or around 64 million people of 237.6 million population are youth [1].

Youth knowledge about SRH in Indonesia is

becoming an interesting issue. The proportion of women who think that HIV can be prevented by limiting sexual intercourse to one partner has increased considerably from 55 percent in 2007 to 66 percent in 2012 [2]. The trend of premarital sexual intercourse of unmarried youth in Indonesia is increasing [3]. About 3.7 per cent males in age group 15-19 in 2007 reported that they were engaged in premarital sex which increased to be

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**Table 1** Summary of operational definition and measurement of variables

Variable	Operational definition	Categories	Measurement scale
<i>Dependent variable</i>			
Premarital Sexual Intercourse	Respondent ever had premarital sexual intercourse	0 = No 1 = Yes	Nominal
<i>Independent variable</i>			
Age	Respondent's age	15 - 19 20 - 24	Ordinal
Place of Residence	Geographical area where the respondent lives at the time of the survey in 2012	0 = Rural 1 = Urban	Nominal
Education	Respondence highest education	0 = Less than Primary 1 = Completed Primary 2 = Some Secondary 3 = Completed Secondary / Higher	Ordinal
Knowledge about Sexuality and Reproductive Health	The respondents score on 33 questions of SRH knowledge.	Low = $\bar{x} - 1SD$ Middle = $-SD1 \leq \bar{x} \leq 1SD$ High = $\geq \bar{x} + 1SD$	Ordinal
Attitude toward maintaining women's virginity before married	Agreement about whether should maintain virginity until married or not	0 = Disagree 1 = Agree	Nominal
Opinion about Men still value women's virginity generally	Agreement about whether men still value women's virginity or not	0 = Disagree 1 = Agree	Nominal
Smoking & Drinking Behavior	Respondent's behavior on smoking together with drinking alcohol	0 = Not Smoke & Not Drink 1 = Smoke and Drink 2 = Smoke but Not Drink	Nominal
Drug use	Respondent's behavior on drug using	0 = Never 1 = Ever	Nominal
Discuss about sexual matters with friend	Respondents have discussed about sexual matters with friends	0 = No 1 = Yes	Nominal
Friends Have had sex before marriage	Respondents have friends that had sex before marriage	0 = No 1 = Yes	Nominal

7.2 percent in 2012, while females in the same age group showed the same percentage (1.3 %) for both 2007 and 2012 surveys. In addition, there were 10.5 % (2007) males in age group 20-24 reported that they were engaged in premarital sex which had been increased to 20.93 % in 2012, while females in the same age group also showed the inclining of proportion from 1.4 % in 2007 to 3.43 % in 2012.

The early marriage is still a common practice in Indonesia. The Population Reference Bureau reported that 4 per cent of women ages 20 to 24 years old were married by age 15 and 22 per cent married by age 18 in Indonesia [4]. In addition, Adolescent Fertility Rate (births per 1000 women ages 15 to 19) is 42 for Indonesia which poses in the third highest rank after Timor Leste (51) and Philippines (46) among 11 South East Asia countries [4]. In 2011 the HIV/AIDS prevalence among adolescent aged 15 to 24 is 0.2 percent for men and women. This fact is commonly found in rural areas, where female adolescents are married

young and conditioned to start having children immediately [5].

Another consequence is about committing an unsaved abortion as a result of premarital pregnancy. Abortion is prohibited in Indonesia. According to Indonesia Law no. 36 of Health 2009 of article 75 paragraph 1 that abortion is only allowed under some conditions such as emergency medical indications detected as threatening the lives of mother and / or fetus; or pregnancies resulting from rape that can cause psychological trauma for rape victims [6].

The ultimate objective of the study is to help policy maker to design strategies and programs related to youth and sex education in Indonesia. Whilst, the specific objectives comprise four points on unmarried youth in Indonesia which are to investigate the relationship between knowledge about sexuality and reproductive health and premarital sexual intercourse, to investigate the relationship between attitude toward woman's virginity and premarital sexual intercourse, to

**Table 2** General characteristic of the respondents

Characteristics	Men (%)	Women (%)
<b>Age</b>		
15-19	61.6	69.8
20-24	38.4	30.2
<i>Male : Mean = 18.7 years</i>		
<i>Female : Mean = 18.2 years</i>		
<b>Place of residence</b>		
Rural	45.9	40.4
Urban	54.1	59.6
<b>Education</b>		
Less than primary	5.736	3.1
Completed primary	7.587	4.7
Some secondary	48.83	47.4
Completed secondary/higher	37.85	44.8
<b>SRH knowledge</b>		
Low	17.7	17.1
Middle	65.9	68.3
High	16.4	14.6
<b>Attitude toward maintaining women's virginity until marriage</b>		
Agree	97.7	98.7
Disagree	2.3	1.3
<b>Men still value their partner's virginity generally</b>		
Agree	87.9	75.2
Disagree	12.1	24.8
<b>Smoking and drinking alcohol</b>		
Smoke and drink	40.1	2.6
Smoke but not drink	41.5	13.1
Not smoke and not drink	18.4	84.3
<b>Using drugs</b>		
Ever	4.3	0.3
Never	95.7	99.7
<b>Discuss about sexual matters with friends</b>		
Yes	56.4	58.8
No	43.6	41.2
<b>Friends have had sex before marriage</b>		
Yes	59.8	53.8
No	40.2	46.2
<b>Premarital Sexual Intercourse</b>		
Yes	12.4	1.9
No	87.6	98.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

investigate the relationship between risky behavior and practice of premarital sexual intercourse and to investigate the relationship between peer influences and premarital sexual intercourse.

## METHOD

The secondary data from quantitative research of Indonesia Demography and Health Survey (IDHS) 2012 is used for this study. This was carried out by Indonesia Statistic Bureau (BPS), National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN),

Ministry of Health of Indonesia, MEASURE DHS and ICF International. The 2012 IDHS sample intended for providing the reliable estimation of key characteristics for female aged 15 to 49, currently-married male aged 15 to 54 and never-married male aged 15 to 24 in Indonesia as a whole, in urban and rural areas, and in each of the 33 provinces included in the survey [2].

The subgroup for this study selects never-married females and males aged 15 to 24 whom living both in urban and rural areas. Therefore, there were 10,861 males and 8,816 females as respondents selected for the analysis.

Table 1 shows the summary of operational definition and measurement of the variables used in this study. The data was analyzed using the licensed software of STATA version 12 owned by Mahidol University. This study has official approval of Board of IRB committee of Institute for Population and Social Research Mahidol University coded as COA No. 2014/1-1-30.

## RESULTS

The sample size of this study is 19,677 youth which comprises of 10,861 unmarried male youth and 8,816 unmarried female youth.

In Table 2, it can be seen that three-fifths of the unmarried males and almost 70% of the unmarried females are in the 15-19 years group of age. In terms of place of residence and highest education level, more than half of both unmarried males and females are youth who stay in urban area and more than 45% with some secondary education. Around 65.9% of males and 68.3% of females have middle level of knowledge about sexuality and reproductive health. 98% of both unmarried male and unmarried females agree that women should maintain virginity until marriage. It also shows that most unmarried males and unmarried females agree that men still value their partner's virginity generally (87.9% and 75.2% respectively). There was similar percentage of unmarried male who smoke also drink and who smoke but not drink (40.1% and 41.5%). Whilst, most of unmarried female reported not smoke and not drink (84.3%). It is also shown that more than 95% of both unmarried male and female reported never used drug. It shows that more than half of unmarried youth discuss about sexual matters with friends and more than half of unmarried youth are having friends who have had sex before marriage as well. Unmarried male who practiced premarital sexual intercourse stands at 12.4% out of 10,861 respondents while unmarried female who practiced it stands at 1.9% out of 8,816 respondents.

**Table 3** Binary Logistic Regression: Odds ratios of premarital sexual intercourse among unmarried male youth in Indonesia, 2012

All factors	Premarital sexual intercourse			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	(Personal factors)		(Personal & environment factors)	
	Odds ratio		Odds ratio	
<b>Age group (ref= 15-19)</b>				
20-29	1.16	***	1.16	***
<b>Education &amp; place of residence (ref= rural - less than primary)</b>				
Urban - less primary	0.94		0.73	
Rural - completed primary	0.77		0.67	
Urban - completed primary	0.62		0.51	*
Rural - some secondary	0.62	*	0.53	**
Urban - some secondary	0.50	***	0.39	***
Rural - completed sec / higher	0.84		0.64	*
Urban - completed sec / higher	0.67	*	0.49	***
<b>SRH Knowledge (ref=Low)</b>				
Middle	2.29	***	1.42	**
High	2.77	***	1.46	*
<b>Attitude toward maintaining women virginity before married (ref = disagree)</b>				
Agree	0.20	***	0.20	***
<b>Opinion about men still value women's virginity generally (ref = disagree)</b>				
Agree	0.71	***	0.77	*
<b>Smoking &amp; drinking behavior (ref = not smoke &amp; not drink)</b>				
Smoke and drink	10.12	***	7.00	***
Smoke but not drink	1.82	**	1.55	*
<b>Drug use (ref = never)</b>				
Ever	2.86	***	2.51	***
<b>Discuss about sexual matters with friend (ref = no)</b>				
Yes	-		1.25	**
<b>Friends have had sex before marriage (ref = no)</b>				
Yes	-		5.73	***
<b>LR Chi-square</b>	1671.11		1997.08	
<b>Pseudo R-square</b>	0.2052		0.2453	
<b>N</b>	10,861		10,861	

\*p<.05 , \*\*p<.01 , \*\*\*p<.001

### Binary logistic analysis

Binary logistic regression is applied to analyze this study since it has dichotomous dependent variable. The purpose of the analysis is to measure the effect of certain independent variable which include personal and environment factors. In this analysis, variable education and variable place of residence are compiled become a single variable due to the multicollinearity which showed that two variables are very highly correlated each others. Model 1 presents the effect of personal factors on premarital sexual intercourse and Model 2 emphasizes on the effect of peer influences as environmental factors on premarital sexual intercourse among unmarried youth in Indonesia.

### Binary logistic analysis for unmarried male youth

Table 3 shows the results of the two models for unmarried male youth. According to Model 1, all personal factors are statistically significant related

to Premarital Sexual Intercourse. The odds ratio shows that unmarried male who age 20-29 years were 1.16 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who age 15-19 years. Regarding education and place of residence, having some secondary education with either reside in urban or rural area was positively related to premarital sexual intercourse. For SRH knowledge, the higher level of SRH knowledge (middle to high), the more likely for unmarried male to have premarital sexual intercourse (2.29 to 2.77 times, respectively) compared with those with low level of knowledge. For attitude toward women's virginity, unmarried male who agree that women should maintain virginity before marriage were 80% less likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than who disagree. In addition, unmarried male who agree that men still value women's virginity were 29% less likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who disagree.

**Table 4** Binary Logistic Regression: Odds ratios of premarital sexual intercourse among unmarried female youth in Indonesia, 2012

All Factors	Premarital sexual intercourse			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	(Personal factors)		(Personal & environment factors)	
	Odds ratio		Odds ratio	
<b>Age group (ref= 15-19)</b>				
20-29	1.17	***	1.19	***
<b>Education &amp; place of residence (ref= rural - less than primary)</b>				
Urban - less primary	0.58		0.53	
Rural - completed primary	1.05		1.14	
Urban - completed primary	1.06		0.86	
Rural - some secondary	0.58		0.58	
Urban - some secondary	0.48		0.46	
Rural - completed sec / higher	0.62		0.57	
Urban - completed sec / higher	0.59		0.52	
<b>SRH knowledge (ref=Low)</b>				
Middle	0.91		0.74	
High	0.69		0.56	
<b>Attitude toward maintaining women virginity before married (ref= disagree)</b>				
Agree	0.16	***	0.14	***
<b>Opinion about men still value women's virginity generally (ref= disagree)</b>				
Agree	0.44	***	0.47	***
<b>Smoking &amp; drinking behavior (ref=not smoke &amp; not drink)</b>				
Smoke and drink	10.93	***	8.74	***
Smoke but not drink	3.75	***	3.26	***
<b>Drug use (ref= never)</b>				
Ever	3.96	*	3.21	*
<b>Discuss about sexual matters with friend (ref = no)</b>				
Yes	-		0.73	
<b>Friends have had sex before marriage (ref= no)</b>				
Yes	-		3.31	***
<b>LR Chi-square</b>	248.97		284.18	
<b>Pseudo R-square</b>	0.1483		0.1692	
<b>N</b>	8,816		8,816	

In terms of risky behavior, unmarried male who smoke also drink were 10.12 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who do not smoke and do not drink, while unmarried male who smoke but not drink were 1.82 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who do not smoke and do not drink alcohol. Moreover, unmarried male who used drugs were 2.86 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who never used drugs.

For the second model, peer influences as environmental factors were added in order to examine their net effect on premarital sexual intercourse, controlling for personal factors. The results revealed that discussing about sexual matters with friends and having friends who had sex before marriage were statistically significantly associated with premarital sexual intercourse at 0.01 and 0.001 respectively. It is evident that unmarried male youth who discussed about sexual matters with friends were 1.25 times more likely to have premarital

sexual intercourse than those who do not. Moreover, unmarried male who have friends that had sex before marriage are 5.73 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who do not have friends that had sex before marriage. It can be seen clearly that all personal and environmental factors are predictors for premarital sexual intercourse among unmarried male in Indonesia.

#### Binary logistic analysis for unmarried female youth

Table 4 shows the results of the two models for unmarried female youth. According to Model 1, age, attitude toward maintaining women's virginity before marriage, opinion about men still value women's virginity, smoking & drinking behavior, and drug use are statistically significant related to premarital sexual intercourse. The odds ratio shows that unmarried female who age 20-29 years were 1.17 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who age 15-19 years. For attitude toward women's virginity, unmarried female who agree that women should maintain

virginity before marriage were 84% less likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than who disagree. In addition, unmarried female who agree that men still value women's virginity were 66% less likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who disagree. In terms of risky behavior, unmarried female who smoke also drink were almost 11 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who do not smoke and do not drink, while unmarried female who smoke but not drink were 3.75 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than who do not smoke and do not drink alcohol. Moreover, unmarried female who used drugs were 3.96 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than who never used drugs.

For the second model, peer influences as environmental factor were added in order to examine its net effect on premarital sexual intercourse, controlling for personal factors. The results revealed that discussing about sexual matters with friends is not associated with premarital sexual intercourse among unmarried female. In addition, the model shows that having friends who had sex before marriage was statistically significantly associated with premarital sexual intercourse at 0.001. It is evident that unmarried youth female who have friends that had sex before marriage are 3.31 times more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse than those who do not have friends that had sex before marriage, although it is found no association with premarital sexual intercourse in the first model.

It can also be noted that education and place of residence, and SRH knowledge were not significantly associated with premarital sexual intercourse among unmarried female in both models.

## DISCUSSION

The youth's sexual activity is an issue of greater concern in Indonesia these days than ever before. The youth in this study are unmarried young people (mean age is 18.7 for males and 18.2 for females) and descriptive statistics are deployed to present that generally unmarried youth in Indonesia are not trying premarital sexual intercourse. According to the survey, the proportion of those who have had premarital sexual intercourse is approximately 12.4% for males and 1.9% for females. Similarly, a qualitative and quantitative study of 676 adolescents in East Wollega shows that a much higher percentage of young men reported having premarital sex than young women [7]. Male-female differential in sexual activity may be better explained by the

double-standard norms in terms of sexual initiation. In most developing countries male sexual adventures are socially acceptable but not for women [8]. In this study, it can be assumed that premarital sexual intercourse among women is under reported due to social and cultural standard.

## CONCLUSION

The study indicates premarital sexual intercourse committed by unmarried youth in Indonesian is affected by personal and environmental factors. The findings also suggest that sexuality and reproductive health education should be provided formally in schools and universities, with more programs focused on university students due to the finding that more older youth (20-24 years) committed premarital sexual intercourse. In addition, family resilience to create open communication is another point that should be taken into account by involving parents and family members to be exposed with Sexuality and Reproductive Health (SRH) information. Therefore, adequate life skill education for youth and family is strongly recommended.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, this study recommends several important points to policy makers:

1. Responding to the finding that the educated youth tend to commit premarital sexual intercourse than the lower educated, it is needed to recommend Indonesian government to put sexual and reproductive health as a special subject in high school and university, particularly more comprehensive programs for youth at the university level due to the findings that older youth (20-24) are more likely to commit premarital sexual intercourse than the younger counterparts.
2. Promoting Youth Centre at the school level which is gender sensitive, confidential, affordable and friendly also needed to be the centre of excellence for youth to address some crucial problems regarding to SRH issues among young people.
3. Parental communication skill is another strategy that is needed to be accounted in addressing youth problems. An approach through increasing parental education related to youth's life skills can be a possible choice of solution.
4. Youth empowerment policy is also needed to equip and encourage young unmarried people to have negotiation skills in order to refuse unsafe sexual debuts and to respect each other by controlling themselves not to practice sexual intercourse and being abstinence until getting married.

5. Generating and developing a well-organized documentation, data collection and recording systems related to adolescent's sexuality is highly recommended since it is very limited in Indonesia.

6. Beside quantitative research, in-depth studies are also needed to provide broader information from youth's perspective such as factors affecting premarital sexual intercourse and how youth can cope with the social mainstreams such as peers, social media and other attractions leading to misbehavior that cause their lifestyle unhealthy.

7. Another research can be conducted focused on older youth like university-based due to this study finding that older youth have more tendencies to try experiencing premarital sexual intercourse than younger youth.

#### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Since this study is using secondary data from 2012 Indonesia Demography and Health Survey (IDHS 2012). Therefore, it is difficult to find the reliability since this data is based on interviewing the respondents face to face that may result in bias by personal and private questions about sexuality and reproductive health. Respondents in this survey might not give real feedback related to their sexuality and reproductive live, thus may result in under reported data and difficulties to prove the hypotheses.

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