



Attitude towards premarital sex

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Abstract

The adolescents of today have a different perspective towards physical intimacy and sometimes may lead them to indulge in premarital sex (casual sex). This study is aimed at understanding the attitude of both males and females towards premarital sex. The study was conducted on 330 college students in the age group of 18- 23 yrs. Google forms were used as a means of data collection. Descriptive survey method was the methodology adopted for the research. A self-developed questionnaire consisting of 19 items with multiple choices to choose from as options was developed. Descriptive analysis and percentage analysis were computed for comparison and to observe the general trends as indicated by the data collected. The result of the survey shows that both males and females have positive and negative attitudes towards premarital sex though they differ in certain aspects.

Keywords: premarital sex, casual sex, adolescents, attitude

Introduction

Premarital sex or otherwise called 'Casual Sex' is sexual activity that is practiced by people before marriage. Premarital sex was considered a sin and taboo till approximately the 1960's, after which the view changed and was more widely accepted, especially in the western cultures.

Premarital sex has been a topic of great concern since the 1900's. Schools in the McLennan County, Texas; took active interest in sex education by making children take pledges of 'Abstinence only'. This was not only practiced in the schools of McLennan County but in hundred other school districts. It included education in the use of condoms, contraceptive pills and an active effort to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Later in the year 2004, a study found that 88% of teenagers who took the pledge of abstinence indulged in premarital sex anyway.

In current time, the concern of premarital sex has increased drastically. This may be because of the modern trends in many metropolitan cities which influence adolescents to indulge in premarital sex. This can even go to the extent where teenagers have to discontinue their education due to early pregnancies. A study on 'Students Perception on Premarital Sex' was conducted on participants who were in their late adolescence, most of them did not agree with indulging in premarital sex. Further it was found that, males learnt about sexual information through mass media and females through school or peer groups. Premarital sex may be caused due to many emotional factors such as self- confidence, self- esteem, lust, love, trust, jealousy, fear, conformity and many more. These factors can cause a person to indulge in premarital sex and/or could even cause them to continue indulging in premarital sex. Other reasons that may be considered are contraception,

reduced parental supervision, more women in the work force and decline of marriage.

With regard to religion, a study in 2014 showed that premarital sex was considered a sin predominantly by the Muslim nations like Malaysia, Jordan, Egypt and Pakistan. In the Roman Catholic Church, sex was considered a sin that can be forgiven through confession.

That being said, there is a major difference in opinion among males and females towards premarital sex. Studies have been conducted on gender difference among adolescents in three different Asian cities, where it has shown that males are more open minded to premarital sex than females. This study focuses on the attitude of adolescents towards premarital sex between the age group of 18-21. This age group is the most probable to indulge in premarital sex than any other, because they are in the phase of their life where they may experience distress, or they find the need to satisfy and conform to their peer groups and experiment and experience aspects of the adult life.

Focus group discussion

A focus group discussion was conducted on a group of 18 individuals; 9 males and 9 females. Some of their opinions and feedback to some of the questions posed in the questionnaire have been mentioned. Many of the respondents had a lot to say with regard to the questions posed in the survey. Many of the respondents stated that it is entirely up to him/her whether they want to indulge in premarital sex. Whereas, some of the other respondents feel that premarital sex is completely unnecessary and that there is no need to indulge in such acts that interferes with ones morals and values. One of the respondent stated that, premarital sex is the

same as post marital sex and marriage should not define ways of showing love and when to have sex. Some stated that following Western cultures is alright but not at the cost of our own rich values and morals. The responses given show such diverse mindsets among the age group of 18-21 with regard to values, culture and preferences.

Review of literature

1. Bocar, Anna, Perez and Noeme (2013) [1] investigated Students’ Perception towards Premarital Sex. The descriptive survey design of research is utilized in this study. The survey questionnaire was administered to the one hundred twenty respondents. The results revealed that males’ insight on pre-marital sex is different from the females.
2. Fennell and Jacynth (1999) [5] studied the link between non-secular Beliefs, ethical Development, Self-Control, Peer Pressure, vanity, and premarital sex. Subjects were primarily between 18 and 25 years old. A survey was completed by 148 students. Of the 148 students who participated in the study, 38% were Black, non-Hispanic, 38% were White, non-Hispanic, 10% were Hispanic, and 4% were Biracial/Multiracial. Ninety-six percent of subjects stated that they belonged to a religious faith or church, and 4% stated that they did not. With regard to whether or not the subjects had premarital sexual intercourse, 33.8% had consensual sex. 55.4% did not have sex. 8.1% had sex and were forced, and 2.7% had sex but were unsure as to whether or not it was consensual. Of those subjects who did have premarital sex. 86% of those had sex with their boyfriend/ girlfriend. With two exceptions, the 8.1% of subjects who were forced to have sex were female and forced or pressured by a boyfriend/girlfriend. Most of the participants, 49.3 %, showed principled ethical scores within the low vary. Regarding self-esteem, most of the subjects, 56.8%, scored in the average range. Self-control scores of subjects revealed that 74.3% scored in the average range. In relation to peer influence. 79.1% of subjects were not influenced by any of their peers on the nine issues studied.
3. Bieda and Kathryn (2008) [6] investigated Self-Esteem in Relation to Casual Sex Behaviour, Attitudes, and Affect. Using stratified regression, results indicated that there was a curving result for socio-sexuality on range of casual sex partners. Results for the second hypothesis showed an interaction between behaviour and attitudes to predict self-esteem. For hypothesis the results showed that there exists a moderation effect for attitudes on negative affect regarding overall casual sex experience and self-esteem.

Aim

The current study is aimed at understanding and investigating the attitude of adolescents towards premarital sex.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were

- To investigate the general attitude of students towards premarital sex.
- To examine the extent to which there is a difference of

opinion regarding the attitude towards premarital sex among the genders.

- To examine what emotions are responsible for causing a person to resort to premarital sex.

Methodology

The methodology adopted was descriptive survey method.

Sample

Convenience sampling, snow ball sampling was used for the study. The sample consisted of 330 people of varying age groups of 18 to 23 of which 165 were females and 165 were males from colleges.

Tools Used

A self-developed questionnaire consisting of 19 items to measure Attitude towards Premarital Sex, with multiple response question’s, was developed by the authors.

Data Collection

Participants were invited to participate in an online survey that was distributed through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat.

Statistics Used

Descriptive analysis and percentage analysis were completed for comparison and to observe the general trends as indicated by the data.

Results and interpretation

Item 1: Do you think, the relationship between a couple will strengthen after engaging in premarital sex?

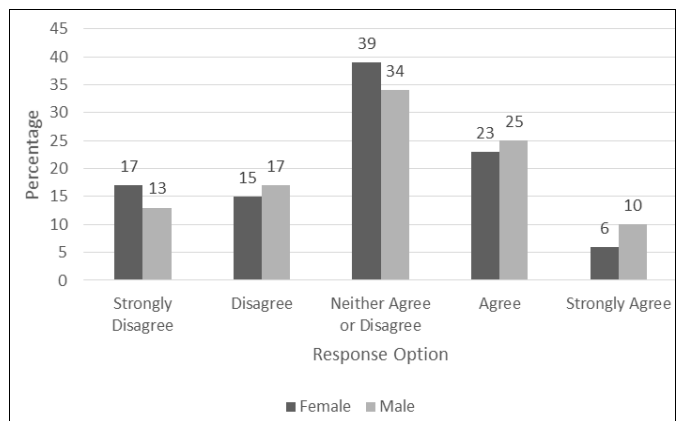


Fig 1: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph it is evident that, less than half of the males think that their relationship will increase in strength after engaging in premarital sex; very few of the males (10%) strongly agree and few of the males (25%) agree that indulging in premarital sex will increase the strength of the relationship. Whereas, nearly half of the females (39%), neither agree nor disagree that the strength of the relationship will increase after engaging in premarital sex.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be

because; indulging in premarital sex is an advancement in the physical bond and hence can strengthen the relationship according to them.

Item 2: Should premarital sex be a punishable act?

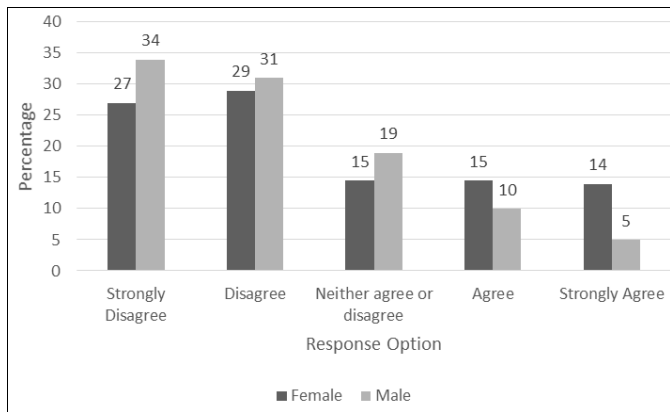


Fig 2: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph it is evident that, a majority of males and females disagree that premarital sex should be a punishable act. Among the females, few of the females strongly disagree (27%) and disagree (29%) that premarital sex should be a punishable act. Among the males, less than half of the males strongly disagree (34%) and disagree (31%) that premarital sex should be a punishable act.

Comparing the males and females it is evident that more number of males disagree that premarital sex should not be a punishable act.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; the partners know that only if premarital sex is not consensual it is a punishable act. But indulging in premarital sex generally occurs on each other’s consent.

Item 3: Is premarital sex a sin?

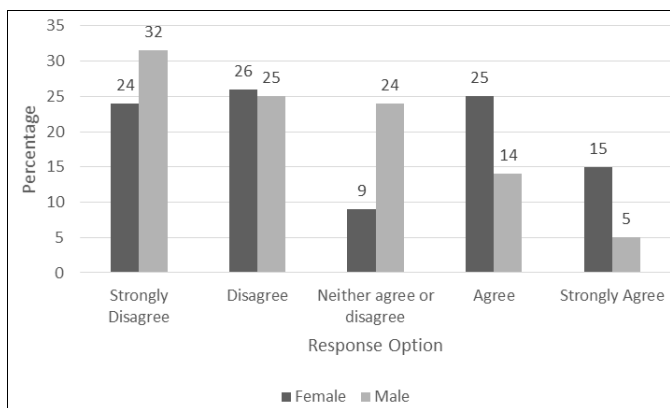


Fig 3: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph it is evident that, a majority of males think that premarital sex is not a sin; less than half of the males strongly disagree (32%) and few of the males disagree (25%) that premarital sex is a sin.

Comparing both males and females, it is evident that more number of males disagree that premarital sex is a sin.

According to studies, this may be because; within Christianity, ‘The Roman Catholic Church calls premarital sex a “sin that must be forgiven through confession”. A study in 2014 shows that in Muslim nations like Malaysia, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan and Egypt had the highest disapproval percentage of (90%), while those of Western Europe were more accepting of premarital sex.

Item 4: Do you think people engage in premarital sex as a result of poor parenting?

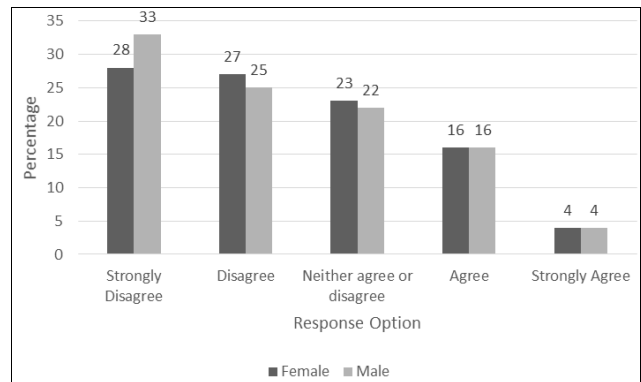


Fig 4: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that a majority of males disagree that they engage in premarital sex as a result of poor parenting; less than half of the males strongly disagree (33%) and few of the males disagree (25%) that they engage in premarital sex as a result of poor parenting.

Comparing both males and females, it is evident that more number of males disagree that they engage in premarital sex as a result of poor parenting.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; they feel that since their parent won’t talk about intercourse to them it is their own duty to understand the concept. Upon learning what sex is, they are tempted to try it themselves or it is the curiosity in the adolescent mind that urges them to try it.

Item No. 5: Do you think the loss of self-respect in premarital sex leads a person to continue engaging in premarital sex?

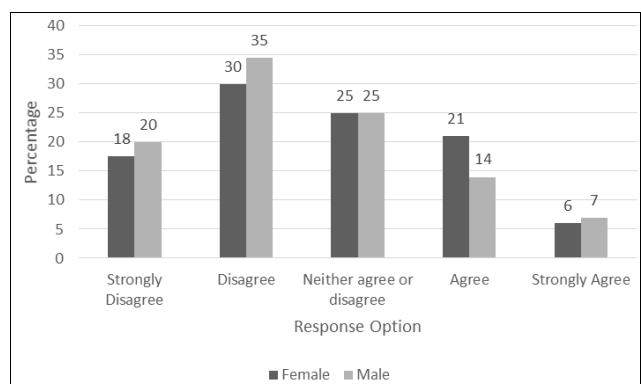


Fig 5: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that a majority of males strongly disagree that the loss of self-respect leads a person to continue engaging in premarital sex; few of the males strongly disagree (20%) and less than half of the males disagree (35%) that the loss of self-respect leads them to engage in premarital sex.

Comparing both males and females, it is evident that more number of males disagree that the loss of self-respect leads them to engage in premarital sex.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; those indulging in premarital sex don't feel that their self-respect is being attacked in the act of passion that they are comfortable with and feel is right.

Item no. 6: Do you think people engage in premarital sex for the thrill of it?

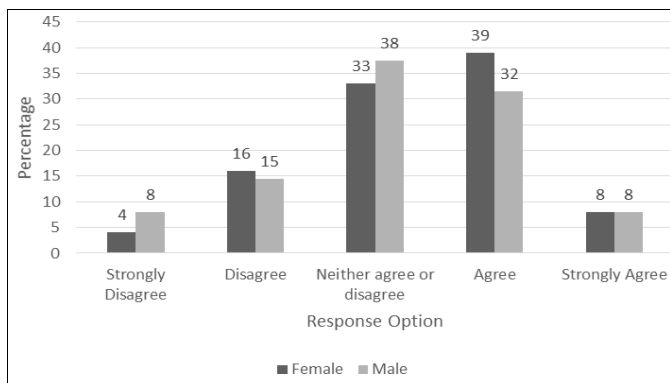


Fig 6: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that nearly half of the females agree that they engage in premarital sex for the thrill of it; very few of the females strongly agree (8%) and less than half of the females agree (39%) that they indulge in premarital sex for the thrill of it. Whereas, nearly half of the males neither agree nor disagree (38%) that they engage in premarital sex for the thrill of it. Comparing both males and females, it is

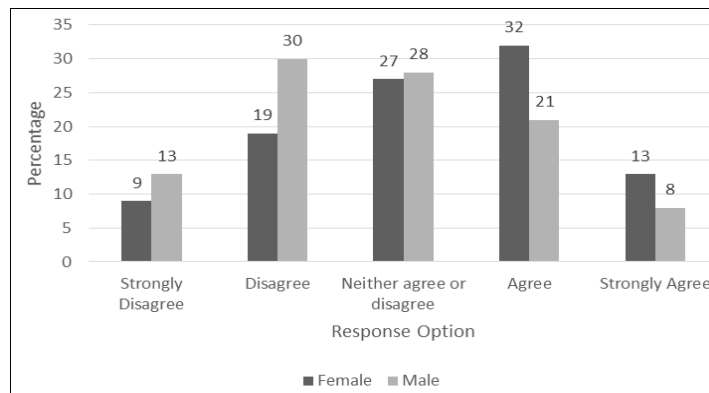


Fig 8: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that nearly half of the females agree that they are at a risk of getting depressed due to engaging in premarital sex; few of the females strongly agree (13%) and less than half of the females agree (32%) that they

evident that more number of females agree that they indulge in premarital sex for the thrill of it. According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; in a conservative society like the one in India, most people do engage in premarital sex for the thrill of it.

Item 7: Seeing failed relationships cause people to resort to premarital sex?

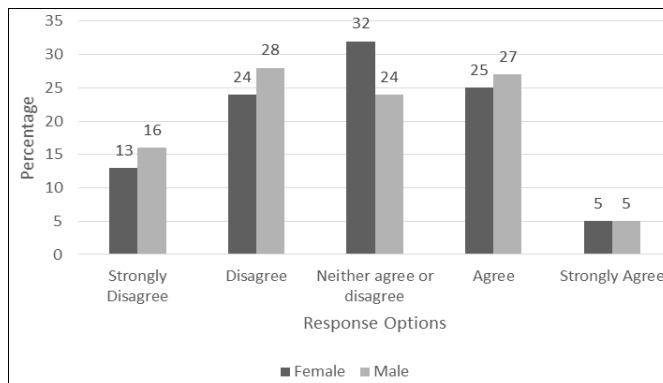


Fig 7: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph it is evident that nearly half of the males disagree that seeing failed relationships cause them to resort to premarital sex; few of the males strongly disagree (16%) and disagree (28%) that seeing failed relationships cause them to indulge in premarital sex.

Comparing both males and females, it is evident that more number of males disagree that seeing failed relationships cause them to indulge in premarital sex.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; seeing a failed relationship should not induce the feeling of arousal rather, one should feel sympathy or sadness on seeing a failed relationship.

Item 8: Do you think those who engage in premarital sex are at a risk of getting depressed?

are at a risk of getting depressed due to engaging in premarital sex.

Whereas, nearly half of the males disagree that they are at a risk of getting depressed due to engaging in premarital sex; few of the males strongly disagree (13%) and less than half of

the males disagree (30%) that they are at a risk of getting depressed due to engaging in premarital sex.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; women are sensitive. The fear of whether the partner will stay with them after engaging in premarital eventually leads them to get frustrated and that later turn into depression.

Item 9: Do people engage in premarital sex due to their own uncertainties about their relationship?

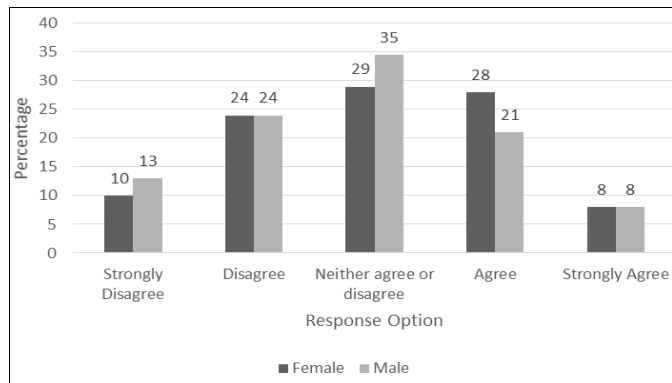


Fig 9: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph it is evident that less than half of the males disagree that they engage in premarital sex due to uncertainties in their relationship; few of the males strongly disagree (13%) and few disagree (24%) that they indulge in premarital sex due to uncertainties in their relationship.

Whereas, less than half of the females agree that they engage in premarital sex due to uncertainties in their relationship; very few females strongly agree (8%) and few of the females agree (28%) that they engage in premarital sex due to uncertainties in their relationship.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; they may find the need to keep the spark in the

relationship active and strong and hence indulge in premarital sex. In addition the respondents also said that, to prevent infidelity they may indulge in premarital sex.

Item 10: Does premarital sex emerge out of lust?

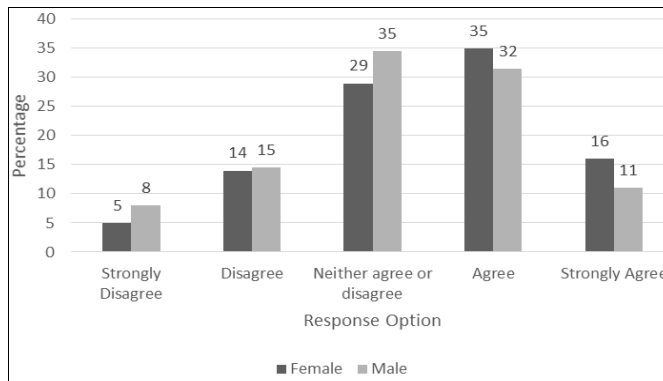


Fig 10: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that a majority of females engage in premarital sex out of lust; few of the females strongly agree (16%) and less than half of the females agree (35%) that they indulge in premarital sex out of lust. Among the males, few of them strongly agree (11%) and less than half of the males agree (32%) that they engage in sex out of lust.

Comparing both males and females more number of females agree that they engage in premarital sex as a result of lust.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; people lack self-control. In addition the respondents said that, the generation today is active physically from their very first relationship with a partner of the opposite sex and that intensifies the desire to have constant sexual contact.

Item 11: Do you think marriage is successful after premarital sex (with the same partner)?

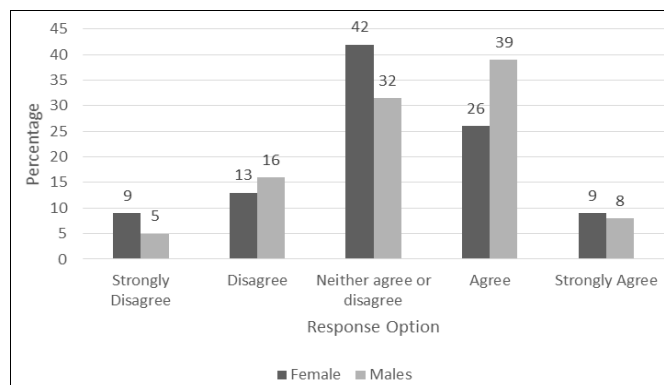


Fig 11: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that nearly half of the males agree that marriage is successful even after engaging in premarital sex with the same partner; very few of the males strongly agree (8%) and less than half of the males agree (39%) that marriage is successful even after engaging in premarital sex with the same person.

Whereas, nearly half of the females neither agree nor disagree that marriage is successful after engaging in premarital sex with the same person.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; the partners feel that they know each other on both an emotional and physical level prior to marriage and after they are married they feel that the strength of their relationship

will only increase.

Item 12: Premarital sex reduces trust post marriage with the same partner?

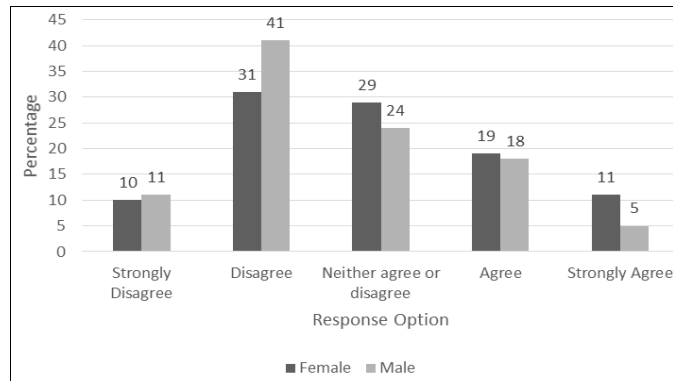


Fig 12: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that a majority of males disagree that premarital sex reduces trust post marriage with the same person; few of the males strongly disagree (11%) and nearly half disagree that (41%) premarital sex reduces trust post marriage with the same person. Among the females, very few of the females strongly disagree (10%) and less than half disagree (31%) that premarital sex reduces trust post marriage with the same person.

Comparing both males and females, it is evident that more number of males disagree that premarital sex reduces trust post marriage with the same person.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; the bond of marriage strengthens the relationship, especially since they have accepted each other to the extent that they agreed to marry each other. So trust doesn't really seem to be affected.

Item 13: Does premarital sex boost self-confidence?

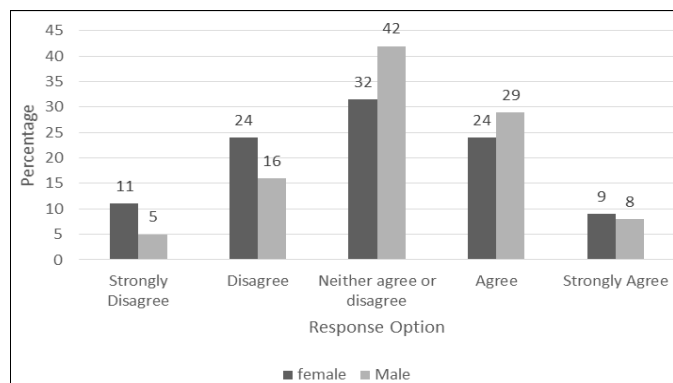


Fig 13: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that less than half of the males agree that premarital sex boosts self confidence; very few of the males strongly agree (8%) and few of the males agree that premarital sex boosts self confidence.

Whereas, less than half of the females disagree that premarital sex boosts self confidence; few of the females strongly disagree (18%) and nearly half of the females disagree (40%) that premarital sex boosts self confidence.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; indulging in premarital sex gives one a feeling of accomplishment and the feeling that they are desired by someone and hence this boosts confidence among men. The respondents go on to say that, women cannot discuss matters of sex with others and if they do they are excluded by society and that brings shame and disappointment to them.

Item 14: Does a man lose interest in the women after engaging in premarital sex?

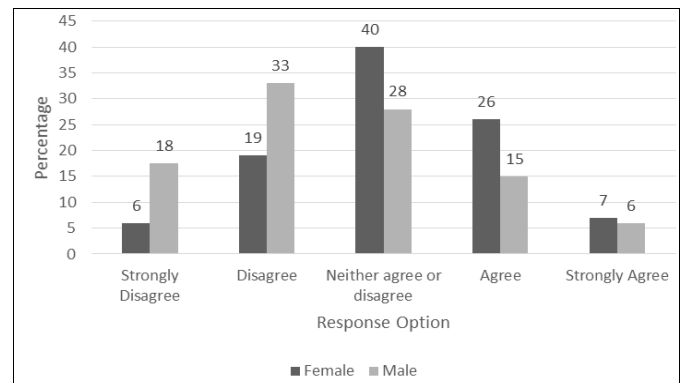


Fig 14: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that a majority of males disagree that they lose interest in the woman after engaging in premarital sex; few of the males strongly disagree (18%) and less than half of the males disagree (33%) that they lose interest in the woman after engaging in premarital sex.

Whereas, nearly half of the females neither agree nor disagree (40%) that a man loses interest in the woman after engaging in premarital sex.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; the relationship is not just based on a physical connect only, emotions matter as well.

Item 15: Does a woman begin to feel insecure about marriage with the same partner due to premarital sex?

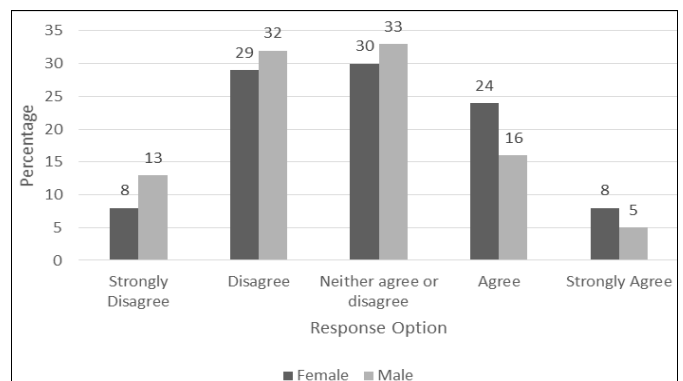


Fig 15: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph it is evident that nearly half of the males disagree that women begin to feel insecure about marriage with the same person due to premarital sex; few of the males strongly disagree (13%) and less than half of the males disagree (32%) that women begin to feel insecure about marriage with the same person due to premarital sex. Among the females, very few of the females strongly disagree (8%) and few disagree (29%) that they begin to feel insecure about marriage with the same person due to premarital sex.

Comparing both males and females, more number of males disagree that women feel insecure about marriage with the same person due to premarital sex.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; the bond of marriage only increases the feeling of security and trust.

Item 16: Is marriage affected when one or both the partners have engaged in premarital sex with other partners?

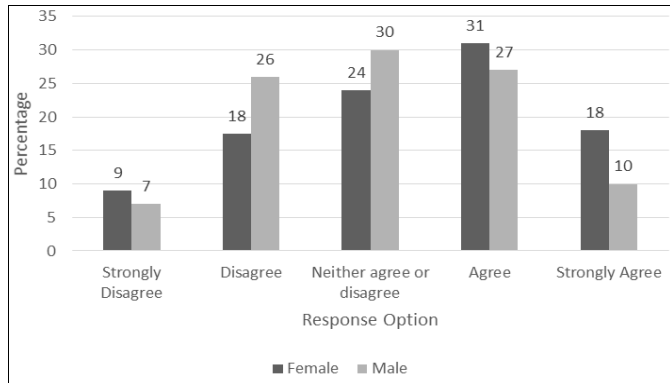


Fig 16: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that nearly half of the females agree that marriage is affected when one or both the partners have engaged in premarital sex with other partners; few of the females strongly agree (18%) and less than half of the females agree (31%) that marriage is affected when one or both the partners have engaged in premarital sex with other partners. Among males, Very few of the males strongly agree (10%) and few of the males agree (27%) that marriage is affected

when one or both the partners have engaged in premarital sex with other partners.

Comparing both males and females, more number of females agrees that marriage is affected when one or both the partners have engaged in premarital sex with other partners.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; there is a loss of trust and insecurities creep in easily. Fears of infidelity also arise.

Item 17: Does premarital sex emerge out of emotional connect (love)?

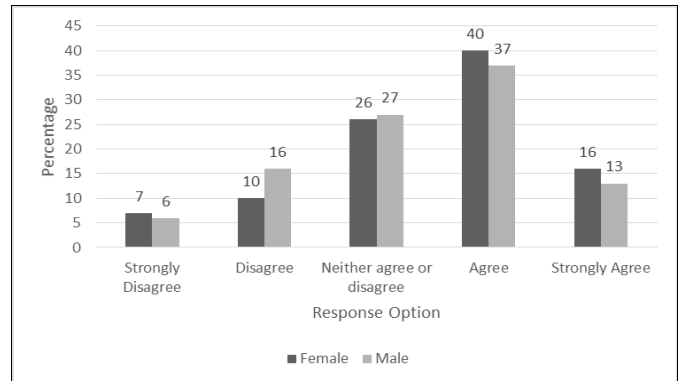


Fig 17: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph it is evident that a majority of females agree that premarital sex emerges out of emotional connect; few of the females strongly agree (16%) and nearly half agree (40%) that premarital sex emerges out of emotional connect. Among the males, few of the males strongly agree (13%) and less than half of the males agree (37%) that premarital sex emerges out of emotional connect.

Comparing both males and females, more number of females agree that premarital sex emerges out of emotional connect. According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; love is a strong feeling and when a person is in a position like that there is a chance that they indulge in premarital sex in hopes to intensify the feeling of love.

Item No. 18: Does peer group influence cause people to resort to premarital sex?

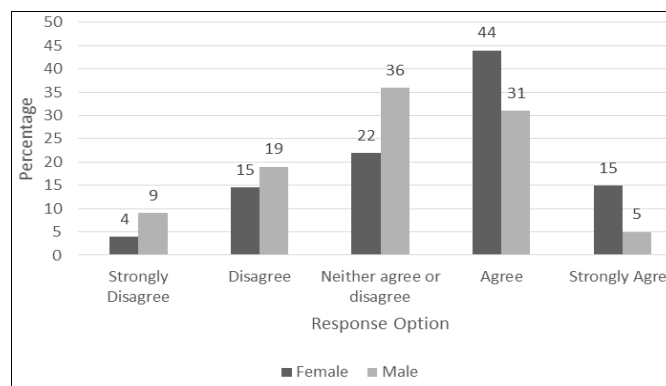


Fig 18: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that a majority of females agree that peer group influence causes people to resort to premarital sex; few of the females strongly agree (15%) and nearly half of the females agree (44%) that peer group influence causes people to resort to premarital sex. Among males, less than half of the males neither agree nor disagree (36%) and very few of the males strongly agree (5%) and less than half of the males agree (31%) that peer group influence causes people to resort to premarital sex.

Comparing both males and females, more number of females agree that peer group influence causes people to resort to premarital sex.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; the generation today is growing up very fast and is setting high standards for relationships that partners have to meet up to so that they can be accepted by their peer group and be tagged as “cool”.

Item 19: Have you felt the need to engage in premarital sex after watching intimate media content?

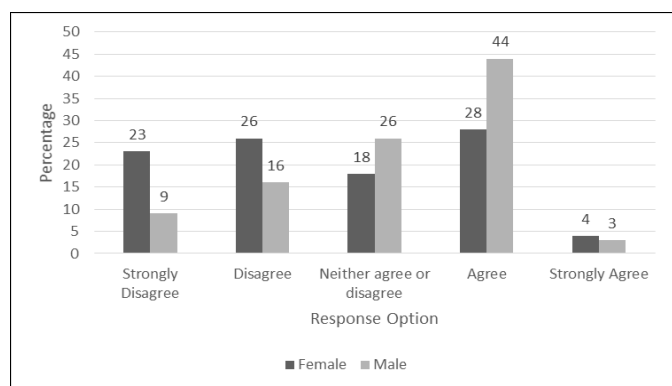


Fig 19: shows the responses for the statement

Interpretation

From the graph, it is evident that nearly half of the females disagree that they have felt the need to engage in premarital sex after watching intimate media content; few of the females strongly disagree (23%) and few disagree (26%) disagree that they have felt the need to engage in premarital sex after watching intimate media content.

Whereas, nearly half of the males agree that they engage in premarital sex after watching intimate media content; very few strongly agree (3%) and nearly half of the males agree (44%) that they have felt the need to engage in premarital sex after watching intimate media content.

According to the respondents of the focus group, this may be because; women generally are not amused by media content rather, they prefer real emotions to indulge in premarital sex. Males on the other hand learn from media content and the urge to experiment is higher.

Conclusions and implications

1. Less than half of the males think that their relationship will increase in strength after engaging in premarital sex.
2. A majority of males and females disagree that premarital sex should be a punishable act

3. A majority of males think that premarital sex is not a sin
4. A majority of males disagree that they engage in premarital sex as a result of poor parenting
5. A majority of males disagree that the loss of self respect leads a person to continue engaging in premarital sex
6. Nearly half of the females agree that they engage in premarital sex for the thrill of it
7. Nearly half of the males disagree that seeing failed relationships cause them to resort to premarital sex
8. Nearly half of the females agree that they are at a risk of getting depressed due to engaging in premarital sex
9. Less than half of the males disagree that they engage in premarital sex due to uncertainties in their relationship
10. A majority of females engage in premarital sex out of lust
11. Nearly half of the males agree that marriage is successful Even after engaging in premarital sex with the same partner
12. A majority of males disagree that premarital sex reduces trust post marriage with the same person
13. Less than half of the males agree that premarital sex boosts self confidence
14. A majority of males disagree that they lose interest in the woman after engaging in premarital sex
15. Nearly half of the males disagree that women begin to feel insecure about marriage with the same person due to premarital sex
16. Nearly half of the females agree that marriage is affected when one or both the partners have engaged in premarital sex with other partners
17. A majority of females agree that premarital sex emerges out of emotional connect.
18. A majority of females agree that peer group influence causes people to resort to premarital sex.
19. Nearly half of the females disagree that they have felt the need to engage in premarital sex after watching intimate media content.

Limitations

- The study was restricted to only participants of Chennai.
- The study did not include parent’s perspective.
- The study did not touch on topics like teen or early pregnancy.

Suggestions for further research

- Comparison of adolescents and parents can be done.
- Inclusion of more sensitive topics like pregnancy, eloping and suicide can also be included.

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