MALAYSIAN ADULT'S ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION ON PREMARITAL SEX, UNINTENDED PREGNANCY AND THE USAGE OF CONTRACEPTION AMONG ADOLESCENTS (AGE 10-19)

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Introduction
Rates of premarital sexual experiences and unintended pregnancies among Malaysian teenagers are on a worrying rising trend. In Kuala Lumpur itself, one baby is being abandoned every 10 days (1). The sensitivity of sex-related issues in this Muslim-majority country creates various barriers for Malaysian teenagers to gain sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and supports. Therefore, measures to provide education on SRH and contraception as a secondary prevention for pre-marital adolescents have become the biggest challenge for Malaysian health care providers.

It is found that 37% of sexually active teenagers used some form of contraception (2). Condoms (51%) were the most popular option among these teens. This is followed by oral contraceptive method (18%) and coitus interruptus (15%). Meanwhile, it has been reported that more than half of its respondents aged 17 to 26 did not have access to information related to sexual intercourse (57.1%). These respondents were not seeking information about safe sex practices, contraception and pregnancy because there is poor availability to gain such support and information in Malaysia (3).

By providing information to young women before their sexual debut, studies (4) have shown that this can make a difference in terms of unintended pregnancies and STD (Sexual Transmitted Diseases). Having said that, Malaysian government has not implemented sex education as a routine formal subject in secondary schools despite WHO(5) emphasizing that sexuality education in school does not lead to provide education on SRH and contraception as a formal subject in secondary schools despite WHO(5). Furthermore, the importance of contraception and safe sex among adult teachers at schools and parents at homes, these social norms, providing contraception and widening its accessibilities to adolescents have become a controversial issue. The second stage of the study will target on parents with teenage children.

In short, it is argued that by increasing the awareness about the importance of contraception and safe sex among adult population, it would improve Malaysian adolescents' SRH.

Objectives
1. To determine levels of knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of Malaysian adults toward the needs for contraception among adolescents.
2. To explore attitudes of Malaysian adults towards unintended teen pregnancies.
3. To determine Malaysian adults’ perceptions regarding an adolescent’s choices of sexual orientations and habits.

Methods
The authors developed a 32 self-administrated questionnaires. The questionnaire was divided into 6 parts which include demographic data, acceptance of the usage of contraception among adolescent, attitudes towards unintended teen pregnancy, perceptions on adolescent sexual habit and orientation and knowledge on Malaysia sexual laws. Each part contained 6 to 8 questions. Five-point Likert scale was adopted for questions which required respondents to rate their agreement. Revisions were made based on an expert's review.

The distribution of questionnaires was mostly done via social websites such as survey website and email. Data was entered and analysed with SPSS version 20.0. Non-parametric tests were used to determine if any significance of differences between groups of selected attributes (e.g., religion). Contingency tables were used to assess internal consistency of knowledge and attitudes scores, with an acceptable values of at least 0.6.

Results
One-hundred and fifty-nine (n=159) respondents completed the questionnaires. Mean age of respondents was 36.6 (SD: 10.12) and almost half of them were degree holders. Approximately 45% were Muslims and 25% were Hindus. Almost 60% of the respondents had their first child after the age of 25. Eighty-eight (65%) respondents were parent to (a) teenager(s).

- With regards to contraception, many respondents chose condoms and hormonal pills (n=50 and n=27 respectively). However, a number of respondents (n=22) did not practice any form of contraception. These adults were aware that other than contraception, the combine oral contraceptive pills can control acne (+20%), reduce pain and menstrual flow (+7%) and regulate menses (+11%).
- The respondents in this survey were knowledgeable about benefits of contraception and negative implications of pre-marital sex in terms of unintended pregnancies and STDs among adolescent.

Conclusions
Malaysian adults were knowledgeable about benefits of contraception and negative implications of pre-marital sex. They were supportive of SRH education at schools and parental involvements. However, due to religious values and social norms, providing contraception and widening its accessibilities to adolescents have become a controversial issue. The second stage of the study will target on parents with teenage children.

References