



The Question of Sex in Malaysia - Part 1

A Study by Cent-GPS

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### Researcher

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# **CONTENT**

| 1.0: Introduction      | 1  |
|------------------------|----|
| 2.0: Literature review | 3  |
| 3.0: Methodology       | 5  |
| 4.0: Results           | 10 |
| 5.0: Conclusions       | 18 |
| 6.0: References        | 20 |

# 1 ( ) INTRODUCTION

Issues surrounding rape, baby dumping, divorce and even teenage pregnancy have often gone under the radar in Malaysia. We know they exist, yet many seem paralyzed and unaware as to the scope of the national crisis. The statistics point to a dim future for Malaysia's social cultural stability.

In the case of baby dumping, Malaysia has seen 1075 cases of baby dumping since 2008. Almost 25% of these cases come from Selangor. According to Women, Family and Community Deputy Minister Hannah Yeoh, Selangor sees the highest number of cases because it is a transit population where many people move in and out of the state. Sabah recorded 141 cases whilst Johor recorded 127.

According to OrphanCare Foundation, of the 1075 babies that were dumped, only around 40% were found to be alive. The rest were found dead in location.

In Malaysia, the number of divorces revolves around 49,965 according to a 2017 statistic. The number of Muslim divorces recorded in 2017 was 39,709 whilst for non-Muslims the number was 10,256. According to the records, some of the reasons that divorces happen are due to irreconcilable differences at 56%, unfaithfulness at 12% and meddling in-laws at 10%. Other factors that contribute to the high rates of divorce include couples who abandon their partners to go on trips with friends. Some even included a failure to do chores around the house. More than half of the divorces recorded had marriages that lasted no more than five years, leading to the highest rates of divorce happening around the ages of 30 to 35.



# Looked deeper into the statistics, it's clear that the highest number of marriages in Malaysia occurs between the ages of 25 and 29. Here, 42% of marriages take place.

Deputy Minister Hannah Yeoh has promised that the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) would implement steps to strengthen the institutions of marriage and family in the short future.

In other more daunting realities, Malaysia's rape cases in the past few years have evolved to around 3000 a year. This number however should be taken with a grain of salt as it is only the number of reported cases whereas experts assume that number could be drastically higher if more came forward.

Close to 20% of these rape cases happen in Selangor. In calculation, the number roughly lead to around one rape in every 35 minutes.

From the years 2000 to 2013, over 42,000 domestic violence cases were reported. Over 31,000 cases of rape were reported and 25,000 molestation cases were reported.

When we focus on teen pregnancies, the news becomes more grim. An average of 18,000 teenage girls in Malaysia get pregnant every year. Of this total, 25% involve cases out of wedlock. According to the UM Specialist Centre, the rates of teenage pregnancies could be on the rise.

These statistics of course do not stand alone. They are all interconnected, interlinked. With higher rates of teenage pregnancies, the likelihood of child marriages increase. With this, the likelihood of failed marriage or domestic abuse also increases. More teenage pregnancies also point to a danger of more child dumping cases

The Centre for Governance and Political Studies (Cent-GPS) therefore began studying just how prepared our society is when it comes to questions around consent, sexual education, healthy relationships and the use of protection. If the basics cannot be gotten right, then clearly, it spells trouble for many of the partnerships and relationships happening in Malaysia today.

This is part 1 of a two part study.



# 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

When looking at the question of sex education, many countries around the world have started recognizing the importance of sex education as they experience various social ills.

Here in Malaysia, a version of basic sex education is currently being taught in Malaysian schools under the banner of Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) which is covered by Physical Education, Moral, Science and Islamic Studies textbooks. It covers Year One to Form Five syllabuses.

Despite this progress however, there are many who seem opposed to the implementation of these subjects. Even certain teachers, administrators, parents and religious groups have voiced concern.

A research by IMU and UM in 2012 previously explored the perspectives of Malaysian professionals on the issues and barriers affecting the implementation of sex education in Malaysia.

This qualitative study's methodology included an in-depth interview with 15 key professionals working in the field of sex and reproductive health in Malaysia. The study concluded that there were 5 barriers to sex education: feasibility, acceptability, accountability, strategies, and community unawareness.

Of the respondents in the study, quite a few believed that implementing national sex education would prove to be a time-consuming project. They feared that Malaysia's multicultural society would prove to be a barrier. Accomplishing sex education in school according to these individuals would prove to be a difficult task. Some also argued that an abstinence-only policy restricts the access of young people to accurate information.

According to UNESCO, one of the leading worries about sex education is that it would lead to more sexual activities. For many, the thought of having children learn about sexual education imparts fear that this would make adolescents sexually active; corrupting the minds of teenagers and children.

Studies have tried to analyze the effects of sex education on a teenager's sexual behaviour to provide a form of guidance on sex information for parents, teachers and religious groups. UNESCO previously conducted a comprehensive study involving 87 researches from around the world, surveying 29 developing countries

#### The Question of Sex in Malaysia | Part 1

which had some form of a structured curriculum on sexuality in their education system. Most of these countries covered topics such as HIV, STD, STI, birth control and sexual intercourse. Overall, the students in these countries would sit through over 15 hours of formal sex education. Conclusively, the report showed that sexual education successfully delayed the period of sex intercourse for almost a third of the participants.

In Malaysia however, research on sex education in classrooms is limited. According to Azizah Jaafar and Chan Siew Lee of UKM, there have been different perceptions between teachers and students regarding the issue of sex education. Based on their research, 53.6% of the teachers explained that the content of information from the books is already enough for the students to understand the issue. However, 58.2% of them stated that the information provided in school textbooks was not enough.

In a different survey by Heathline on October 2018, where more than 1000 Americans were polled with 12% of the respondents over 60 years old and 33% between 18 and 29, questions on sex education, consent and relationships were asked.

"When it comes to promoting sex education, the biggest obstacle is definitely our country's cultural inclination to avoid conversations about sexuality entirely, or to only speak about sex and sexuality in ways that are negative or shaming," explains Jennifer Driver, SIECUS' State Policy Director.

According to the study, many surveyed misunderstood essential usages of contraception. Around 93% were unable to correctly answer how many days after intercourse, emergency contraception was valid. Many claimed it was only effective up to two days after sex. Rather, Plan B pills are effective up to 5 days after sex with 89% reduction in risk.

Meanwhile, around 34% of those polled believed that taking the morning after pill can cause infertility and abortion.

This study also examined the respondent's understanding of consent. The findings indicate that respondents of ages 18 to 29 still have misconceptions about consent. Around 14% believe that a significant other has a right to sex. More than a quarter of all respondents unfortunately believe that consent while under the influence is applicable.



# **METHODOLOGY**

In total, Cent-GPS surveyed over 2000 Malaysian male respondents. The research team was split into Team A and Team B. Team A was responsible for asking 3 questions on sex education, how Malaysian men comprehend sex education, whether or not they approve of it and whether their religion allows there to be sex education. Team B was focused on questions about consent, healthy relationships and the use of protection.

Specifically, Cent-GPS obtained 2,014 male respondents. The respondents were Malay, Chinese, Indian and unspecified. The ages of the respondents were between 18 and 30 years of age.

Cent-GPS filtered its male respondents through identities and personalities found in online dating applications. From these applications, we were able to identify and control the age of our respondents (18 to 30), note down the race of our respondents, their tertiary education, as well as restrict our net of respondents to within 100 km distance of the Klang Valley area. In every way, these male respondents, hypothetically, are meant to represent the urban class crowd of the Klang Valley who, supposedly, are meant to be most and best informed about sex education, consent, healthy relationships and protection.

The questions we asked were in English.

Confidence level: 95% Margin of error: 3%

Answers that were incomplete, and seemingly rushed were excluded.

The respondents were divided into two groups. The first 1,007 male respondents were asked three questions pertaining to sex education, their approval of it, their beliefs about whether religion permits it and who they believe should pass on sex education. The specific questions will be listed below. The second group of 1,007 male respondents were asked three other questions that pertain to how they learned how to use protection, how they understand consent, and how they comprehend healthy relationships.

The first group was asked:

- 1. Does sexual education promote sexual activity?
- 2. Does your religion allow for sex education?
- 3. Would you rather provide your kids sex education or let schools do it?

The second group of respondents was asked:

- 1. Where did you see or first learn how to use protection in sex?
- 2. If your partner made you choose between her or your friends, would you still date the person?
- 3. What would you consider as consent for sex?

### Categories for each question

#### First Group:

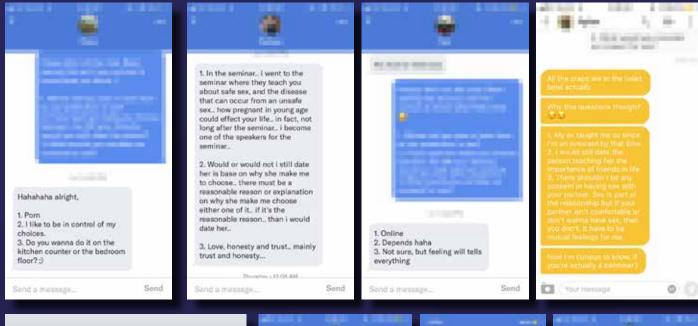
- 1. Does sexual education promote sexual activity?
  - a. Here respondents' answers were categorized into 3 categories.
    - i. I don't know
    - ii. No
    - iii. Yes
- 2. Does your religion allow for sex education?
  - a. Here respondents' answers were categorized into 3 similar categories.
    - i. I don't know
    - ii. No
    - iii. Yes
- 3. Would you rather provide your kids sex education or let schools do it?
  - a. Here respondents' answers were categorized into 5 categories
    - i. Both
    - ii. I don't know
    - iii. Neither
    - iv. Parents
    - v. Schools

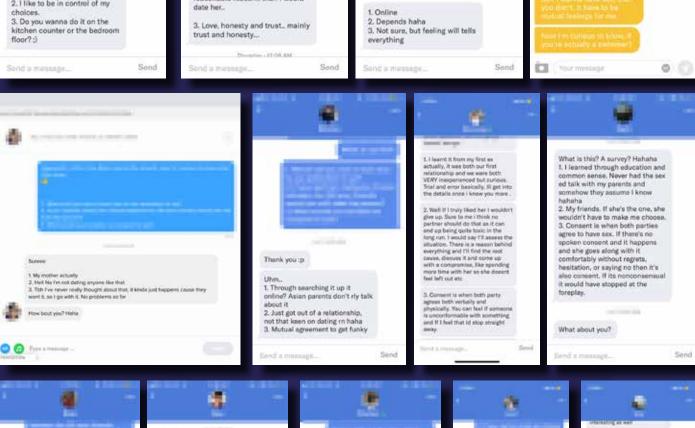
### Second Group

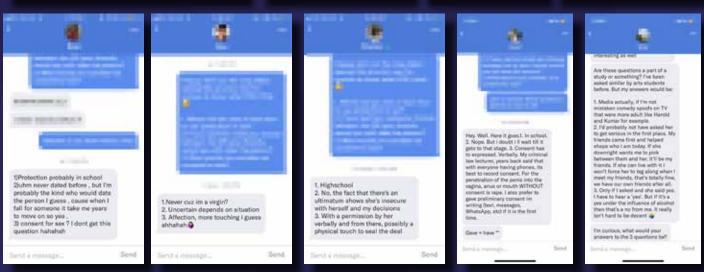
- 1. Where did you see or first learn how to use protection in sex?
  - a. Here respondents' answers were categorized into the following:
    - i. Formal education: school, campaigns
    - ii. Friends & Family
    - iii. Media: porn, internet, videos, movies, tv shows, comics, self-taught by own initiatives.
    - iv. Experience: past and present relationships, first-time sex
    - v. I don't know
- 2. If your partner made you choose between her or your friends, would you still date the person?
  - a. Here respondents' answers were categorized into the following:
    - i. Depends
    - ii. No
    - iii. Yes

- 3. "What would you consider as consent for sex?"
  - a. Here respondent's answers were categorized into the following:
    - i. Body language: Display and allowance of certain body movements or gestures including eye contact, touching and kissing. *Keywords: touching, eye contact, kissing, foreplay, when partner initiates*
    - **ii. Romantic attachment:** Consent based on some form of attachment (relationship, marriage, partner) and shared values (love, honesty, trust). *Keywords: love, trust, honesty, bonding, relationship, marriage, partner*
    - **iii. Mutual agreement:** Unspecified verbal or non-verbal agreement between two parties in conscious state. Involves communication and discussion. *Keywords: communication, discussion, agree, both want, mutual intention, willingness, no means no*
    - **iv. Verbal :** Clear, explicit and conscious verbal agreement a 'yes' to a suggestion for sex by two parties.
    - v. Unspecified: Based on surrounding conditions (mood, vibe, comfort), availability of protection and a general assumption of non-coercion. Keywords: mood, vibe, safety, protection, no forcing, comfortable, flirting, teasing, when she invites over, when she agrees to go on date, chemistry
    - **vi. Non-objection:** When no clear refusal to sexual act is made, therefore assumed for agreement. *Keywords: silent, when she doesn't reject*

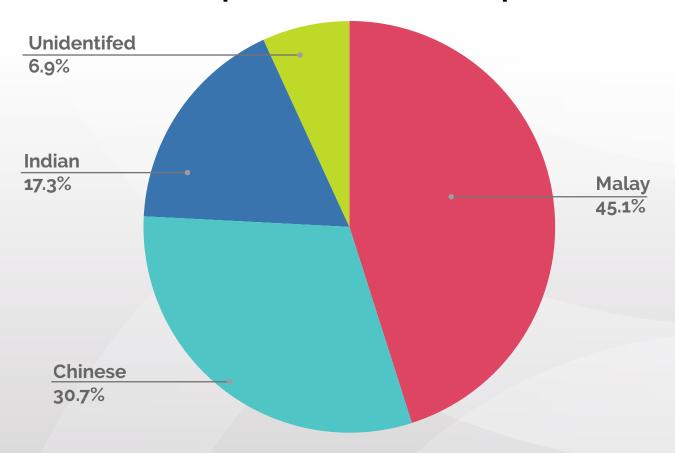








# Total race composition for 2014 respondents



# 4.0 Result

### Question 1:

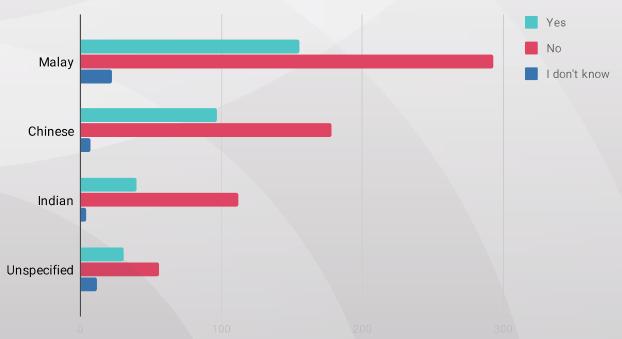
# Does sexual education promote sexual activity?

| Q1                   | Sex ed promote? | %             |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| I don't know         | 45              | 4.468718967   |
| No                   | 639             | 63.45580933   |
| Yes                  | 323             | 32.0754717    |
| Grand Total 1007     |                 | 100           |
|                      |                 |               |
| Q1 correlate with Q3 |                 | -0.1623877371 |

Borderline negative (those who think sex ed doesn't promote sex inclined to have it taught in schools) but generally no correlation

Here, the results point to a majority of Malaysian men surveyed claiming that sex education does not promote sexual activity. Of the 1007 respondents, 63% claim that sex education does not promote sexual activity. Around 32% of men surveyed however think that sex education and teaching of it will lead to more sexual activity. The ones who did not know registered at 4.4%.

# Q1: Does sexual education promote sexual activity?



Here we breakdown the responses in terms of race. Amongst all the races, the answer points to a clear no. Whether Malay, Chinese or Indian, the men surveyed all mostly believe that sex education does not promote more sexual activity.

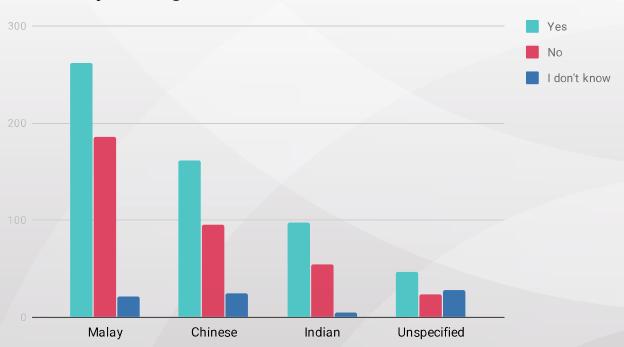
## Question 2:

# Does your religion allow for sex education?

| Q2           | Religion allow? | %           |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| I don't know | 80              | 7.944389275 |
| No           | 359             | 35.65044687 |
| Yes          | 568             | 56.40516385 |
| Grand Total  | 1007            | 100         |

In this question, we test whether or not the men surveyed believe that their religion permits the teaching of sex education. For the most part, 56% of male respondents believe that their religion does allow for sex education. Around 35% believe that sex education is not allowed in their religion. 8% said they did not know.





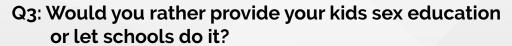
Here we broke down the responses in terms of race. Across the board, it is clear that **there is acceptance** on the different religions for sex education.

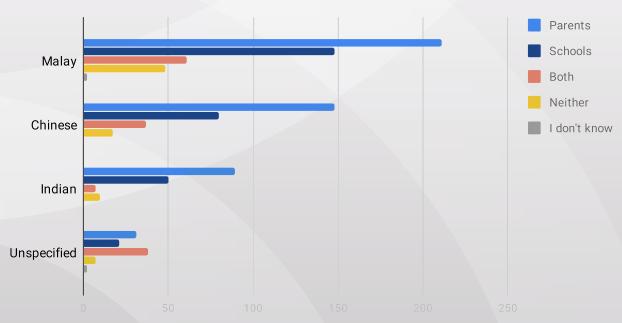
# Question 3:

# Would you rather provide your kids sex education or let schools do it?

| Q3           | Parents/School? | %            |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Both         | 143             | 14.20059583  |
| I don't know | 4               | 0.3972194638 |
| Neither      | 82              | 8.142999007  |
| Parents      | 479             | 47.56703078  |
| School       | 299             | 29.69215492  |
| Grand Total  | 1007            | 100          |

Here we tested how comfortable the male respondents are when it comes to how sex education is taught. Are they comfortable having schools teach sex education? Are they confident schools can do a good job? Around 30% of respondents agreed with having schools teach sex education. A whopping 48% however believe that it is best if parents teach their children about sex. 14% however refused to comply to the restrictions of the question and answered that it should be both.





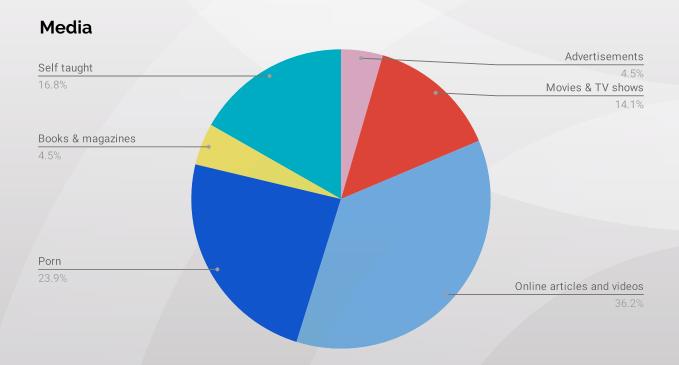
Here we once again broke the results in terms of race. Amongst all the race segments, respondents are more comfortable with having parents teach their children about sex rather than having it integrated within the national school curriculum.

## Question 4:

# Where did you see or first learn how to use protection in sex?

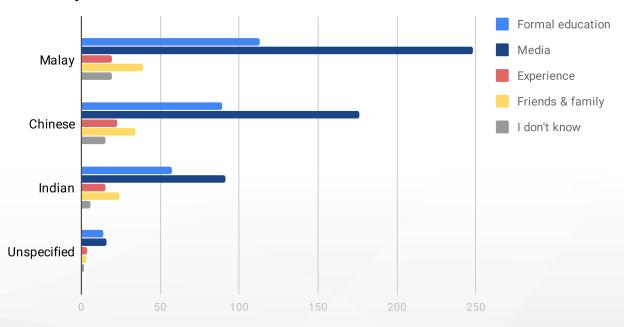
| Q4  | Source | %    |
|---|--------|------|
| Formal education  | 273    | 27.1 |
| Friends & family  | 100    | 9.9  |
| I don't know  | 42     | 4.2  |
| Media (ads, movies, internet, books, porn, self-taught) | 531    | 52.7 |
| Experience  | 61     | 6.1  |
| Grand Total   | 1007   | 100  |

Here, the results are very interesting. Around 53% of respondents claimed they learned how to use protection through the media. Specifically, this is divided as "books & magazines," "advertisements," "movies & tv shows," "porn," and "online articles & videos." This will be further broken down below. 6% claimed they learned by experience. Around 10% claimed they learned from friends and family. Interestingly, only 27% claimed they learned about protection and its uses through formal education.



Here we breakdown the respondents who claim that they had learned about protection during sex through the media. A whopping 24% of these respondents admitted that they learned through porn. 36.2% claim they learned from online articles and videos. 14% claim they learned from movies and tv shows. Around 4.5% claimed they learned through advertisements. 17% claimed vaguely that they learned through "self taught" online means.

# Q4: Where did you see or first learn how to use protection in sex?



Above is a breakdown of race in terms of learning where to use protection. The trends are similar throughout all the races.

# Question5:

# If your partner made you choose between her or your friends, would you still date the person?

| Q5          | Unhealthy relationship | %           |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Depends     | 256                    | 25.42204568 |
| No          | 379                    | 37.63654419 |
| Yes         | 372                    | 36.94141013 |
| Grand Total | 1007                   | 100         |

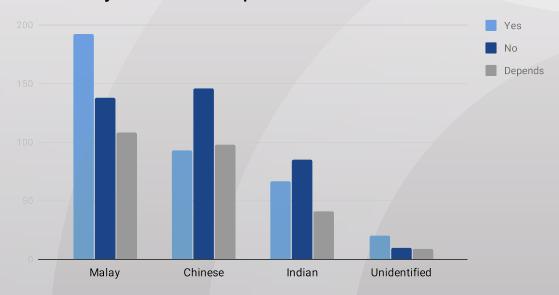
In this question, we wanted to test whether the male respondents would be able to walk away from a seemingly unhealthy and obsessive relationship. Quite obviously, if an ultimatum is given concerning a romantic partner or friends, not enough space and trust is being invested in this relationship. We found that the responses are quite split. Around 38% of respondents claim that they would stop dating the person if given such an ultimatum. Another 37% claim they would continue to date the girl if she were to make such a proposal.

Around 25% of the respondents were less definitive, hoping to ask more questions, wait, and further assess the situation.

| %            | Yes    | No     | Depends |
|--------------|--------|--------|---------|
| Malay        | 51.61  | 36.41  | 42.19   |
| Chinese      | 25.00  | 38.52  | 38.28   |
| Indian       | 18.01  | 22.43  | 16.02   |
| Unidentified | 5.38   | 2.64   | 3.52    |
|              | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00  |

Here again we broke down the answers according to race. Interestingly, amongst the Malay respondents, more than half of them would choose to remain in the unhealthy relationship. Only 36% chose to leave whilst 42% chose to wait and see. The numbers for staying in the relationship are very low for the Chinese and Indian respondents. 25% of Chinese and 18% of Indians would choose to stay whilst more would choose to leave the relationship. Of the race segments, the Indian respondents appear to be the most likely to be definitive in their decision about leaving or staying in the relationship.

Q5: If your partner made you choose between her or your friends, would you still date the person?



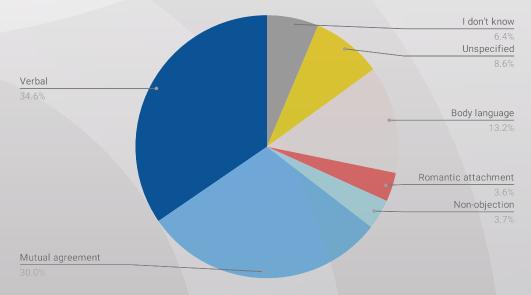
Question 6: What would you consider as consent for sex?

| Q6                  | Consent relationship | %           |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| I don't know        | 64                   | 6.35551142  |
| Unspecified         | 87                   | 8.639523337 |
| Body language       | 133                  | 13.20754717 |
| Romantic attachment | 36                   | 3.574975174 |
| Non-objection       | 37                   | 3.67428004  |
| Mutual agreement    | 302                  | 29.99006951 |
| Verbal              | 348                  | 34.55809335 |
| Grand Total         | 1007                 | 100         |

Here we wanted to check to see how the respondents defined consent. Going into this question, it is important to note that consent, in its correct form, is when both parties verbally say "yes" to sex. Therefore it is important to observe whether or not the majority of men surveyed recognize this. We found that only around 35% of men surveyed knew that consent meant an explicit verbal yes. Disappointingly, the other 65% of male respondents incorrectly defined consent as anything other than a verbal "yes" from the female partner.

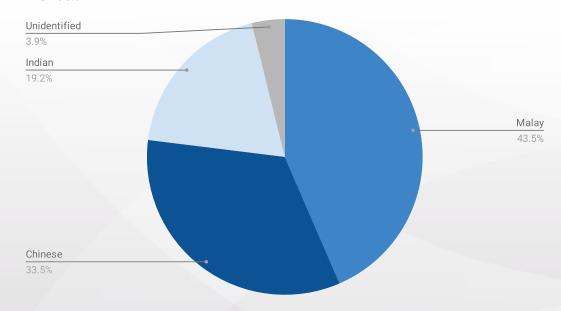
Specifically, 13% said consent could be identified through body language. 4% claimed consent would be a given if there was some form of romantic attachment with the partner. Another 4% claimed that consent was given if the female partner did not object. Mutual agreement at 30% is an interesting statistic here too. In this category, respondents claim consent is given if a discussion has been had or if both sides had agreed to sex. This category however falls short into specifically identifying that consent meant an explicit verbal yes.

Q6: What would you consider as consent for sex?



|                     | Malay | Chinese | Indian | Unidentified |
|---------------------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
| Body language       | 54    | 48      | 26     | 5            |
| I don't know        | 39    | 14      | 10     | 1            |
| Mutual agreement    | 138   | 92      | 54     | 18           |
| Non-objection       | 11    | 21      | 4      | 1            |
| Romantic attachment | 22    | 8       | 5      | 1            |
| Unspecified         | 36    | 29      | 19     | 3            |
| Verbal              | 138   | 125     | 75     | 10           |

# Verbal



# 5.0 conclusions

The issues surrounding rape, sexual harassment at work, consent for sex, unhealthy relationships, teenage pregnancies, and misunderstandings of sex education are prevalent in Malaysia. Cases of baby dumping, teenage pregnancies often rarely breach news headlines. The phenomena has become far too normalized within our society that the issues have somehow been allowed to prevail.

The Centre for Governance and Political Studies (Cent-GPS) surveyed over 2000 Malaysian men to analyze whether they understood sex education, its purposes, whether or not it promotes sexual activity, whether religion permits sex education and whether they would prefer it being taught by teachers or parents. We also surveyed whether Malaysian men understood the concept of consent for sex, where they learned about protection and whether they would leave or recognize an unhealthy relationship.

Cent-GPS surveyed over 2000 men who all use social dating apps in the Klang Valley. We targeted this group because we hypothesized that they would be the most sexually active and likely to be in interactions with a romantic partner. Ideally, if you are actively looking for a partner, then these men should know a thing or two about consent, healthy relationships, sex education and more. Specifically, Cent-GPS split our research team into two groups. Team A asked over 1000 men about sex education. Team B asked over 1000 men about consent, healthy relationships and protection. The study was done within a one month period. The men in our survey were all aged between 18-30. They lived or are working in the Klang Valley area. They were able to understand and respond in English. They were all Malaysians. Specifically, 45% of the respondents were Malay. 31% were Chinese and 17% were Indian.

Confidence level: 95% Margin of error: 3%

Cent-GPS excluded answers and responses from subjects that were incomplete and short of an explanation.

The results of this survey point to a slippery understanding of sex education, consent, healthy relationships and protection for all races of men in Malaysia. Here are some highlights:

When asked whether sex education promotes sexual activity, 63% of the men disagreed whilst a staggering 32% agreed that sex education promotes more sexual activity. Specifically here, men who answered that sex education promotes safer sex were included within the 63% who disagreed. This is because Cent-GPS were specifically looking for subjects that believed sex education promoted more thoughts and prevelance of unwanted sex.

When asked whether their religion allows for sex education, 56% said yes, while 36% said no.

When asked whether sex education should be taught at schools or by parents, 48% chose parents and 30% chose schools.

When tested on where they had learned how to use protection, around 53% of respondents answered that they learned how to use protection from the media. Specifically, the data categorized media as key terms such as "books & magazines," "advertisements," "movies & tv shows," "porn," and "online articles & videos." Of the men who claimed that they learned how to use protection through the media, a whopping 24% of these respondents admitted that they learned through porn. 36.2% claim that they learned from online articles and videos. 14% claim that they learned from movies and TV shows. Around 4.5% claimed that they learned

through advertisements. 17% claimed vaguely that they learned through "self taught" online.

Interestingly, only 27% claimed that they had learned about protection and its uses through formal education. Around 10% claimed that they had learned from friends and family. 6% claimed they learned by "experience."

When tested for their response to an unhealthy relationship, around 38% of respondents claim that they would stop dating a seemingly obsessive partner. Interestingly, 37% of men answered that an obsessive partner would not affect the relationship, thereby opting to continuing it. Around 25% of the respondents were less definitive, hoping to ask more questions, wait, and further assess the situation.

We broke down the answers according to race. Interestingly, amongst the Malay respondents, more than half of them would choose to remain in the unhealthy relationship. Only 36% chose to leave whilst 42% chose to wait and see. The numbers for staying in an unhealthy relationship are lower for the Chinese and Indian respondents. 25% of Chinese and 18% of Indians would choose to stay in an unhealthy relationship whilst the majority would choose to leave the relationship. Of the race segments, the Indian respondents appear most likely to be definitive in their decision about leaving or staying in the relationship.

When surveyed on their understanding of consent for sex, the results are rather interesting. Going into this question, it is important to note that consent, in its correct form, is when there is an explicit verbal agreement to sex. In other words, a "yes". This was our main observation, whether or not the majority of men surveyed recognize the true form of consent for sex. We found that only around 35% of men surveyed knew that consent meant a partner had to verbally say yes to sex. Disappointingly, the other 65% of male respondents in the Klang Valley incorrectly defined consent as anything other than a verbal "yes" from the female partner.

Specifically, 13% said consent for sex could be identified through "body language." 4% claimed consent was given if there was some form of romantic attachment with the partner. In other words, these men believed that sex with a girlfriend or wife is a "given" if the relationship is established. Another 4% claimed that consent for sex was given if the female partner did not object. (This is an important distinction from the correct form of consent. A female partner not saying no is completely different from a female partner saying yes to sex.)

30% of the men claimed consent was given if there was a "Mutual agreement" where a discussion has been had or where both sides had talked about sex. This answer however should not be mistaken as the proper form of consent. Here, a clear "yes" for sex from the female partner is not specified. This answer in fact still has a lot of vagueness where consent may not have been properly given.

Cent-GPS wishes not to identify why the results may have turned out the way they have. This is for the public to discuss. Without a doubt, the results point to a higher need for an effective and more in-depth sex education in Malaysia. A majority of men do not understand the true meaning of consent. A majority of men claim they learned how to use protection through the media and porn. A big segment of men are unable to identify an unhealthy relationship. A big chunk of men believe that sex education promotes unnecessary sexual activity.

Hypothetically, this segment of men - urban, Klang valley, English-speaking - was supposed to represent the most comprehensive and understanding in terms of consent, sex education and healthy relationships. We fear the results and misconceptions surrounding sex education may possibly be the same, or worse in other areas of Malaysia.

We hope this study can continue to spark a conversation about these very important issues. A safer Malaysia starts with everyone having the will and strength to first recognize these issues exist in the first place.

This is part 1 of our study.



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