

The Relationship of Self-Control and Religious Orientation to Attitude toward Pre-marital Relations

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Today premarital friendships between boys and girls is one of the most important cultural and social issues which can greatly affect the health of young people. The role of religion and self-control in mental health is of particular significance. Given the importance of these issues, this study aimed to determine the relationship of self-control and religious orientation to attitude toward premarital relations.

Method: This study was correlational. 357 students at Robat Karim Azad University were selected for stratified sampling. Then, they completed the Tangney self-control questionnaire, Allport religious orientation scale and Inventory attitude to Pre-marital relations with the opposite sex. The data were analyzed by Pearson correlation. In this study, all the ethical issues were considered and the authors declared no conflict of interest.

Results: The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between self-control and intrinsic religious orientation ($r= 0/148$), and between self-control and external religious orientation ($r= - 0/153$), self-control and attitude toward premarital relations ($r= -0/107$), intrinsic religious orientation and attitude to premarital ($r= -0/174$), external religious orientation and attitude toward premarital relations ($r= 0/197$).

Conclusion: Religious orientation and self-control are determining factors in attitude to premarital relationships. It seems that investigating religious orientation and self-control can predict attitudes to premarital relationships.

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Summary

Background and Objectives: Premarital friendship is an important issue in society which can inflict health problems on young people; besides, the role of religion and self-control is particularly important in the investigation of mental health problems. This study was conducted to determine the relationship of self-control and religious orientation to premarital friendship. Recently, with increase in college education, moving to big cities, and also widespread access to new communication technologies (e.g., the Internet and social networks), communication has been

facilitated (1). Moreover, due to the willingness of girls to further their studies to university level, and economic problems related to marriage such as unemployment, the age of marriage has escalated in recent years. Consequently, the gap between the onset of puberty and marriage has widened (2). Communication and friendships between boys and girls before marriage can affect their health; thus, clarifying its causes is an important step in planning for their youth and health issues (3). Human instinctive attraction to the opposite sex, along with cultural, social, economic, and family factors can play a role in the development of heterosexual tendencies (4). Young adults turn to these types of relationships given the stage they are in. The important issue is the ability to

control the seduction, which means to control the urge to have a relationship with the opposite sex and postpone it until marriage. Self-control is a process in which people monitor their behavior and judge behavior in accordance with standards; accordingly, they modify their behavior according to the results of the judgment (3). Several preceding studies have shown the relationship between self-control and religion (5). Religion as a vast system of guidance includes elements of self-control as well because it gives guidance and ethical rules to people in order to control and prevent these types of behavior (6). Religious beliefs have a positive impact on life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and lifestyle (7). To prevent problems, attention should be paid to the roots of the factors affecting the relationships before marriage. This study investigated the relationship among self-control, religious orientation, and attitude regarding relationships with the opposite sex before marriage.

Method: This study is applied research in terms of purpose, and descriptive-correlational as for data collection. The statistical population included 6920 undergraduate students at Robat Karim Islamic Azad University in the academic year of 1394-95. Using Morgan and Jersey's table, 357 male and female students were selected through stratified random sampling. After that, the required information was collected by questionnaires considering the principle of confidentiality. In this study, Self-control Questionnaire, Religious Orientation Scale, and Attitude to Relationships with the Opposite Sex before Marriage Questionnaire were used (below). The statistical method used in this study included descriptive statistics (mean & standard deviation), the Pearson correlation coefficient, and multiple regression.

Tangney self-control questionnaire: The self-control questionnaire was designed by Tangney et al in 2004. It aims to measure people's control over themselves and consists of 36 phrases. Cronbach's alpha was reported to be 0.89 (8).

Religious orientation scale: Allport's religious orientation scale was designed in 1950 by Allport and Rass. This scale was prepared to measure the intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation and contains 21 sentences (9). The internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.71, and the test-retest reliability of 0.74 was reported (10).

Premarital relationship attitudes with the opposite sex friends questionnaire: Premarital relationship attitudes questionnaire was developed in 1380 by Monireh Kordloo. This questionnaire measures the consent of people to connect with friends of the opposite sex before marriage. The questionnaire has 25 questions and the Likert scale is used for its scoring. The test validity is 0.93 (11).

Results: The results showed that there was a significant relationship between the variables. In other words, there was a significant positive relationship between self-control and internal religious orientation

($r = 0.148$); besides, there were significant negative relationships between self-control and external religious orientation ($r = -0.153$), self-control and attitude to premarital relationship ($r = -0.107$), internal religious orientation and attitude to premarital relationship ($r = -0.174$). Moreover, a significant positive relationship between self-control and external religious orientation and attitude to premarital relationship was observed ($r = -0.197$).

Conclusion: The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship among self-control, religious orientation, and attitude toward relationships with the opposite sex before marriage. The results of this study indicated a significant relationship among self-control, religious orientation and attitude to premarital relationships. The results of this study were consistent with the findings of previous studies. For instance, in one study a positive relationship between self-control and religious attitude was demonstrated (12-13). People with strong self-control can better follow the religious orders against the temptations more often. People with high self-control are able to protect themselves against negative behaviors more, to avoid deviant behaviors, and also to appropriately respond to social behaviors (14-15). By delving into the holy Quran, we also come to know that in some cases emphasis is put on the importance of self-control. According to the Qur'an, following desires is the main cause of corruption and self-destruction (16). Considering religious orientation and its relationship to premarital relations and matrimonial matters, results of several studies (17-19) confirm that religious values have the highest explanatory power about friendship before marriage (20). In another study, it was found that religious orientation affects students' tendency toward premarital relationships (21). Also, in another research it was shown that there was a significant difference between students who had relations with the opposite sex before marriage and students who did not have this type of relationship (22). To clarify the findings of this study, we should point out that people's attitude is different about premarital relationships. Some students have positive attitude toward these relations and perceive it to be useful, while there is a negative attitude about this in our society. People who have self-control and positive religious orientation adopt a negative attitude toward premarital relationships. The reason is that premarital relations leading to marriage have unfortunate results such as divorce. Self-control and religious orientation are factors which affect the attitude toward relationships with the opposite sex before marriage. By examining self-control and religious orientation, this attitude can be predicted. As for the limitations of this study, using correlation and self-reported questionnaires should be taken into account. Furthermore, this study was limited to students of Robat Karim Islamic Azad University, reducing its generalizability.

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