

## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, youths and adolescents are attributing with more sexually active than ever before. The consequences of sexually active lead to reproductive health problems and social problems: such as unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, obstructed labor, contracting STIs and death. Premarital sexual practices among youths and adolescents have been recognized high and increasing worldwide. This study aimed to assess the awareness and perception on sexual and reproductive health and self-reported practice of premarital sex among never married youths in Chaungzone Township, Mon State. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 404 youths of equal proportion of male and female youths both in rural and urban community. Assessment was carried out through guided self-administered semi-structured questionnaires. Most of the youths were between 15-17 years and middle school passed and above level. Most were unemployment and nearly 27% had relationships. This study found that 11.4% (17.8% of males and 5.0% of females) had premarital sex practice. Among 36 male exposed respondents, 11.1% was homosexual, 72.2% was heterosexual and 16.7% was bisexual. Among 10 exposed female respondents 20.0% had homosexual and 80.0% had heterosexual experience. Only 9.9% of youths stated that they accepted premarital sex practice. Over a quarter of youths (26.0%) had high total knowledge level in reproductive health, premarital sex, HIV/AIDS and contraceptive issues. But most of youths (92.6%) had good total attitude level in these issues. After adjusting the covariates, the odds of practicing premarital sex were higher among youths with  $\geq 18$  years age group (AOR=3.5, 95% CI = 1.2, 9.6), low education (AOR=3.3, 95% CI = 1.1, 10.7), Burmese youths (AOR=3.1, 95% CI = 1.2, 8.4), youths with relationship (AOR=8.0, 95% CI = 3.0, 21.2) and youths who accepted premarital sex practice (AOR=10.9, 95% CI = 3.6, 33.1), having friends with premarital sex experience (AOR=3.9, 95% CI = 1.3, 11.4), compared to their counterparts. The qualitative findings to the awareness and perception of premarital sex explored that most of both youths and service providers, did not accept premarital sex among youths because of its contradiction to traditional norms, customs and belief. All health care providers and youths perceived that privacy was the most critical thing in providing reproductive health services to youths. All levels of providers pointed out that all types of resources would be needed

for providing reproductive health services to youths. In addition, self-reported premarital sex practice among youths was found in this area so specific and targeted strategies and activities should be implemented by effective and efficient youth-friendly reproductive health services.