

Faith Over Distance: The Christian Ethical Response to Phone Sex in Marital Long-Distance Relationships

Simon^{1*}, Auw Tammy Yulianto², Elsyina Rode Pararem³, Jamin Tanhid⁴

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Anugrah, Indonesia; e-mail: simonpetrus45144@gmail.com

² Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Anugrah, Indonesia; e-mail: tammyyulianto@gmail.com

³ School of Theology, Boston University, United States; e-mail: elsyinap@bu.edu

⁴ Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi Jaffray Makassar, Indonesia; e-mail: jamin92@gmail.com

* Correspondence

Received: 2022-11-28; Accepted: 2023-10-23; Published: 2023-12-21

Abstract: This study delves into the ethical considerations of phone sex within long-distance marital relationships (LDRs) from a Christian ethical perspective. Employing qualitative methods, including scriptural analysis and literature review, the research aims to ascertain the compatibility of phone sex with Christian doctrinal teachings concerning marital intimacy. The findings suggest that phone sex is perceived as diverging from the Christian ethical norms which advocate for physical and personal marital interactions, categorizing it as a form of sexual perversion akin to masturbation. The study contributes to theological discourse by providing a framework for understanding modern challenges in marital intimacy within the Christian context. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining physical intimacy as prescribed by scripture and highlights the potential spiritual and ethical pitfalls associated with phone sex in LDRs. Recommendations include fostering educational and counseling initiatives within church communities to guide couples in navigating these issues. This study enriches the dialogue on integrating technology into marital practices while adhering to Christian ethical standards.

Keywords: Christian Ethics; Long-Distance Relationships; Marital Intimacy; Phone Sex; Theological Perspectives.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pertimbangan etis dari seks melalui telepon dalam hubungan pernikahan jarak jauh (LDR) dari perspektif etika Kristen. Menggunakan metode kualitatif, termasuk analisis kitab suci dan tinjauan literatur, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan kesesuaian seks melalui telepon dengan ajaran doktrinal Kristen mengenai keintiman pernikahan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa seks melalui telepon dipandang sebagai penyimpangan dari norma etika Kristen yang menganjurkan interaksi pernikahan yang fisik dan pribadi, mengkategorikannya sebagai bentuk perbuatan seksual yang menyimpang seperti masturbasi. Studi ini berkontribusi pada wacana teologis dengan menyediakan kerangka untuk memahami tantangan modern dalam keintiman pernikahan dalam konteks Kristen. Ini menekankan pentingnya menjaga keintiman fisik seperti yang diamanatkan oleh kitab suci dan menyoroti potensi bahaya spiritual dan etis yang terkait dengan seks melalui telepon dalam LDR. Rekomendasi termasuk mendorong inisiatif pendidikan dan konseling dalam komunitas gereja untuk membimbing pasangan dalam menavigasi isu-isu ini. Studi ini memperkaya dialog tentang integrasi teknologi dalam praktik pernikahan sambil mematuhi standar etika Kristen.

Kata Kunci: Etika Kristen; Hubungan Jarak Jauh; Intimitas Pernikahan; Perspektif Teologis; Seks Telepon.

1. Introduction

Long distance relationship in the context of marriage is called long distance marriage which means that the couple are physically separated, where one of the spouses must go to another place for the purpose of working or something else, while the other person must stay at home (Carole Pistole, 2010).

Aylor as quoted by Pistole stated that the number of married couples who had LDR increased from year to year (Arditti & Kauffman, 2004). In Indonesia, Reza explained that the results of his research showed that from ten married couples who had long distance relationships, which will be abbreviated as LDR in the following writing, seven of them met their biological needs by using phone sex (Zakiah, 2020). In addition, a survey from the UK organized by *Durex* stated that 14% of married couples showed a level of biological satisfaction when using telephone as a means of meeting their biological needs (Efita, 2014). From this data, it can be said that phone sex is the main means used by married couples who have LDR in order to fulfill their biological needs.

The phenomenon of phone sex has indeed been rampant and developed nowadays, especially with the development of technology and the variety of application features on the smartphones that makes it easier for people to interact with others wherever they are. As stated by Ramadani, technological developments today had a significant influence, such as the emergence of various applications to indecent videos. Not only in the form of unethical videos or recordings, but also the phenomenon of phone sex or talking or fantasizing sexually with a partner had become a trend for the wider community. This was done in order to maintain the intimate relationships while meeting the biological needs (Ramadani & Fitri, 2022). As a result of phone sex, teenagers and adults who are not bound in a marriage can carry out this activity in order to obtain pseudo-sexual satisfaction. In his thesis, Sofyan from the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya revealed that phone sex had been favoured by teenagers today. Teenagers engaged in phone sex because it could provide sexual gratification while having wild fantasies with their partners (Sofyan, Sumarliyah, Reliani, & others, 2011). This finding demonstrates the fact that phone sex activities, whether for married couples or not, are starting to be widely used in obtaining sexual gratification.

The rise of phone sex activities today was responded by Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) through fatwa No. 287 year 2001 which urged the government to make laws regarding pornography and porn actions (Achmad, 2019). As a result, the state established a law concerning pornography which was UU RI No. 44 year 2008. This rule accommodates the prohibition of phone sex activities. The reason why MUI voiced this issue vigorously was to prevent the moral damage among the younger generation from getting worse especially in promiscuity, because phone sex could cause infidelity (Hannani, 2012). However, a sexologist, doctor Boyke expressed a different opinion that if the phone sex activities were carried out by a legally married couple who was having a long-distance relationship, this was said to be normal and not a deviation. However, this phone sex is generally misused by many people (Hildawati, 2018).

How does the Christian ethics study and assess the phenomenon of phone sex performed by married couples? Does Christian ethics allow phone sex or strictly prohibit this practice? If it is forbidden, isn't sexual arousal a gift of God from the very beginning when man was perfectly created? (Sitanggang, 2012). As far as the author's observation and understanding, there has been no ban on this phone sex activity in writing if it is carried out by married couples who are in LDR marriage. The Catholic Church, which is known to be active in social problems, officially rejected masturbation through the statements of Thomas Aquinas (Sanford, 1994). Masturbation and phone sex have similarities and differences. The similarity is that the sexual activity is carried out individually, while the difference is in the phone sex, there is an opposite sex that is visible and they perform the sexual activity together.

If Christian ethics forbid the practice of phone sex by husband and wife, what is the theological basis? How does Christian Ethics through the Bible respond to this phone sex? Previous research research on phone sex was written by Ramadani and Fitri. The findings of their research showed that phone sex was a normal activity if performed by a legal married couple (Ramadani & Fitri, 2022). There was also research from Antonius which discussed Christian Marriage from the Perspective of God's Word. His research findings revealed that the Christian concept of marriage is based on the union of the two persons according to God's plan. However, the general concept of marriage is influenced by social pressure (Antonius, 2020). There was also research conducted by Paath regarding the Construction of Biblical Christian Marriage. The research findings suggested that marriage in the

Christian concept is permanent because it is based on a commitment to God through a marriage promise built on Bible. Ramadani's research examined phone sex from the aspect of the MUI Fatwa, then Antonius examined Christian marriage from the perspective of God's word and how the Biblical construction of marriage studied by Paath was different from what the author researched. The author will highlight what the Bible says and evaluate Christian ethics regarding phone sex from the perspective of Christian ethics.

The gap in the differences in this research also provided novelty in this paper. The purpose of writing this topic was to give Christians a theologically definitive understanding of the question, whether phone sex is ethical or not when it is performed by married couples in LDR from the Christian ethics point of view? This topic was written to educate the congregations in pastoral ministry through literacy from the Christian ethics point of view.

2. Method

This article was written using qualitative methods with a literature study approach and biblical exposition. By using a literature study approach, the primary source of data used are books, journals, and online news related to this topic. Therefore, the data presented in this article is relevant, and can be accounted for its validity scientifically (Zaluchu, 2020). In addition, the exposition approach was also used in this article to answer how phone sex was studied from the Christian Ethics point of view. In order to obtain the answer, the researchers exposed the verses of the Bible. From the exposition carried out, a theological framework for the answers would be obtained. Koller defined that the exposition and analysis of biblical verses could be extended into an interpretation. The interpretation of the verses in the scriptures includes words and phrases used while paying attention to the close and far context, as well as their historical and geographical background (Zaluchu, 2021). The steps that were taken by the researchers in deciphering this topic started with sorting out the data, reading, describing and deciphering comprehensively as well as analyzing how the phone sex was reviewed in Christian ethics. The discussion was closed with a conclusion.

3. Result and Discussion

Meaning of phone sex

The definition of phone sex is a sexual activity carried out by two individuals of different sex or the same sex without physical sexual activities. Phone sex is usually performed by those who are separated by a distance, but they use the means of technology to create sexual stimulation. By Hildawati, this phone sex was categorized as online sex by using *Whatsapp* through the video call feature or various types of devices or smartphones. In performing this phone sex activity, a person is pretending to have a physical sexual activity by listening to the voices or sighs as if they were having an intercourse in order to evoke the biological desires of the interlocutor (Hildawati, 2018). Phone Sex is a sexual activity carried out by listening over the phone or watching cellular videos. A person tends to call his partner in a more intimate way and draw to the desire to have sex. The sexual activity is done via mobile phones while the partners make soft but lust conversations and sighs in order to tease his partner.

General Perspectives on The Impact of Phone Sex

In general, the phone sex activities done by husband and wife can be divided into two perspectives. Both perspectives have negative and positive impacts. The first negative impact of this phone sex activity is that a person will enjoy a sexual activity through a phone call more than a real physical intercourse. When a person has phone sex, he will feel comfortable and get more orgasmic arousal. Piliang said phone sex was a part of the digitalisation of sex which provided a new way to generate 'satisfaction differentiation'. Various forms of sex such as *digital voyeurism*, *phone sex*, *teledildonic*, *sex games* are manifestations of the desire for the differentiation of sexual satisfaction

(Piliang, 2016). Since phone sex is a part of digitalization, there is a concern that someone will prefer this kind of sexual activity because it provides a new sensation that gives more comfort than a sexual intercourse.

The second negative impact is that privacy matters can be consumed by the public because the devices or smartphones can be hacked by irresponsible people. There were some evidents in 2015 when some of the world's celebrities were hit by the "*fapping*" scandal. That happened when a hacker accessed more than 50 *iCloud* accounts and 72 *Gmail* accounts belonged to various Hollywood female celebrities. The hacker disseminated the sensual photos of some public figures such as Jennifer Lawrence, Ariana Grande, and Kate Upton to the internet (Ardian, 2020). The third impact of this phone sex is that people can fall into the habit of accessing pornography through their smartphones. Usually, those who are actively engaged in phone sex activities tend to have a habit of accessing porn contents. This was emphasized by Rachmaniar in her research which revealed that smartphones had the potential to open access to porn contents. Ironically, the perpetrators have been dominated by young people since they switched their mobile phones to smartphones, so they can access the porn contents easily (Rachmaniar, Prihandini, & Janitra, 2018). This proves that phone sex activity can push a person into pornography. A lot of people consider that this activity is illegitimate. The ban is certainly reasonable because those who totally reject this say that whatever the reason, this will have a bad impact on the perpetrators.

While commonly there are people who respond negatively to phone sex activities, there is another perspective which views this activity to have a positive impact especially for couples who are having a Long Distance Relationship. As stated by Ramadani, phone sex was normal when done by two people who were in a legal marriage. However, this activity will be considered wrong if it is done by unmarried couple because it is categorized as pornography and porn action and it violates the religious norms (Ramadani & Fitri, 2022). The first positive impact is that it can preserve the integrity of conjugal love biologically. Even though it is done without physical intercourse, this activity can provide happiness and biological satisfaction even when it is done virtually. Secondly, both husbands and wives can fulfil their biological needs even through virtual space only. The fulfillment of biological needs, which used to be carried out through physical encounters, can be done by having phone sex in order to meet their biological needs even though they are at different places. Joyce A. Arditti conducted her research on couples who were in LDR, in the findings of her research she revealed that the couples could build harmony and intimacy over the phone intensively. In addition, interdependence and commitment are the key elements in maintaining intimate relationships for couples who are in LDR (Arditti & Kauffman, 2004). Thirdly, this activity can maintain the intimacy of a conjugal relationship. Although sexual activities were carried out through videos, as stated by Rosenau, having this kind of sexual activity could create the illusion of intimacy in the virtual world by replacing the real activities with stimulation based on their experiences to represent the real acts. In addition, sexual activities can strengthen the commitment and fulfill their longing souls (Rosenau & Tan, 2002). This means that sexual activities performed by phones can keep the love commitment for married couples so that they will not get apart.

Phone Sex Reviewed from Christian Ethics

For married people, of course, sexual needs are essential. David Ming suggested that sex was part of man's natural instincts. Therefore, it is categorized as one of the basic needs. However, the fulfillment of sex should not be done freely if it is not legalized by the state and Bible (Ming, 2021). A reformed figure, Martin Luther viewed sex as holy, sacred, and closely related in the lives of husbands and wives. Therefore, women or men must not become sex slaves (Monding, 2020), although the aspect of physical needs - including sex - is the most dominant aspect should be restrained by the application of Christian ethics in the family (Tanhidy, Daliman, Suparti, & Siswanto, 2021). This signifies that the sacredness of sex must be built on the legitimacy of the state and the Bible which is confirmed through the bonds of marriage.

How does Christian Ethics respond to phone sex for married couples who are in LDR? In conducting sexual activities for husbands and wives who are in LDR, the sexual stimulation is carried out by each individual with the help of the interlocutor through their smartphones. The sexual stimulation is done individually but simultaneously through *video calls*, which is categorized as masturbation. Masturbation can be defined as the act of stimulating the most sensitive genital organs to reach the peak of sexual pleasure. Sitanggang defined that masturbation, which was derived from the Latin word *masturbare*, consisted of two words, *manus* (hand) and *stuprare* (misuse). Thus, masturbation is interpreted as the misuse of hand (Sitanggang, 2012). Hands are used to stimulate and touch the genital organs to obtain sexual stimulation that is categorized as masturbation. For some Orthodox churches, especially Catholics, masturbation is considered a cursed act because it is considered a serious sinful act (Mulya, 2010). Sitanggang considered masturbation as solo sex (Sitanggang, 2012).

Based on the Bible, obtaining proper sexual stimulation should be done simultaneously by husband and wife through physical contact. The husband stimulates his wife by touching the sensitive organs, and vice versa. This is confirmed by God through His word that *thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee* (Gen. 3:16d KJV). In the Bible - ENDE translation - uses the word "desire." The word desire in Hebrew uses the word *תַּשׁוּבָה* (*tə-šū-qā-têk*) (*Genesis 3:16 Interlinear*): This means that the wife's lust for the husband because the husband has something that makes the wife sexually aroused. The word "lust" also confirms that the husband performs sexual stimulation to the wife, so that the wife becomes lustful. Busenitz conducted a study in a paper entitled *Woman's Desire For Man: Genesis 3:16 Reconsidered*, she revealed that although this text was related to the fall of man in sin, Eve had a longing and intimacy for Adam both affectionately and intimately in sexuality (Busenitz, 1986). This shows that the desire for sex is acquired and performed by the opposite sex as the partner.

Stanislaus revealed that the text of Genesis 3:16 was directly related to the sexuality framed in the institution of marriage. Therefore, the passion for sexuality in marriage embodies the faith in God as well as a religious dimension of husband and wife integrated into God's relationship with His chosen people (Stanislaus, 2017). The same was expressed by Fletcher that the Bible clearly states that sexuality is inseparable from commendable morality. The Book of Torah contains prohibitions and avoidance of immoral acts as written in Lev. 19:20-22 and Deut. 22:13-30. That is why it is important to maintain chastity before and after marriage (Fletcher Jr, 2017). This means that in obtaining sexual stimulation, it must be done in a proper and strict moral and civilized manner.

Sexual activities carried out through phones are unethical when viewed from Christian Ethics. This is because in this activity, the sexual stimulation is not carried out directly or physically by the spouse but the sexual stimulation is carried out individually by means of technology. The Bible is clear in Gen. 3:16, that sexual stimulation must be done directly through intercourse. Even Gellman revealed that Adam was a normative sexual being who was Eve's subordinate (Gellman, 2006). What was revealed by Gellman confirmed that Eve's sexual arousal was obtained from Adam through sexual intercourse. In essence, sex performed outside the normal sexual activity by a couple is prohibited by the Bible and thus does not meet the proper and healthy Christian ethics.

From Christian Ethics, phone sex is not approved by the Bible, because there is no physical sexual activity between husband and wife who are in LDR. Yet the sex satisfaction occurs when they have solo sex accompanied by fantasies before the smartphones simultaneously with their partner. The pattern of phone sex performed by LDR couples is not natural, because it is built on fantasy. Piliang suggested that the digitalization of sex opened up space for "unnatural" sex, where there was no physical contact (Piliang, 2016). From Christian ethical view, phone sex is categorized as sex perversion, because God built human sex patterns, in the case of Adam and Eve naturally through normal and natural copulation.

The sexual intercourse written in the Bible was when Adam and Eve had sex. The Bible says, "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD" (Gen. 4:1 KJV). The word "intercourse" in Hebrew is *יָדָעַתְּ* (*yā-dā'*) (Bible Hub, 2022b). In *Strong's Concordance* the translation is *knowing*, but in NAS translation, the word *יָדָעַתְּ* (*yā-dā'*) is interpreted as *Now*

the man had relations with his wife, which means Adam had a husband and wife relationship while they were having sex. The INT translation reads "*now the man had Eve his wife.*" (Bible Hub, 2022c) This word means that Adam possessed Eve, marked when they had a sexual copulation. From the description of the Hebrew word *יָדָה* (*yā-da'*), it can be concluded that the direct penetration or direct copulation of Adam and Eve indicates that they are a legal married couple before God. The direct sex penetration performed physically by Adam and Eve also hints that Eve's body is owned by Adam, and it goes the same that Adam's body is owned by Eve. Davidson suggested that although Adam and Eve fell into sin, God's ideals regarding Adam and Eve's sexual relationship did not change as He mandated in the second chapter of Genesis to make the couple into one flesh (Davidson, 1988). This means that the intercourse approved by the Bible is the normal and natural copulation by a legal husband and wife.

In phone sex performed by husband and wife who are in LDR, copulation through physical contact does not occur, but done individually. This action is not justified by the Bible, because the form of sex referred in the scriptures is direct intercourse between husband and wife. Haffner revealed that Adam and his wife were both naked, and they did not feel embarrassed. The verse clearly talks about marriage and sex, but does not mention procreation at all (Haffner, 2004). Sexual gratification *via* phone is a fallacy in the view of Christian ethics, because sex performed via phone is an act that is not commendable. Maulida did her research on phone sex and it turned out that the impact of this activity was that it could reduce the religious behaviour, easily loss concentration and enthusiasm could fade due to addiction (Maulida & Rachmah, 2016). This indicates that phone sex has a detrimental impact on the soul and erodes the religious nature of the person who does it.

Phone sex is not justified by the law either because from the legal point of view, it is categorized as porn action. Phone sex activity is included in the category of pornography and porn action due to the urge of religious leaders initiated by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) which saw the rampant cases of people who were exposed to this issue. Ramadani stated that due to the urge of the religious leaders on this issue, the government passed a law, Undang Undang Reublik Indonesia no 44 year 2008, that phone sex is labeled as pornography. Ramadani and Fitri, "Fenomena Sex Phone Relationship Due to Westernization: A Study of Mui's Fatwa On Pornography And Pornography." When the government labelled phone sex as pornography, in principle Christian Ethics agrees because Christian Ethics deals with what is morally right and wrong (Geisler, 2010). The agreement between Christian ethics and the government was about regulating and arranging the moral norms of the wider community so that it is civilized, especially in virtual spaces. David Hollenbach argued that the church played an important role in contributing mutual benefit even in a pluralistic society (Hollenbach & Hollenbach, 2002). Legally, this sex activity is not justified, civilized and polite in virtual spaces and basically Christian Ethics has the same view.

The phone sex activity, even though it is carried out by a legal couple, is not justified in the perspective of Christian Ethics, because the activity has the potential to spread in public spaces. The privacy matters can be spread out because smartphones can be hacked by anyone. Pamungkas et al stated that crimes in today's digitalization era often haunted the smartphone users. By using phishing or fake websites that are deliberately spread through social networks such as email, chat or broadcasting, the perpetrators ask or steal the personal information of the smartphone users. Once the criminals have obtained the data, they can spread the private matters (Pamungkas & Saputra, 2020). The sexual activities should be done in a closed room, but when it is done through smartphones, the activity has the potential to be consumed by the public.

The Principles of Christian Ethics prohibit Christians from having phone sex even if they are husband and wife, because the Bible encourages believers to show modesty in public spaces as well as in virtual spaces. Phone sex activity is a part of the virtual space, where believers should demonstrate civilized and decent attitude. The Bible states that Christians should live as people who are courteous before others and not become stumbling blocks (1 Thes. 4:12) and have self-control according to biblical principles (Wenas, 2016). The word "polite" in Greek uses the word *εὐσχημόνως* (*euschēmonōs*) which means honorable and noble (Bible Hub, 2022d). This means that when people engage in phone sex activities, it is not a polite behavior let alone honorable. Christians should have boundaries about what

needs to be done and shown in the public sphere, so as not to undermine his identity and life testimony. After all, the virtual world is a world that can be copied, edited, hacked, and forged (Simon, Lie, & Komaling, 2021). Even Nzioka argued that the media was flooded with content related to sex. With the advancement of media platforms such as internet connectivity, there is more information about sex and how it continues to evolve and be used by humans (Nzioka, 2022). This means that believers should not use private matters such as phone sex in a virtual space and become public consumption.

Even though phone sex activities are carried out by husband and wife, from the perspective of Christian ethics, this activity cannot be justified by the Bible because this practice is categorized as solo masturbation even though it is carried out between husband and wife who are far apart. Phone sex also cannot be justified according to Christian ethics because the sexual activities via smartphone are not polite and refined and also because the sexual stimulation is not appropriate according to Biblical terms which should involve physical contact between husband and wife. Sexual desire is indeed part of God's gift to humans, but the channeling of that desire must not violate Christian ethical principles. Therefore, self-control is needed in managing sexual desires, so that when sexual desires arise, they do not result in violations of Christian ethical principles.

Discussion

This research has highlighted the controversial nature of phone sex among married couples in long-distance relationships (LDRs) from a Christian ethical perspective. It finds that phone sex, while providing a means of maintaining intimacy for some couples, does not align with Christian teachings on the sanctity of marital sexual relations, which are expected to be direct and personal. Christian ethics emphasizes that sexual relations should be confined to personal interaction between spouses, not mediated by technology in the form of phone sex, which is equated with masturbation and seen as a perversion of the divine intent for marital intimacy.

This study offers a stark contrast to secular perspectives on the role of technology in maintaining intimate relationships across distances. Secular research often regards tools like phone sex and sexting as beneficial for sustaining relationship intimacy, where such activities are seen as adaptive and practical, particularly through the skillful creation of "real" interactions by operators (Selmi, 2018). In contrast, from a Christian ethical standpoint, these practices diverge significantly as they are viewed as deviations from the sanctity of marital sexual relations, which are intended to be physical and exclusive to marriage partners.

Furthermore, while sexting is prevalent among youths and those in romantic relationships and is often accepted as a normative part of modern communication (Delevi & Weisskirch, 2013; Franco, Gaggi, & Palazzi, 2022; Wei & Lo, 2013), Christian ethics perceives such behaviors as encouraging sexual expression outside the bounds of marriage, leading to potential spiritual and relational harms. This view extends to the secular understanding of harm in sexting, which differentiates between consensual and non-consensual acts (Wei & Lo, 2013); Christian ethics, however, sees all sexting as potentially harmful.

Lastly, the secular application of mobile technology in areas like sex work and sexual health education (Eleuteri, Rossi, Tripodi, Fabrizi, & Simonelli, 2019; Panchanadeswaran, Unnithan, Chacko, Brazda, & Kuruppu, 2017) shows an adaptation to the impacts of technology, focusing on perceived benefits. Contrastingly, Christian ethics would critique these adaptations for their moral implications and risks, emphasizing that any educational or therapeutic use of technology must align with biblical teachings on marriage and chastity. This highlights the essential role of theological perspectives in framing the ethical considerations of digital interactions in intimate relationships.

This research underscores the profound impact of religious beliefs on moral decisions, particularly in the context of a technologically advanced society. Religious individualism, where individuals interpret moral decisions through their understanding of God's will, correlates with progressive attitudes on issues like same-sex marriage, divorce, and premarital sex (Uecker & Froese, 2019). Moreover, the degree of religious belief moderates individuals' optimism about societal and moral progress, reflecting varying levels of existential belief in human advancement (Rutjens, van Harreveld,

van der Pligt, van Elk, & Pyszczynski, 2016). Additionally, differences in religious orientations, such as fundamentalism and intrinsic religiosity, significantly predict moral foundations, illustrating the intricate links between religious dimensions and ethical concerns (Mikani & Rasoolzadeh Tabatabaei, 2021).

The ethical implications of religious beliefs manifest in behaviors that often promote prosociality towards strangers, driven by the awareness of supernatural monitoring and cultural religious practices (Norenzayan, 2014). Such moral frameworks, while fostering strong values and addressing existential queries, also encourage a homogenization of behaviors within religious communities, making individuals resistant to change (Adam-Troian & Motyl, 2020). On a sociological level, religious beliefs influence deontological moral choices, especially when these choices are framed as personal decisions, tapping into deep moral and emotional instincts that create a clustering effect within communities, a phenomenon stronger than that observed with secular systems of meaning (Adam-Troian & Motyl, 2020; Szekely, Opre, & Miu, 2015). This intersection of religion and morality, explored through the impact of religious iconography and the internalization of moral codes, highlights the ongoing relevance of studying the spiritual foundations of moral cognition (Cavrak & Kleider-Offutt, 2015; Simpson, Piazza, & Rios, 2016).

The implications of these findings are profound for pastoral care and counseling within Christian communities. They suggest a need for clearer guidance and support for couples in LDRs, stressing the importance of fostering physical togetherness wherever possible and finding morally acceptable ways to maintain intimacy. This study also invites a broader discussion within the Christian community about the boundaries of acceptable intimacy and the role of technology in relationships.

The findings stem from the fundamental Christian conviction that marriage and sexual relations should reflect the direct, physical union of spouses. This perspective is rooted in biblical scriptures which emphasize physical togetherness as a cornerstone of marital intimacy. The divergent view on phone sex is a reflection of these deep-seated beliefs about the nature of marital acts, deemed sacred and private.

Based on the insights gained from this research, it is recommended that churches initiate educational programs specifically designed to help couples in long-distance relationships maintain marital intimacy while adhering to scriptural teachings. Additionally, the enhancement of marital counseling services is crucial; these should provide couples with strategies to uphold intimacy without breaching their ethical or religious principles. Furthermore, fostering open discussions within church communities about the effects of technology on relationships could lead to the development of consensus-based strategies that address these contemporary challenges effectively.

4. Conclusion

This study underscores that within the framework of Christian ethics, phone sex among married couples, particularly those in long-distance relationships (LDRs), is not permissible. The primary biblical principle guiding this conclusion is that sexual relations should occur within the context of physical intimacy between spouses, reflecting natural and direct interaction. The research reveals that any sexual activities deviating from this norm are considered perversions by scriptural standards. Additionally, phone sex is associated with potential negative impacts, including the risk of indulging in pornography, spiritual degradation, and public exposure, all of which compromise a Christian's moral and public testimony.

This investigation contributes to the discourse on Christian ethics by articulating a clear theological stance on a modern issue—phone sex within marriage. By grounding the analysis in scriptural interpretations and Christian doctrinal teachings, it offers a distinct conceptual framework that helps believers navigate the complexities of maintaining marital intimacy within the ethical boundaries prescribed by their faith. This study also advances methodological approaches in theological ethics by integrating scriptural exegesis with contemporary social phenomena, providing a model for addressing other modern ethical dilemmas.

One limitation of this study is its primary reliance on scriptural analysis without empirical data from couples experiencing LDRs, which might have provided deeper insights into the practical challenges and ethical considerations they face. Future research could benefit from qualitative studies involving interviews with Christian couples in LDRs to explore their experiences and coping strategies in maintaining intimacy without compromising their ethical standards. Additionally, further studies could examine the impact of religious counseling on these couples' decisions about maintaining physical intimacy and adhering to their faith's teachings. Such research would enrich the understanding of the interplay between personal faith, church teachings, and marital intimacy in contemporary Christian life.

References

- Achmad, F. (2019). Cyber Sex Menurut Perspektif Hukum Islam Dan Undang-Undang No. 44 Tahun 2008 Tentang Pornografi. *Syaikhuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pranata Islam*, 10(1), 50–66. <https://doi.org/10.36835/syaikhuna.v10i1.3471>
- Adam-Troian, J., & Motyl, M. (2020). Religion: more essential (and existential) nutrient than opiate for the masses. In *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-817204-9.00029-9>
- Antonius, S. (2020). Pernikahan Kristen Dalam Perspektif Firman Tuhan. *Jurnal Pionir*, 6(2).
- Ardian, D. (2020, November). Penasaran Kok Bisa Ya Video Seks Pribadi Bocor ke Internet? Ternyata Ini Jawabannya.. *SINDO News*.
- Arditti, J. A., & Kauffman, M. (2004). Staying Close When Apart: Intimacy And Meaning In Long-Distance Dating Relationships. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 3(1), 27–51. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1300/J398v03n01_03
- Bible Hub. (2022a). Genesis 3:16.
- Bible Hub. (2022b). Genesis 4:1.
- Bible Hub. (2022c). Hebrew Concordance: yā·da' -- 64 Occurrences.
- Bible Hub. (2022d). Strong's Greek: 2156. εὐσχημόνως (euschémonós) -- becomingly.
- Busenitz, I. A. (1986). Woman's Desire for Man: Genesis 3: 16 Reconsidered. *Grace Theological Journal*, 7(2), 203–212.
- Carole Pistole, M. (2010). Long-Distance Romantic Couples: An Attachment Theoretical Perspective. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 36(2), 115–125. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2009.00169.x>
- Cavrak, S. E., & Kleider-Offutt, H. M. (2015). Pictures Are Worth a Thousand Words and a Moral Decision or Two: Religious Symbols Prime Moral Judgments. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 25(3), 173 – 192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508619.2014.921111>
- Davidson, R. M. (1988). The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 3. *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)*, 26(2), 18.
- Delevi, R., & Weisskirch, R. S. (2013). Personality factors as predictors of sexting. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(6), 2589 – 2594. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.06.003>
- Efita, R. (2014). Astaga, 12 Persen Orang Menelepon Saat Berhubungan Intim. *Kabar 24 Bisnis*.
- Eleuteri, S., Rossi, R., Tripodi, F., Fabrizi, A., & Simonelli, C. (2019). Smartphone applications : Useful for sex education, counselling and therapy ?; [Applications pour smartphones Peuvent-elles être utiles pour l'éducation sexuelle, le counseling et la thérapie ?]. *Revue Medicale Suisse*, 15(642), 579 – 582. Retrieved from <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85062761005&partnerID=40&md5=dbb34451d4e2f775f9d6fc4e98b8b2e1>
- Fletcher Jr, J. L. (2017). Sex Education and The Biblical Christian. *Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine*, 4(2), 1.
- Franco, M., Gaggi, O., & Palazzi, C. E. (2022). Improving Sexting Safety through Media Forwarding Control. *Proceedings - IEEE Consumer Communications and Networking Conference, CCNC*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/CCNC49033.2022.9700555>
- Geisler, N. L. (2010). *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options* (2nd ed.). United States of America: Baker Academic.
- Gellman, J. (2006). Gender and Sexuality in the Garden of Eden. *Theology & Sexuality*, 12(3), 319–335. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/13558358060605>
- Haffner, D. W. (2004). Sexuality and Scripture. *Religious Humanism*, 37(1), 2–14.
- Hannani, H. (2012). Pornografi dan Pornoaksi dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam. *DIKTUM: Jurnal Syariah Dan Hukum*, 10(1), 77–86. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35905/diktum.v10i1.256>
- Hildawati, H. (2018). Seks Onlen, Media Sosial, dan Gender. *Emik*, 1(1), 37–52.
- Hollenbach, S. J., & Hollenbach, D. (2002). *The Common Good And Christian Ethics* (Vol. 22; Robin Gill, Ed.). United

- Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Maulida, I., & Rachmah, N. (2016). *Perilaku Seksual Melalui Media Phone Sex*. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.
- Mikani, M., & Rasoolzadeh Tabatabaei, S. (2021). Religious Fundamentalism and Quest as Predictors of Moral Foundations Among Iranian Muslims. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 60(4), 811 – 829. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12750>
- Ming, D. (2021). Pandangan Alkitab Terhadap Seks Sebagai Landasan Iman Kristen. *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation*, 5(1), 36–51. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46965/jtc.v5i1.360>
- Monding, Y. D. (2020). Tinjauan Teologis Tentang Pendidikan Seks Dari Perspektif Pendidikan Kristiani Transformatif. *Jurnal Teologi Pengarah*, 2(2), 173–182. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36270/pengarah.v2i2.39>
- Mulya, T. W. (2010). Church Youth Sexuality in Surabaya: Teachings, Attitudes, and Behaviors. *Anima Indonesian Psychological Journal*, 25(3), 215–224.
- Norenzayan, A. (2014). Does religion make people moral? *Behaviour*, 151(2–3), 365 – 384. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568539X-00003139>
- Nzioka, J. N. (2022). A Biblical and Theological View on Human Sexuality: A Case Study of Selected Churches in Nairobi. *European Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, 6(1), 19–40. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47672/ejpcr.1162>
- Pamungkas, W. C., & Saputra, F. T. (2020). Analisa Mobile Phishing Dengan Incident Response Plan dan Incident Handling. *JURIKOM (Jurnal Riset Komputer)*, 7(4), 511–516. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.30865/jurikom.v7i4.2304>
- Panchanadeswaran, S., Unnithan, A. M., Chacko, S., Brazda, M., & Kuruppu, S. (2017). What's technology got to do with it? Exploring the impact of mobile phones on female sex workers' lives and livelihood in India. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 21(1–2), 152 – 167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718524.2017.1385318>
- Piliang, Y. A. (2016). Digitalisasi Seks dan Kepuasan Virtual. *Extension Course Filsafat (ECF)*, 1(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26593/ecf.v0i1.2291.%25p>
- Rachmaniar, R., Prihandini, P., & Janitra, P. A. (2018). Perilaku Penggunaan Smartphone Dan Akses Pornografi Di Kalangan Remaja Perempuan. *Jurnal Komunikasi Global*, 7(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24815/jkg.v7i1.10890>
- Ramadani, Y. D., & Fitri, W. (2022). Fenomena Hubungan Sex Phone Akibat Westernisasi: Kajian Fatwa Mui Tentang Pornografi Dan Pornoaksi. *Jurnal Pro Hukum*, 11(2), 175–184. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55129/jph.v11i1>
- Rosenau, D. E., & Tan, E. S. N. (2002). Single and Sexual: The Church's Neglected Dilemma. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 30(3), 185–194. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/009164710203000302>
- Rutjens, B. T., van Harreveld, F., van der Pligt, J., van Elk, M., & Pyszczynski, T. (2016). A March to a Better World? Religiosity and the Existential Function of Belief in Social-Moral Progress. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 26(1), 1 – 18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508619.2014.990345>
- Sanford, K. (1994). Toward a Masturbation Ethic. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 22(1), 21–28. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/00916471940220010>
- Selmi, G. (2018). The ordinary nature of fantasy: Language, gender and sexuality in phone sex work. In *Routledge International Handbook of Sex Industry Research* (pp. 577 – 583). Londo: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133913-56>
- Simon, S., Lie, T. L., & Komaling, H. W. (2021). Prinsip-Prinsip Etika Kristiani Bermedia Sosial. *DANUM PAMBELUM: Jurnal Teologi Dan Musik Gereja*, 1(1), 56–68.
- Simpson, A., Piazza, J., & Rios, K. (2016). Belief in divine moral authority: Validation of a shortened scale with implications for social attitudes and moral cognition. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 94, 256 – 265. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.01.032>
- Sitanggang, M. H. (2012). Masturbasi Ditinjau dari Perspektif Etika Kristen. *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan*, 13(1), 31–54. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v13i1.254>
- Sofyan, S. D., Sumarliyah, E., Reliani, S. K., & others. (2011). *Hubungan Antara Perilaku Remaja Tentang Phone Sex dengan Perilaku Seks Bebas di Kelas Xi Sma Negeri 1 Jenggawah Jember*. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya.
- Stanislaus, S. (2017). Perkawinan Dalam Kitab Suci Perjanjian Lama. *Logos*, 14(2), 17–51. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54367/logos.v14i2.337>
- Szekely, R. D., Opre, A., & Miu, A. C. (2015). Religiosity enhances emotion and deontological choice in moral dilemmas. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 79, 104 – 109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.01.036>
- Tanhidy, J., Daliman, M., Suparti, H., & Siswanto, K. (2021). Implementasi Etika Kristen Dalam Keluarga Badan Pengurus Jemaat Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia Propinsi Jawa Tengah. *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*, 5(1), 102. <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v5i1.348>

- Uecker, J. E., & Froese, P. (2019). Religious Individualism and Moral Progressivism: How Source of Religious Authority Is Related to Attitudes about Abortion, Same-Sex Marriage, Divorce, and Premarital Sex. *Politics and Religion*, 12(2), 283 – 316. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048318000792>
- Wei, R., & Lo, V.-H. (2013). Examining sexting's effect among adolescent mobile phone users. *International Journal of Mobile Communications*, 11(2), 176 – 193. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMC.2013.052640>
- Wenas, M. L. (2016). Integrasi penguasaan Diri Dalam Psikologi Dengan Pendidikan Agama Kristen. In I. P. A. Darmawan (Ed.), *Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Agama Kristen*. Ungaran: Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Simpson Ungaran.
- Zakiah, R. U. (2020). Pola Pemenuhan Hak Dan Kewajiban Suami Istri Long Distance Relationship (LDR). *Al-Ahwal Al-Syakhsyiyah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Peradilan Islam*, 1(1), 71–82. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15575/as.v1i1.7804>
- Zaluchu, S. E. (2020). Strategi Penelitian Kualitatif dan Kuantitatif Di Dalam Penelitian Agama. *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*, 4(1), 28. <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v4i1.167>
- Zaluchu, S. E. (2021). Metode Penelitian di dalam Manuskrip Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan. *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup*, 3(2), 249–266. <https://doi.org/10.38189/jtbh.v3i2.93>



© 2023 by the authors. This publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>).

This page is intentionally left blank