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Risk and Protective Factors Affecting Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health in Peninsular Malaysia

Introduction

The rise in adolescent sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs has raised an increasing interest among the national agendas. This concern has been evident in the increasing proportion of young people who are at an early age, resulting in pregnant adolescents, early marriage, and early childbearing. The Youth Survey in 2014 reported that 41% of first sexual intercourse was below age 15 years old for both male and female adolescents. The proportion of 15% is due to sexual transition and breastfeeding (18.6% in 2010 to 55.5% in 2011). Furthermore, about 20% of women and men who were sexually active at the age of 15-20 years were pregnant. Moreover, the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy has increased among young people. Early interaction programs and policies are more acceptable and cost-effective.

Objective

The objective of this study is to determine the risk and protective factors of youth sexual and reproductive health.

Methodology

A cross-sectional study was done among randomly selected secondary school students aged 15-18 years in a state in Peninsular Malaysia. The sample size was calculated based on the prevalence of sexual activity in the study area. A total of 1,000 adolescents were randomly selected and interviewed. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and logistic regression.

Results

Youth Profile

Of the adolescents who participated in the study, 52.5% were male students, 47.5% were female students. More than half of the adolescents (56.4%) were from rural areas, while 43.6% were from urban areas. The majority of the participants (91.5%) had never been sexually active, while 8.5% had been sexually active. The age group with the highest number of sexually active adolescents was 16-18 years old, with 8.3% reporting sexual activity.

Risk and Protective Factors of Premarital Sex

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of socio-demographic and protective factors of sexual activity among adolescents. The factors significantly associated with sexual activity were age, gender, family structure, and contraceptive use.

Table 2: Distribution of Youths by Socio-Demographic and Protective Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Demographic/Protective Factor</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Male</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 15-16</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 17-18</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure: Nuclear</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure: Extended</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraceptive use: Yes</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraceptive use: No</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Sexual activity among adolescents is influenced by various factors, including socio-demographic characteristics and protective factors. However, contraceptive use was found to be significantly associated with sexual activity. Therefore, promoting contraceptive use among young people is crucial to reduce the prevalence of sexual activity and its associated risks.

With regard to socio-demographic factors, male youth were found to be 2 times more likely to be sexually experienced than female youth. Similarly, age group, living arrangement, family structure, and contraceptive use were also found to be associated with sexual activity. Meanwhile, there was no evidence to show that religiosity and family background had a significant impact on sexual activity.

References

[Provide references here, if applicable.]
Introduction
The National Policy on Reproductive Health and Social Education was passed in late 2009 and has been amended several times since then. It is one of the agencies in charge of implementing the initiative of its Plan of Action. One of the programmes designed was sexual reproductive health education (SRHE) in schools, known as PERNIS. The objective of the Programme PERKERTI@Sekolah is to complement the SRHE in the school curriculum. Two modules on SRHE were developed to cater for the primary school students targeting 12 years old and 15 years old secondary school students.

Objective
- The objective of the pilot study is to evaluate the feasibility, effectiveness and acceptability of students and teachers of having PERKERTI@Sekolah as an extra-curricular subject.
- Facilitators conducting the module were school counselors and Health Education teachers who had undergone 3 days training of the modules.
- The modules consisted of short interactive lectures, group discussions, case studies, games and role plays.

Method
33 schools from the whole of Malaysia were randomly selected by the Ministry of Education to participate in this pilot programme from September to November 2012; 16 primary schools, 10 secondary schools and 1 primary special education school.
- Evaluation of the programme:
  1. Feasibility was assessed from post training evaluation of teachers and counselors.
  2. Effectiveness was assessed from pre and post test assessment questionnaires on knowledge and attitude towards SRHE were distributed to the students.
  3. Receptiveness was assessed from teachers’ reports after the pilot test.

PILOT TEST OF SRHE PROGRAMME AS EXTRA CURRICULUM IN MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS

Results: Post Training Evaluation
- 67 teachers and counselors underwent 18 hours training of the module.
- Pre and post training questionnaires showed that they found the modules were useful and shall benefit both teachers and students. They also thought that the structure of the modules and the programme were suitable and feasible to be implemented in the schools.
- The participants also provided suggestions for the implementation of the PERKERTI@Sekolah programme.

The suggestions were:
1. Two teachers per class of 40 students.
2. Each module to be conducted for 4 hours in 2 consecutive days.
3. Each module to be implemented at the end of the year after completion of major examinations but before school holidays.

Pre and Post Test Results
- A total of 2,376 students participated in this evaluation; 1,255 were 15 years old, 1,086 were 12 years old and 26 were from the primary special education class. Two thirds of them were boys. The result of the test showed that the mean score for SRHE knowledge was significantly increased from 9.10 to 14.00 for the primary school students and from 6.82 to 10.31 for secondary school students. Refer Chart 1.
- Chart 2 showed the positive attitude toward SRHE was significantly increased for the secondary school students where the mean score increased from 3.94 to 4.61.

Conclusion
- PERKERTI@Sekolah programme is feasible, effective and acceptable to the students and teachers as an extra-curricular subject.
- The success of this pilot project has led to this programme being funded for the year 2014 for 47 schools.