

Effectiveness of a Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Prevention Program for Thai Early Adolescents: Youth Empowerment and Participation

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ABSTRACT

Young people are at the center of the HIV/AIDS epidemic globally. Thailand is similar to many other countries in this regard as experiencing a high prevalence of sexually-transmitted diseases among Thai adolescents. Innovative and effective strategies are needed to prevent risk-taking behavior at the earliest period of adolescence before unhealthy patterns are established. The aim of this study was to empower youth leaders in developing and implementing activities for sexual and reproductive health education and HIV prevention among Thai early adolescents, using the youth and adult partnership with schools (YAPS) approach. Twelve schools from three different educational areas in Chiang Mai participated in this participatory action research. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected, using various methods. Results showed that this peer education program was effective in empowering junior youth leaders to conduct peer-led activities with early adolescents in grades 5 to 7. Junior youth leaders developed participatory learning activities and created innovative media materials including cartoon books, websites, radio broadcasting, VCDs and an educational computer game. The scores of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behaviors among target peers significantly increased after implementing peer-led activities in 12 schools ($p=.05$). The use of partnerships and the participatory process mobilized parents, teachers and school administrators to play a proactive role in sexual education and HIV prevention for early adolescents in schools, resulting in the integration of the program into the school system, thereby assuring its sustainability.

Keywords: HIV prevention, Early adolescence, Peer education, Participatory action research, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

AIDS is considered a public health problem faced by all countries as the number of HIV-infected people has been on the rise annually. Furthermore, adolescents are at the center of the global spread of HIV/AIDS because young people aged 15-24 account for 45% of all new HIV infections in adults (UNAIDS, 2008). Meanwhile, the number of those with sexually-transmitted diseases is likely to reach 19 million and more than half of them are 15-24 years old (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006). In Thailand, the public health report of 2009 revealed that there was a total number of 353,020 people living with AIDS during 1984-2008 with 30,399 people aged 15-24, accounting for 8.6 %, being infected with HIV (Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2009). Research studies from many sources indicate that adolescents with early sexual activities tend to have many sexual partners and that many of them are susceptible to HIV infection, while only 20-30 % of these young people always use condoms. In addition, most of them think they are not vulnerable to HIV infection (Fongkaew et al., 2006), putting them at high risk of sexually-transmitted diseases and AIDS.

Adolescence is an important transitional period from childhood to adulthood (Mandleco and McCoy, 2002) during which there are physical, mental, emotional and social changes. During this period, adolescents work toward independence and seek new experiences on their own. This leaves them vulnerable to risk behaviors, particularly if they are exploring in areas where there is little communication or guidance from parents or other adults. Because of their attachments and need to gain acceptance of friends (Santrock, 2001), the peer group plays an influential role in young people's attitudes and sexual behaviors. This includes decisions to have sexual intercourse (O'Donnell et al., 2003) and whether to use or not to use condoms (DiClemente, 1990; Kirby, 2001).

In Thailand, the study of 11,297 young people aged 13-22 who were studying in the secondary, vocational education and higher education levels in public and private institutions showed that the top five factors influencing male adolescents' sexual activities were friends, girlfriends, media, alcohol and themselves. The top five factors for female adolescents included friends, boyfriends, alcohol, media and themselves. The study indicated that friends were the information source of sex education and were the primary problem-solvers for sexual issues. The youth reported that their friends were influential in introducing them to sexual experiences and acted as helpers in finding a suitable place (Fongkaew et al., 2006).

Due to the influence of peers on sexual behaviors among adolescents, peer education is therefore an important strategy that has been widely applied by many agencies and organizations around the world to address risk behaviors among adolescents. It is based on the belief that adolescents are effective and credible educators while being role models influencing friends at the same age (Hope, 2003). Peer education can bring about changes in education, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the group and society. Therefore, a peer educator must be educated, knowledgeable, capable of transferring knowledge and able to foster appropriate attitudes, values and behaviors among friends, as well as act as a leader or role

model of good health behavior (Milburn, 1995). In Thailand, peer education is commonly used to prevent HIV infection among young people in both formal and informal education and shows promising results. Research findings suggest that giving AIDS education in schools by youth leaders is effective in enhancing knowledge about AIDS, sex and reproductive health, and boosting proper attitudes towards sexual risk behaviors to prevent HIV infection among early adolescents (Chamrathirong et al., 2004; Poonsri et al., 2005; Fongkaew et al., 2007). In addition to peers, media is an important source of information and shapes sexual behavior (Bertrand and Anhang, 2007). This includes not only television, but increasingly, the internet. Media can be considered the important social factor molding adolescent's sexual behaviors, and can play a great role in sharpening their perception and development of sexual identity which has an effect on their lifestyle.

This study sought to develop a program for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education and HIV prevention among Thai early adolescents by building the capacity among youth leaders through an 'edutainment' approach in order to enable early adolescents' learning by active doing rather than passive listening. This was done by encouraging adolescents' participation in brainstorming, exchanging experiences, planning, defining methods and implementing activities. We also felt it was important to create mutual collaboration with key stakeholders to play a critical role in changing school policy and provide a supportive environment to promote healthy behaviors among the adolescents.

Objectives of the Study

1. To develop a senior-junior peer program for SRH education and HIV prevention among Thai early adolescents, using a youth-adult partnership with schools approach.
2. To evaluate the outcome of implementing a senior-junior peer program for SRH education and HIV prevention among Thai early adolescents.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study used a participatory action research approach, emphasizing on building the capacity of the youth leaders in educational institutions to take the lead in brainstorming, finding problems, planning, undertaking activities and creating innovative media for HIV prevention, and evaluating the outcome of their efforts. It also aimed to establish collaboration and commitment of key stakeholders to play a critical role in changing school policy and integrating HIV prevention activities for early adolescents into the school system.

Setting and Participants

A total of 12 public and private schools in three educational areas of Chiang Mai Province.

The participants consisted of:

1. Forty-two youth leader trainers or senior youth leaders (SYLs), 16 males and 26 females;
2. One-hundred-and-four junior youth leaders (JYLs), including 38 males and 66 females, studying in Grade 7 at 12 schools;
3. Forty-six teachers from 12 schools, 11 males and 35 females;
4. Two-thousand-and-three-hundred students in Grades 5-7 at 12 schools. Among these students taking part in the AIDS prevention education program in schools, there were 1,159 males and 1,141 females;
5. Other stakeholders including school administrators, school committee members, parent representatives and public health personnel.

Data Collection

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using various methods. The qualitative data included field notes of participatory group activities, data from focus groups and transcripts of individual interviews. The quantitative data were gathered using online questionnaires measuring HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior (reliability = .74 and .81, respectively).

Research Process

The PAR process was conducted during the period May 2007 to May 2009 in the following ten steps:

Step 1: Building the partnership and commitment of co-working between the research team and educational institutions determined to participate in the participatory action research. The research team stated the objectives of the study and exchanged experiences with the administrators of 12 schools to raise awareness and commitment and seek their cooperation for selecting teachers who were interested in taking the role of school researchers. Three to six teachers from each school were chosen, for a total of 46 teachers in this study acted as the school researchers.

Step 2: Exploring the problems and needs of undertaking activities and producing innovative media to prevent HIV infection. The school researchers were divided into groups by the research team to brainstorm and explore the problems related to sexual risk behaviors, knowledge about AIDS and HIV prevention, effective prevention strategies/activities for developing innovative media appropriately and according to the schools' needs and contexts to prevent HIV among early adolescents.

Step 3: Raising awareness and understanding of participatory action research in school researchers. The school researchers attended the meetings with the research team to brainstorm ideas related to HIV prevention and media access in adolescents, and to jointly work out a plan and define the responsibilities of each school's working committee. The research team, together with the researchers from 12 schools, also joined the workshops to increase understanding about the participatory action research which emphasized the participatory approach throughout the research process through brainstorming, discussion, debate

and exchange of ideas about HIV prevention among adolescents.

Step 4: Selecting senior youth leaders and junior youth leaders. As part of this study, the research team and school researchers recruited youth leaders representing two age groups.

Senior Youth Leaders (SYLs). There were 42 SYLs comprising 16 males and 26 females in Grades 11-12, aged from 16-18 years. They were the volunteers from the group of youth leaders who joined the capacity building program in 2003 as part of a completed research program (Fongkaew et al., 2007). The selected youth leaders had six years of consistent experience of doing activities to disseminate knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention in schools and communities. They united and called themselves “Youth Leaders: Power of the New Gen, Season 1.”

Junior Youth Leaders (JYLs): This group consisted of 104 students in Grade 7 at 12 schools, aged 11-12. While they were selected by each school’s researchers, they were also evaluated for capabilities by the research team, using participatory activities to assess leadership, teamwork and assertiveness skills. JYLs were given the chance to show their ability during discussions, debates and exchanges of ideas about sexual risk behaviors, prevention of HIV infection among adolescents, strategies for SRH education and HIV prevention as well as the types of innovative media effective to educate friends in schools. They called themselves “Power of the New Gen, Season 2.”

Step 5: Enhancing leadership capacity of JYLs. The senior-junior peer approach was applied to empower JYLs to conduct peer-led activities and create media appropriate for their age group for SRH education and HIV prevention. They received the knowledge and skills at skill-building sessions in which SYLs, who were well-trained and prepared to handle sensitive issues associated with sex education, served as trainers and mentors. JYLs were empowered through the participatory approach which created a friendly and open environment to promote collaborative work. Group sessions were used to share experiences, raise awareness and reflect on actions. Group work strategies included action-planning, brainstorming and feedback on the significance and applications of what the young people were learning.

Step 6: Collecting baseline data of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among early adolescents in 12 schools. The research team provided technical methods for the teachers to gather data by employing the online questionnaires designed by the school researchers. These online questionnaires developed by the researchers were accessed through an online website to assess the HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among early adolescents in order to obtain baseline data for planning further activities and developing innovative media.

Step 7: Building capacity of teachers to promote JYLs to have capability to conduct peer-led activities and create innovative media as planned. The research team empowered the teachers by organizing brain-storming, experience-sharing and training sessions so they could play an important role in supporting JYLs to conduct peer-led activities for SRH education and HIV prevention in

schools effectively, with warm mentorship and mutual collaboration.

Step 8: Evaluating the outcomes. The researcher team in collaboration with the teachers conducted a post test of assessing the HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among adolescents as well as the reflective thoughts of JYs and school researchers.

Step 9: Organizing a workshop seminar to summarize the lessons and exchange knowledge between the research team and the teachers about the project activities and how school researchers integrate the peer-led activities, strategies and innovative media into school policy and an action plan.

Step 10: Organizing a public forum at provincial level to discuss and disseminate the activities, strategies and innovative media. The forum titled “AIDS Prevention in Adolescence: Youth and Adult Partnership with Schools, or YAPS Model”, involved representatives from the Ministry of Education, school administrators and teachers from various schools and other stakeholders. This was aimed at making policy recommendations and mobilizing the integration of activities and innovative media of HIV prevention among early adolescents into the policy and strategic plan at the provincial level.

RESULTS

The research findings demonstrated: 1) successful strategies for implementing SRH education and HIV prevention activities using senior-junior peer program; 2) increased leadership capacity, HIV/AIDS knowledge and more health-promoting attitudes towards sexual behavior among JYs; 3) changes of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among target peers; and 4) integration of HIV prevention activities into the school system.

1. Strategies for implementing SRH education and HIV prevention activities using senior-junior peer program

It was found that there were five crucial strategies for successful implementation of SRH education and HIV prevention activities using the senior-junior peer program as shown in Figure 1.

Creating collaboration to enhance mutual agreement and commitment among school partners. The research team created collaboration and mutual agreement with teachers from 12 schools to participate as the key actors, and raised awareness of the school administrators to participate and commit themselves as key supporters in order to provide supportive environment which included school policy and an action plan.

Empowering teachers to provide mentorship in an atmosphere of trust and respect. The research team empowered teachers from 12 schools to be competent as the key actors who played a critical role in providing warm mentorship. Teachers should provide guidance to and support for JYs in developing the program for HIV prevention.

Enhancing the capacity of youth leaders to be competent senior youth leader trainers (SYs) with spirit and commitment. The research team empowered SYs

who devoted themselves to being trainers with spirit and commitment, capable of being trainers and mentors for JYLs. SYLs should be able to conduct skill-building camps, using the participatory learning and edutainment approach. They should be able to mentor JYLs in conducting peer-led activities for SRH education and HIV/AIDS prevention. Meanwhile, SYLs were provided with the knowledge and skills required to undertake that role by attending skill-training camps, rehearsing and practising to become SYLs, and serving as trainers and mentors for JYLs.

Building the capacity of the younger generation to become competent junior youth leaders (JYLs) with spirit and commitment to conduct peer-led activities. Capacity-building for JYLs focused on group processes in order to create exchange of knowledge and experience, knowledge transfer, skill development, raising of awareness, reflection about personal actions and working as a team. The group process also allowed JYLs to receive enough leadership skills and knowledge to initiate and implement peer-led activities for knowledge transfer and experiences to other youth in their schools, as well as to create innovative media for SRH education and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Supporting of school policy and action plan with shifting of the paradigm in working with young people. Adults took critical roles in working with youths as co-partners. Meanwhile, school administrators changed their views in working with teachers and youth leaders with providing a supportive environment in terms of school policy and action plans, to enable JYLs in taking their roles, enabling their leadership capacities in implementing the peer-led activities, and creating sustainable development of senior-junior peer programs for effective HIV prevention in the schools.

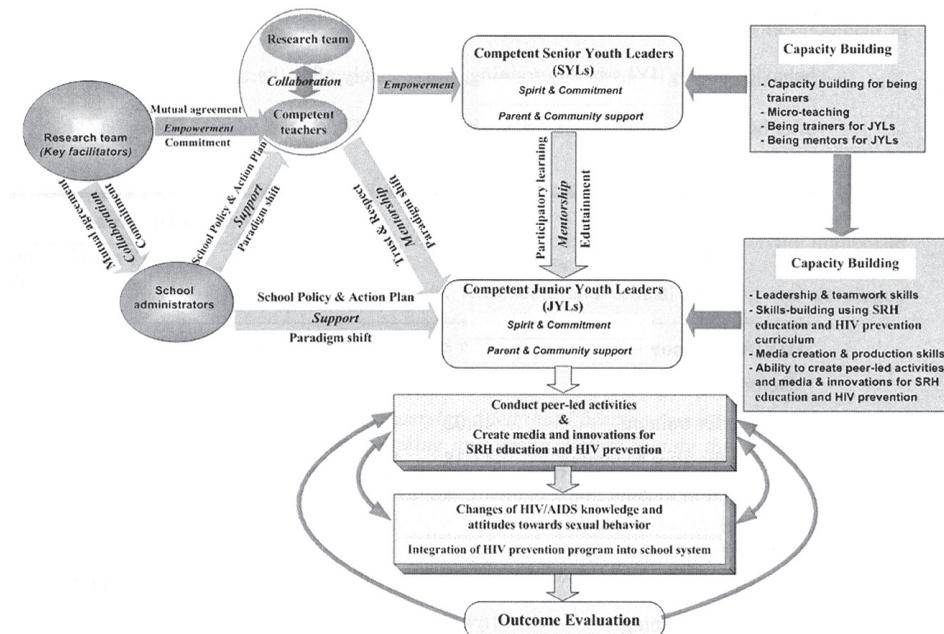


Figure 1. Senior-Junior Peer Program: Youth and Adult Partnership with Schools (YAPS).

II. Changes of youth leaders

The JYL training resulted in the development of capacity among JYLs as a group, and increased competence to lead HIV-prevention activities by individual leaders. The evaluation showed improved HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior, and enhanced confidence in leadership capacity.

Changes of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among JYLs

Table 1. Comparison of the mean scores of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among JYLs before training, immediately after the training and 18 months after becoming youth leaders, using One-Way ANOVA (N=104).

Variables	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	
			Right after training	18 months after becoming youth leaders
HIV/AIDS knowledge				
Before training	27.50	6.03	12.52*	15.88*
Right after training	40.02	4.30	-	3.36*
18 months after becoming youth leaders	43.38	4.72	-	-
Attitudes towards sexual behavior				
Before training	104.07	9.34	5.62*	11.37*
Right after training	109.69	9.35	-	5.75*
18 months after becoming youth leaders	115.44	9.07	-	-

* $p < .05$

The mean scores of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among JYLs at right after training and 18 months after becoming youth leaders were higher than those before training at the statistical significance level of .05. The result also showed higher mean scores of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among JYLs after 18 months of being youth leaders than right after training mean score.

Enhancing leadership capacity of JYLs

The experience of becoming youth leaders among JYLs (from reflections)

The analysis of JYLs' reflective thoughts on their personal development in various aspects after participating in the study showed five skills of their self-development in the role of youth leaders as follows:

1. *Increased confidence in being youth leaders.* Youth leaders became confident, assertive and decisive while they were more capable of solving

immediate problems with systematic, logical, reasonable and critical thinking and developed themselves to lead various activities well.

“As to developing leadership, I felt that I became assertive enough to express my opinions when working in a group. Before joining this program, I dared not speak out for fear that I would be blamed by my friends. After participating in this program, I felt confident enough to think and speak to my friends. The second point is I’m courageous in speaking. I feel that I have gained more courage. And when presenting the work in front of the class, I spoke so confidently that my teacher praised me.”

2. *Improved planning among team members.* JYs had better working processes because of having systematic planning and job assignments. They were also more determined, patient, strong and energetic while having good time management, the skills of analytic thinking, appropriate time management and being able to prioritize studying and working.

“I developed myself by collecting experience in many things, for example, taking responsibility for work and improving my knowledge and skills. And I’ve always added to my knowledge. What I don’t understand yet, I’ll ask my friends and teachers or search for information on the Internet. I have also developed various skills like analytical thinking, planning, coordinating, punctuality and many other things.”

3. *Development of good teamwork.* JYs had good teamwork, unity, better human relations, self-adaptation, consideration, attention to others’ opinions, participation in working as a group, coordination and skills in solving problems for the peer group.

“I got lessons that could be used as guidelines in working with friends as a team. I’ve developed myself. Although I’m a leader, being a good leader doesn’t necessarily mean ordering others to do this and that. Actually, one should be a leader who understands the feelings of those who receive orders.”

4. *Increased capability in developing innovative media and disseminating knowledge for SRH education and HIV prevention to peers.* JYs acquired more knowledge about HIV and AIDS, knowledge about developing various types of innovative media and disseminating knowledge about HIV and AIDS. Their communication skills were also improved, therefore, they were able to share knowledge with peers in schools, families and communities as they knew how to attract and arouse attention, and were able to pass on easily-understandable knowledge to friends and create innovative media to transfer knowledge.

“I can share knowledge with others who don't yet have it, like my school friends, family members and relatives. I can do so because I'm able to create such various innovative media tools to transfer knowledge as DJ, VCD, CD, documents and cartoons to make the content more interesting and attract others including friends, senior and junior friends to do activities with the leaders.”

Innovative media developed by JYLs at the 12 schools to prevent AIDS among adolescents included websites, computer games, animations, cartoon books, VCDs, radio-broadcasting and songs. They contained knowledge about HIV and AIDS, ways of HIV/AIDS infection, AIDS symptoms, risks of HIV/AIDS infection, HIV/AIDS prevention, sexually-transmitted diseases and formation of proper attitudes towards sexual behaviors. In addition, commandment of the 4Rs was employed in order to make adolescents aware of Readiness, Respect, Rights and Responsibility.

5. *Having social skills in living with others.* JYLs had better skills in adapting themselves when staying with others, greater generosity and a higher emotional quotient. Also, they gained acceptance from friends in schools and communities. With a willingness to volunteer their time, effort and minds attuned to public service, they could be good role models for their friends.

“I developed myself and got much knowledge and experience from taking part in the youth leader project. For example, I learned how to adapt myself and collaborate with others in society. I tried to behave myself as well as possible so that everyone accepted me. Being a leader also gave me a chance to make new friends and when we worked together, the attachment between us strengthened.”

III. Changes of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among target school students or peers

The peer-led activities for SRH education and HIV prevention taken by JYLs resulted in improved HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among target peers.

Table 2. Comparison of the mean scores for HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among target peers between before and after conducting peer-led activities for SRH education and HIV prevention.

Knowledge about AIDS	Mean	SD	t	p-value
HIV/AIDS knowledge (N=2,228)				
Before doing activities	28.350	8.125		
After doing activities	32.731	9.105	-19.716	.000*
Attitudes towards sexual behavior (N=2,278)				
Before doing activities	99.252	12.514		
After doing activities	101.427	14.554	-7.423	.000*

*p < .05

The mean scores of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior among target peers after doing activities were higher than those before doing activities, at the statistically significant level of .05.

IV. Integration of the program into the school system

The integration of peer-led activities for SRH education and HIV prevention run by JYLs at the 12 schools showed that the integration into the schools’ policy and action plan was conducted in two ways in order to bring about the sustainability of holding HIV prevention activities in schools.

Integrating into extracurricular activities. This action was mostly shown as HIV/AIDS knowledge was integrated into the schools’ major activities such as 1) Boy Scout activities; 2) school camps including HIV/AIDS knowledge and life skills; and 3) activities on important days like World AIDS Day, Valentine’s Day and World No Tobacco Day.

Integrating into the school curriculum. It was also found that activities were mostly integrated into the school curriculum, including a health leadership curriculum for grades 7-9, student development sessions and health education sessions with the aim of enhancing HIV/AIDS knowledge and proper attitudes towards sexual behavior. At some schools, having observed the youth leaders’ working capacity and their efficiency in facilitating HIV/AIDS education, the administrators and committee members agreed that this program should be continued in schools.

DISCUSSION

The research findings showed that the senior-junior peer program was successful in encouraging the participation of stakeholders at all levels, ranging from youth to adult, to deliver the SRH education and HIV prevention program among early adolescents in educational institutions. This was accomplished by collaboratively identifying the problems, developing the plans, taking the needed actions, evaluating the activities, and finally integrating them into the schools’ policy and action plans. This made the program successful and resulted in a sense

of ownership of the program among participants. It is consistent with the study of Fongkaew et al., (2002) that the participatory strategy will not be successful without the determination and cooperation of every important stakeholder involved. Also, the findings of Fongkaew et al., (2006) support the concept of youth-adult partnership working to develop strategies and action steps in participatory action research in order to build cooperation, capacity, knowledge and empowerment for all related parties.

The senior-junior peer program was effective in empowering junior youth leaders in conducting peer-led activities for SRH education and HIV prevention among early adolescents in grades five to seven. It is of great importance for the capacity development of junior leaders to enable them to launch participation-based learning activities and produce various types of innovative media as part of sexual and reproductive health education activities, as well as providing them with knowledge about HIV infection prevention. These activities comprise an edutainment program emphasizing participatory learning among young people. The training and experiences that youth leaders had undergone were a guarantee of knowledge, capability, courage and self-confidence enabling them to transfer knowledge to friends (Plummer et al., 2007). The capacity-building program was achieved as the peer educators were competent, courageous and confident, giving rise to grouping activities in associations or clubs in educational institutions where activities were done by youth leaders to give advice to students in school (Fongkaew et al., 2002). As a result, students in the target group were encouraged to raise questions on topics of interest to them because they were at the same age as their leaders. It was shown in the study findings that effective peer education to enhance correct knowledge about AIDS and prevent AIDS could enhance awareness of risk behaviors related to HIV/AIDS infection and attitudes towards using condoms (Mankarn, 2001; Ratanarangsee, 2001; Thephatsadin Na Ayutthaya, 2001; Kinsler et al., 2004; Borgia et al., 2005), enhance their knowledge about sex and reproductive health, and bolster good attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS (Kantrip and Aree, 2001; Fongkaew et al., 2002; Langkafah et al., 2005; Poonsri et al., 2005). It also helped reduce risk behaviors, build and adjust proper attitudes towards prevention of HIV/AIDS infection regarding the use of condoms and delay in sexual intercourse (Caron et al., 2004; Kinsler et al., 2004). Additionally, it helped stimulate student peers to feel it was more interesting, amusing, stimulating and effective to learn from peers than simply to listen to their teacher's lessons in class, because the teaching style used by youth leaders was different from most teachers whose focus was on the lecturing approach (Plummer et al., 2007).

Additionally, various innovative media produced by the youth leaders, including cartoons, websites, radio programs/songs and computer games provide important tools for making the implementation of peer-led activities for SRH education and HIV prevention among early adolescents meaningful and effective. This is consistent with the study by Spizzichino et al., (2005), stating that adolescents' involvement in producing proper learning media for peers of the same age should be given precedence, as the media produced by teenagers for

those in the same age group would convey the desired messages most satisfactorily. Poonkham (2003) also stated that the mass media play an important role in health promotion as they can be used to make the strategies of promoting health successful. The media act as channels of the public information and education that counter HIV/AIDS infection among adolescents, and as such serve as one of the important implementation elements for contributing to positive outcomes (Bertrand and Anhang, 2007).

As a result, HIV/AIDS prevention among early adolescents should be conducted in educational institutions by using senior-junior programs, as well as encouraging the participation of parents, teachers, administrators and other key stakeholders to play a proactive role in supporting peer-led activities for SRH education and HIV prevention among early adolescents. Properly conducted, such programs will result in the effectiveness and sustainability of HIV/AIDS preventive activities in the school system.

CONCLUSION

The senior-junior peer program is one effective strategy that could strengthen capacity of early adolescents to be competent senior youth leaders and role models for junior youth leaders, who will continuously conduct HIV prevention activities which lead to sustainability in the school. Adults must change their perspectives in working with young people so they can understand and provide support in an atmosphere of trust and respect. The youth and adult partnership with schools (YAPS) approach can create mutual collaboration and commitment among key stakeholders, leading them to play a critical role in changing school policy and mobilizing resources necessary for successful SRH education and HIV prevention among early adolescents. However, this study was conducted in a specific context at twelve schools in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand, thus the process and practicality of the study may not necessarily be a generalization to other settings. Additionally, a follow up study is essential to establish whether the program can be integrated into the school system in a sustainable manner.

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