

EXPOSURE IN SEX EDUCATION THROUGH MASS AND PERSONAL MEDIA AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT: This descriptive research aims to study the exposure of sex education through mass media and personal media and to study factors which related to the exposure of sex education among the secondary school students in Bangkok, Thailand. Ample of 425 students was taken and data were collected by self-administered questionnaires which consisted of 4 dimensions of sex education; human developments, sexual relationship, sexual behaviors, and sexual health. The statistics used were mean, standard deviation (SD), percentage, frequency and chi-square. The results revealed that the average age of participated students was 13 ± 1.01 years; 49.2% were male and 50.8% were female. Students had different exposures to sex education from various types of media, of which the primary sources chosen were the Internet, mother, father, friends and teachers, respectively. Most males preferred to acquire their sex education from mass media, e.g. the internet, while most females preferred to receive it from personal media. The gender and educational level were associated and statistically significant to the exposure of sex education on the issues of physical change, contraception, condom use, and pregnancy, respectively. Both sexes tend to obtain sex education of sex education from same sex people more than the other. The student's exposure to sex education which related to social values and norms were found to concealed or covered up, not open for discussion and learning, especially among youth and single people. Raising awareness of sexual equality and rights is necessary in order to open the public discourse on sexuality. Broadly disseminating sex education is a basic and critical component of this process.

Keywords: Media exposure, Sex education, Mass media, Personal media, Secondary school, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Sex education is important and much needed for people of all ages. It is associated with us since we were born such as the development of physical, mental, social interaction, positioning in society, and also communicating, understanding and accepting themselves with other people between the gender, etc. There are many sexual problems happen in our society, for examples, spread of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Some other problems are related to the abortion without preparing, divorce, and Problems of couples. These issues are often related to knowledge, understanding of

sexuality, learning about sex and sexual exposure. It is essential to understand the nature of human in terms of social and cultural dimensions. It could also cause the wrong belief and misunderstanding that sex is private and obscene or disgusting and it should be uncovering for the young and unmarried. Therefore, either conversation or communication about sex issues could lead to social problems, such as misunderstanding the issues of sex change among teenage.

In general, sex education is an important subject for teens, especially early adolescents, because it is a physical change period, so they seek exposure to learn their change in a variety of channels. However, talking about sex is always a conflict within the Thai culture and is not discussed openly. There is still a belief that knowledge about sexuality to adolescents

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may encourage children to have prematurely sex. Thai values still keep a check on our moral system and values about discussing sex is prohibitive. Examples of such beliefs are: sex is private and so do not talk about it, do not exhibit your sexual desire, and children should not know about sex, talking about sex is a “taboo”. With all these restrictions, it redirects people to seek information on sex from different types of sources. These could lead to misunderstanding and making wrong values towards sexual behaviors.

Although sex education has been taught in schools, problems such as unprepared pregnancy, abortion, and sexually transmitted diseases still occur. It was report online 20th November 2010 shocking news such as 2,000 baby corpses found in a temple due to illegal abortion shows that the sex education taught is clearly not enough yet.

Thus, sex education is very important to human life especially among the adolescent age group. Panjapon [1] stated that sex education is a process that will enable students to understand the different mechanisms of action and changing which needed in order to improve how to conduct his or herself toward the opposite sex that would lead to the proper order in their family life as well as in the society. However, parents do not have time to answer questions to their child as much as they would like to. Often time, they think that sex is unnecessary to be discussed with their child. Some of the parents or even teachers may lack knowledge and understanding to discuss about sexual health. Wasikasin [2] said that many teens make their own way to find out about sex education in their choices of media sources which are easier to obtain than in the past.

At present time, such media sources, either mass or personal media, are widely and easily available to be chosen and received in sex education. However, there are few studies to conduct this research in Thai context. Our the main objectives of this study were to investigate on media the exposure of sex education to mass media and personal media of the secondary school students in Bangkok, Thailand, and to find out whether if there were any other factors which might be associated as well as influenced their sexual preferences, either of the same sex or opposite sex.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive study was done with the secondary school students who studied in secondary school Grade 1, 2 and 3 from both public and private school in Bangkok, Thailand, aged between 11 -15 years. The simple random sampling technique was used to selecting 4 schools from a list of schools in Bangkok Metropolitan which are under the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education, Thailand. Then, a simple random sampling was used to selecting 3 classrooms for each level. All students in the selected classrooms also participated in this study. A different categories of school such as demonstration school, private school, School in the office of the basic education commission and school in Department of Education Bangkok Metropolitan Administration also included in the study. A total of 425 secondary school students were selected, 209 males and 216 females.

This study was approved by The Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Research Subject, Health Sciences Group, Chulalongkorn University. All participants were asked to complete

Table 1 Demographic characteristics data (n = 425)

	n	%
Sex		
Male	209	49.2
Female	216	50.8
Age (years)		
11	1	0.2
12	77	18.1
13	118	27.8
14	143	33.6
15	86	20.2
\bar{X} = 13, SD. = 1.01		
Type of Schools		
School in the Office of the Basic Education Commission	97	22.8
The demonstration school	132	31.1
Private school	93	21.9
School in Department of Education, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration	103	24.2
Status of living		
With parents	360	84.7
Not with parents	65	15.3

Table 2 Data on human development in relation to gender of subjects

	Change and development in body		Menstruation		Reproductive system	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Internet, TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers	41.6	16.2	34.0	8.8	44.5	48.1
Father	31.2	-	3.3	-	4.8	1.4
Mother	6.7	71.8	31.6	81.9	14.8	32.9
Male friends	6.7	-	1.0	-	2.4	-
Female friends	1.0	4.6	7.7	2.8	0.5	0.5
Teachers	12.0	7.4	22.5	6.5	33.0	17.1

Table 3 Data on sexual relationship to gender in relation of subjects

	Orientation to the opposite sex		Love in same age		Choosing partner	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Internet, TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers	31.1	19.0	21.1	11.6	23.4	16.2
Father	20.1	6.9	22.5	4.6	20.6	2.8
Mother	11.0	47.7	18.2	58.3	19.6	40.3
Male friends	9.1	3.2	10.5	-	22.0	0.9
Female friends	10.5	16.7	6.7	15.3	8.6	35.2
Teachers	18.2	6.5	21.1	10.2	5.7	4.6

Table 4 Data on sexual behaviors to gender in relation of subjects

	Relaxation of sexual desire		Sexual behaviors that are socially unacceptable		Sexual diversity	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Internet, TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers	49.8	49.5	42.6	36.1	44.0	37.0
Father	17.2	0.9	18.2	2.3	17.7	1.4
Mother	3.8	28.7	11.5	42.6	6.2	40.3
Male friends	8.6	0.5	3.3	-	8.1	-
Female friends	1.4	7.9	1.0	4.2	2.4	9.3
Teachers	19.1	12.5	23.4	14.8	21.5	12.0

the consent form before answering the questions. A self-administered questionnaire was conducted. There are 4 dimensions of sex education in questionnaire; human developments, sexual relationship, sexual behaviors, and sexual health. SPSS v.17 software (University's license) was used in data analysis. The statistics used were mean, standard deviation (SD), percentage, and chi-square.

RESULTS

The study revealed that of 425 secondary school students, who enrolled in the study, 49.2% were male and 50.8% were female. Their ages were between 11-15 years old with the average age of 13 ± 1.01 years. The majority of them (84.7%) stayed with their parents, while 15.3% did not (Table 1).

Media exposure in sex education - mass media and personal media

There were different types of media which the male and female subjects were exposed to on the sex education. Of the 4 dimensions of sex education:

human developments, sexual relationship, sexual behaviors, and sexual health, male subjects received all 4 from internet. The subjects or topics of their interests were on women hymen, positioning to the opposite sex, relaxation of sexual desire, and condom uses. While, females received 3 dimensions (human developments, sexual behaviors, and sexual health) from their mothers. For the sexual relationship, they usually exposed sexual information from female friends or their love ones (Table 2-5).

Analysis media by types of media and gender (Table 6)

Mass media: Internet (including television, radio & newspapers)

The most common media that the participants were exposed to was the internet. The top 4 topics that male had exposed from Internet were condom use (52.6%), women hymen (49.8%), masturbation (49.3%), and external ejaculation (48.8%). While the top 4 topics that females exposed from the

Table 5 Data on exposure of sexual health in relation to gender of subjects

	Sexual harassment		Contraception		Abortion		Safe sex	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Internet, TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers	22.0	10.2	45.9	38.4	40.2	31.0	38.8	39.8
Father	28.7	9.3	9.1	0.9	8.6	0.5	15.3	0.5
Mother	13.9	49.5	14.8	45.4	16.3	47.7	6.2	38.4
Male friends	11.5	2.8	3.8	-	3.8	-	4.8	-
Female friends	0.5	16.2	1.4	0.9	1.0	1.9	1.9	2.3
Teachers	23.4	12.0	24.9	14.4	30.1	19.0	33.0	19.0

Table 6 Analysis media by types of media and gender

Topic	Internet, TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers												p-value
	Father		Mother		Male friends		Female friends		Teachers				
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %			
Human development													
Wet dream	40.7	25.9	23.9	21.8	2.9	20.4	7.7	7.4	1.9	3.7	23.0	20.8	< .01
Size of penis	40.7	18.1	32.5	4.6	4.3	63.4	7.7	1.9	1.4	4.6	13.4	7.4	< .01
Hymen	34.0	8.8	3.3	-	31.6	81.9	1.0	-	7.7	2.8	22.5	6.5	< .01
Sexual relationships													
Love	15.3	9.7	23.4	0.9	19.1	34.7	28.2	0.9	6.7	50.0	7.2	3.7	< .01
Choosing mate	23.4	16.2	20.6	2.8	19.6	40.3	22.0	0.9	8.6	35.2	5.7	4.6	< .01
Orientation to the opposite sex	31.1	19.0	20.1	6.9	11.0	47.7	9.1	3.2	10.5	16.7	18.2	6.5	< .01
Sexual behavior													
Sexual imagination	41.1	26.9	18.7	2.8	9.1	45.4	10.0	0.5	4.8	13.9	16.3	10.6	< .01
Masturbation	49.3	42.1	15.3	2.8	5.3	32.4	13.9	1.9	2.4	9.3	13.9	11.6	< .01
Sexual fluidity	49.8	46.3	12.0	1.4	8.1	31.5	4.3	1.9	14	0.5	24.4	18.5	< .01
Sexual health													
Refuse unwanted sex	20.1	12.0	24.9	4.6	16.3	49.5	11.5	0.5	5.7	19.9	21.5	13.4	< .01
Condoms	52.6	47.7	16.7	6.0	5.7	22.2	5.7	5.6	1.0	2.3	18.2	16.2	< .01
External ejaculation	48.8	39.4	9.6	1.4	13.4	35.2	2.9	0.5	1.0	1.4	24.4	22.2	< .01

internet were condom uses (47.7%), sexual fluidity (46.3%), masturbation (42.1%), and external ejaculation (39.4%).

Personal media

Mother (including female-relatives) was the most important personal media source for the female participants. The top 2 topics that female exposed to were on menstruation (32.4%) and women hymen (81.9%). While the top 2 topics which the male subjects exposed from their mother were women hymen (31.6%) and choosing mate (19.6%).

Father (including male-relatives) was another person that male participants got information from, but to a lesser extent. The most topics were wet dream (21.8%) and orientation to the opposite sex (6.9%). While for the female subjects, the most topics were size of penis (32.5%) and refuse unwanted sex (24.9%), respectively and friends of the same sex were the personal media that subjects were exposed to. Females exposed to friends of the

same sex on the topics of love (50.0%), choosing mate (35.2%) and refuse unwanted sex (19.9%). While the topics that males exposed from friends were love (28.2%), choosing mate (22.0%) and masturbation (13.9%), respectively. Finally personal media teacher was another type of personal media which the subjects exposed to more than their parents.

Relationships between Exposure of Teenager and Sex by Topics of Sex Education

The study found that male and female exposures to sexual educations (of physical changing, wet dream, size of the penis, choosing a partner, masturbation, sexual fantasy, refuse unwanted sex, contraception, condom uses, abortion, external ejaculation, and pregnancy) were differences with statistically significant. But on other issues such as menstruation, human reproductive, male and female contraception, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, external

ejaculation and safe sex, there were not.

Students of the secondary school grade 1, 2 and 3 had exposed of physical changing from personal media which was mother, while, student of grade 3 had exposed from the Internet.

DISCUSSION

Results from the responses of our participants of secondary school students, both males and females, demonstrated that the majority of exposure of sexual education (of 4 different dimension of human development, sexual relationship, sexual behaviors and sexual health) was mainly obtained from Internet, mother, father, male and female friends.

The main mass media which the students was used to receive their sexual education was the Internet. This result was similar to the finding by Waddell [3] which stated that whenever teenagers have questions, they tend not to seek answers from their parents or teachers, but instead Google and 54% of them would ask their parents and teachers afterwards if they cannot find it from Google. The reason behind this action would be that the students rather privately prefer to seek the information by themselves via the Internet, which it is more convenience and easy without having to reveal their identities than expose his or her to someone else.

Other mass media, such as radio, television, magazines and newspapers, were found less impact to the secondary school students. These could be based on the facts that these 4 mass media have some limitations of information. For example, the low response (only 3.8%) on the television exposure could be due to the social norms in Thai culture, the restriction on presenting any sex-related issues on the screen, the censorship of any sex-scenes on-air at prime time as well as it was not there when the subjects desire or seek out.

Similar results were found on the exposure of sex education on the male and female relatives when separately analyzed from the "Mother and Father group". Ingkataworawong et al. [4], only 5.7% of them chosen to expose to this group, data provided the fact that several subjects came from single families or with limited-number of relatives.

However, the results showed that the most important source for personal media are fathers and mothers, since they are the closest persons to the students. They also were chosen to expose to them the same sex more than the opposite one which similar to the study by Ingkataworawong et al. [4]. According to Mahasirimongkol's [5] study, families that care for their children have better conversations about sex with them, whereas female teenagers tend

to talk more about sex than male teens, Mahasirimongkol's [5] and also with a female parent more than with a male parent. Some of the reasons for the difference in exposure of female and male teenagers are due to sex prohibition, social norms in Thai society, and the different standards in sex. Female and male friends are also an important person media to the sample group in exposure, because they are only inferior to families in intimacy, also the sample group prefers to expose themselves to the same sex rather than the opposite. This complied to Conell and Jacobson's research referred by Sumran [6] which stated that the sample group mostly obtains information about sex from female friends. Jirawattanakul [7] showed that the 69.4% of young mothers consulted about sex with female friends. Ingkataworawong et al. [4], reported that 56.5% of the sample group consults sex problems with friends, 41.3% consults it with fathers and mothers if there is any mistake in sex, and 39.1% with friends. Noomnuan [8] revealed the most talked over subject with friends is about the opposite sex, their lover or spouse, followed by the subject about love.

Teacher was another important personal media which the secondary school students exposed. About 30% of male students selected mentor teachers and about 19 % of female selected mentor teachers. Teacher could provide consultant, guidance, and protection to their students. They could also be friendly and have a modern perspective to guide their students without hesitation or being shy, and none the least bias-free. Although the percentages for seeking the teacher's advices were quite low (from 16.2-28.7%), but it was found to be the similar to Sumran's study [6]. Yamarat et al. [9] confirmed that female and male students think that the best educational media about sex education is in class room by their teachers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it appeared that the secondary school students differently choose to expose to information due to the gender, the content of sex, the level of study. There were also several other factors, i.e., physical sex and sex developments which are being taught in school which children are able to access to from teachers as well as from mothers and fathers. On the other hand, other sexual subjects, for examples sex relation and sexual behaviors, are bound to be limited by society and is challenging to the culture and custom of the country like Thailand. However, it is quite obvious that the secondary school students are prefer the more private way by exposing them to the internet, instead of being

exposed openly to the sex education. Therefore, we should be more open-minded and fair on discussing on any sex issues when we confront children and teenagers. The more important thing is should be aware of content in the website. Parent – child communication is also still necessary.

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