

A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SEX AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract: The purpose of this survey was to identify the knowledge, resources and experience of sex among school students. The survey also tested whether there were differences in knowledge, resources and experiences regarding sex among students based on demographic factors. The survey involved 100 high school students around Raub town using a cross sectional survey method. The survey findings show that the level of sexual knowledge among students is at a moderate level. There were no significant differences between male and female students' scores on sex knowledge. The survey also found that references to sex knowledge were obtained mostly from peers, the internet, social media, movies and television. The survey also found that experiences of commonly reported sex include watching porn videos, dating and reading pornographic material. This information is intended to identify students' concerns and needs in addressing the issue of sex while providing input to stakeholders to formulate the essence of appropriate sex education in schools to curb social symptoms.

Keywords: Social symptoms, Student, Sex education, Sexual knowledge

Introduction

Human sexuality knowledge is important but complex. However, knowledge of sex among Malaysian schoolchildren is still low (Ghazi, 2012). More research is needed to address the various issues related to sex, especially among Malaysian schoolchildren. As they grow into adolescents and into adulthood, their behaviors are increasingly influenced by peers. Furthermore, discussions about sex knowledge are still considered shameful for open discussion among family members in particular, and the Malaysian community, in general. However, the increase in sex related cases among students and adolescents has raised questions about their knowledge of sex as they are often involved as victims.

Students' knowledge of sex refers to their knowledge of the human reproductive system. It also relates to student awareness that without proper knowledge of sex and unprotected sex, one may be motivated or prone to be involved in the spread of HIV infection, increased miscarriage, unwanted pregnancies or premature marriages. However, these negative symptoms can be prevented by correct and accurate information. Therefore, sex education is important in providing accurate information especially to students so that they can have a mature attitude in making smart decisions before having unsafe sex. For example, a study by Ghazi (2012) found that pregnancy among adolescents occurs due to a lack of knowledge about the human reproductive system, methods of pregnancy prevention and sexually transmitted diseases.

Essentially, the knowledge and behavior of these student's sexuality is based on the reference or source of information obtained. For example, the study of Ayyoub et al. (2012) of Iranian high school students found that there are seven sources they frequently use to find information about sex from peers, books, magazines and pictures, audiovisuals such as CDs and movies, schools, counselling centres, families (parents and siblings) and close family members. This is supported by the study of Siti Nor et al. (2010) stated that adolescents are more likely to refer to peers and the internet as sex references than their parents. A study by Jas Laile Suzana and Masnona (2012) found that young men are more likely to surf porn websites.

The role of family structure is important in influencing the knowledge of sex among students and adolescents. Silver and Bauman's (2013) study found that those who engage in sexual misconduct have

an incomplete family such as parenting or living alone with their parents. The study of Eggleston, Jackson and Hardee (2013) further shows that students who engage in sexual activity also exhibit poor academic performance. They also began to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol and take drugs. Therefore, this survey was conducted with the aim of exploring how much knowledge, information resources and experience about sexuality among high school students around Raub town?

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the knowledge, information resources and experiences of sex among high school students around Raub town.
2. To test whether there are differences in the knowledge, information resources and experiences of sex among students based on demographic factors such as gender, forms and boyfriend or girlfriend factors.

Methodology

This survey is based on cross sectional survey method. The survey population consists of high school students around Raub town. The researchers use a stratified random sample method to collect data. The analysis unit consists of Form One, Two and Four students. The questionnaire was used as a survey instrument. It comprises of four sections, Part A on knowledge of the human reproductive system, Part B on sources of sex knowledge, Part C on sex experiences and Part D on respondents' demographics. The questions raised are based on and adapted from a study conducted by Ghazi (2012).

The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents at Raub bus stop for three weeks from July 1 to July 19, 2019. The research assistant only distributed the questionnaire form after meeting the requirements of the survey and obtaining the consent of the respondents. The questionnaire was submitted in Bahasa Malaysia to enable the respondents to answer individually and independently. Before the questionnaire was distributed, statements and information were read and explained to the respondents explaining the purpose of the questionnaire. To obtain appropriate responses, students were convinced of confidentiality and were given the opportunity to ask questions related to the distributed questionnaire. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, only 100 were used for further analysis.

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23. Descriptive statistics and inference statistical tests were performed to analyze this survey. Descriptive statistics are explained by frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation whereas the inference statistical test such as t-test and one-way ANOVA analysis was used to examine differences between groups.

Findings and analysis

Demographics of respondents

Of the 100 high school students involved in this survey, 47% were male, while female students were 53%. The majority of respondents were Form Two students (43%), Form One (33%) and Form Four (24%). The majority of respondents were Malays (77%) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondents' demographics

	Frequency (Numbers)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	47	47.0
Female	53	53.0
Form		

One	33	33.0
Two	43	43.0
Four	24	24.0
Race		
Malay	77	77.0
Chinese	12	12.0
Indian	8	8.0
Others	3	3.0

Knowledge on the human reproductive system

Item Part A refers to questions about respondents' knowledge of the human reproductive system such as reproductive system, pregnancy, pregnancy prevention and sexually transmitted diseases. The average level of knowledge of the respondents was moderate (mean = 0.44, standard deviation = 0.22). This finding is in line with Ghazi's (2012) study which found that the disclosure of sexual information is restricted, inaccurate and not publicly discussed because it is considered shameful in Malaysian culture and society.

The results of this survey also found that there was no significant difference in the scores of male students compared to female students (t-test = 0.94, $p > 0.05$) although average female students' knowledge score (mean = 0.44, standard deviation = 0.21) was slightly higher than male students' knowledge (mean = 0.41, standard deviation = 0.23). This means that sex knowledge among male and female students is the same. The results support the study of Siti Nor et al. (2010) found no differences in knowledge about sex based on gender.

Results of one-way ANOVA analysis of mean based on students' forms was found to have statistically significant differences (F-test = 73.71, $p < 0.01$). The average Form Four students' scores (mean = 0.57, standard deviation = 0.17) was higher than the average Form One (mean = 0.37, standard deviation = 0.20) and Form Two students' scores (mean = 0.35, standard deviation = 0.19). This means that as a student grows older, the higher the level of their sexual knowledge. The results of this survey are in line with the study of Siti Nor et. al (2010) who showed that the source of information and social interaction and knowledge about sex increased as age increased.

Respondents were also asked to answer whether or not they have a girlfriend or boyfriend or are dating someone. Results of one-way ANOVA analysis for this category showed that there was a significant difference in scores (F-test = 9.17, $p < 0.05$). Respondents who claimed to have a girlfriend or boyfriend were found to have higher sex knowledge scores (mean = 0.49, standard deviation = 0.23) than respondents who did not have a girlfriend or boyfriend (mean = 0.41, standard deviation = 0.21). The mean score of respondents who knew someone (mean = 0.46, standard deviation = 0.17) was found to be significantly higher at $p < 0.05$ than respondents who did not have a girlfriend or boyfriend. This means that students are more likely to have sex related information when having a girlfriend or boyfriend. However, it is feared that the information obtained is insufficient and accurate to help them avoid getting involved in inappropriate activities.

Source of knowledge reference sex

The survey was conducted on sources of referrals used by respondents to obtain information on sex issues. The majority of respondents stated that the main sources of reference were from peers (31%), followed by film or television (11%) and internet (10%) as shown in Table 2. The least frequently cited sources of respondents were family members. However, among these family members, the mother was the most frequently referred person (4%) while the father was the least frequently referred family member (1%) by the respondents regarding sex. The survey supports a study conducted by Morris, Young and Jones (2013) who stated that students are more likely to refer to peers and the internet for sexual information.

Table 2 Source of Knowledge Reference Sex

	Frequency (Numbers)	Percentage (%)
Peers	31	31.0
Film or Televisions	11	11.0
Internet	10	10.0
Magazines	8	8.0
Books	8	8.0
Newspapers	8	8.0
CD or DVD	8	8.0
Girl friends or boy friends	8	8.0
Mother	4	4.0
Siblings (Male)	1	1.0
Sex experience	1	1.0
Father	1	1.0
Others	1	1.0
Doctor or nurses	0	0.0
Relatives	0	0.0

	Frequency (Numbers)	Percentage (%)
Neighbors	0	0.0
Siblings (Female)	0	0.0
Teachers	0	0.0

Summary and Suggestion

The majority of the students involved in this survey were 53 female students and 47 male students. The majority of them are Form Two students of 43, followed by Form One students of 33 and Form Four students of 24. Most students are Malays, namely a total of 77 people. From the knowledge base of the human reproductive system, the survey found that the average level of knowledge of the respondents was modest. This situation may be due to the disclosure of sexual information to students that is limited, inaccurate or not openly discussed because it is considered shameful.

The results of this survey also found that sex knowledge is the same regardless of student gender. On the students' forms based aspect, the survey results show that the average grades of Form Four students are higher than that of Form One students and Form Two students. This situation explains that as a student's age increases, so does their level of sexual knowledge. The survey also found that respondents who had girlfriends or boyfriends or respondents who knew someone had higher sex knowledge scores compared to respondents who did not have girlfriends or boyfriends. This means that students who have girlfriends or boyfriends are more likely to have information about sex.

From the source of sex knowledge referrals, the survey found that the majority of respondents had information about sex from their peers, followed by movies or television and the internet. The least frequently cited source of reference by respondents was family members especially fathers. Finally, in terms of sex related experiences, the survey found that the most common experiences were watching porn movies or videos. However, the findings of this survey are alarming as there are also respondents who have confessed to having sex with same sex couples.

Overall, this survey found that students were more likely to find sexually explicit information through peers, movies or television and the internet. These sources of information indirectly expose students to inaccurate information that may lead to a range of social problems such as pregnancies and an increase in infant abandonment. Therefore, the role of family structure, especially parents, is important in controlling children's inappropriate behavior. Changes in parental thinking about sex education need to be taken into account to make them more open to discussion especially with growing

children. Likewise, peers should be given and equipped with real knowledge of sex as they serve as a source of reference. They can be given courses and training through counselling methods to ensure the right information or advice is provided to help fellow students.

Conclusion

School sex is a complex issue. The knowledge, resources, and experiences of students regarding sex in these surveys do little to illustrate an urgent need for all parties to address these issues. It should be given immediate attention so that it does not become worse. Appropriate efforts and actions need to be made and intensified in addressing these issues to ensure family well-being and community harmony.

This survey has some limitations and the findings of the survey need to be interpreted more carefully. Initially, this survey focused only on high school students around Raub town and should not be widely publicized. Second, this survey only uses questionnaires as a research instrument. Accordingly, in depth information on students' knowledge, resources and experiences about sex could not be further refined. It is hoped that future surveys can be formally carried out involving more schools and more students so that the findings of the survey reflect the current real situation. It is also recommended that future studies be able to diversify data collection methods such as the use of qualitative methods so that the information received is more in depth to understand for the benefit of scientific research.

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