KNOWLEDGE ON SEXUALITY AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF MALAYSIAN ADOLESCENTS: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Abstract- The current study aims to evaluate knowledge on sexuality and reproductive health of Malaysian school adolescents. The sample consists of 80 school students from eight different districts of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The cross-sectional survey method is employed and stratified sampling technique employed. Knowledge test was administered for getting information regarding sexuality. The data were analyzed through SPSS by using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-Test. The results indicate, male adolescents have more sexual knowledge (M = 21.68) as compared to female (M = 19.43), and there are significant differences between both genders t (78) = 2.080, p =.041. Similarly, in comparison with education,level-5 students have more knowledge as comparing to level-3 (M = 21.08, M = 19.88) respectively. There is no significant differences between both level students t(77) = -1.088, p = .280. Conclusively, the study proved, the students from Jempol and Seremban have more knowledge on sexuality as compared to other districts. Limitations and suggestions for future researches are also conferred.

Key words- Knowledge On Sexuality, Reproductive Health, School Adolescents, Malaysia.

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitory period of life that makes adolescents progressing towards adulthood [1]. The adolescents are not fully aware about sexuality, therefore, sexual and reproductive health are important and emerging issues particularly in Asian cultures. Adolescents face many problems related to sexuality and reproductive health such as unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and unsafe abortions [2]. Research supported that there is extensive age gap between puberty and the marriage, this evidence cause premarital sexual activity among adolescents [3]. Above scenario guides that adolescents are more at risk to sexual activities due to lack of knowledge and assistance about sex and sexual relationship [4].

In the international scenario, U.S National Survey [5]reported that both genders initiate sexual activities at the age of 17 years, or mid of 16 years, but male initiate as younger age as compared to female.The most accurate and up to date information is necessary for this age group. In western countries, unwanted pregnancy and abortion rate in adolescents continued to be high and research [6] reported that near about one million teenagers become pregnant each year and approximately half million obtain an abortion. An extensive study supported that lack of knowledge about sexuality leads towards reproductive health problems among adolescents in developed countries too [7].

According to Global School-Based Student Health Survey sexual activities in adolescents are sensitive issue in Asian cultures. The percentage of sexual activities, increasing day by day in school age students. Deficiency of data on sexual activities, especially in school children showing low percentages such as in Vietnam reported 5.7% school children involved in sexual activities [8]. Likewise, in Cambodia 11.9% and Mangloia 15.4% school children involved in sexual activities [9]-[10]. Meanwhile, in Malaysia approximately 5% to 13% school children are involved in sexual activities [11]-[12].

Malaysian adolescents and school children are facing sexual and reproductive health problems. There is a hot issue among Malaysian adolescents and for their parents [13]. Sexual health and related issues still considered as taboo in many Asian countries, therefore adolescents unable to get adequate knowledge, proper guidance and services related to sexual and reproductive health predominantly at school level [14]. Study verifies that adolescents residing in South East Asia and particularly in Malaysia have little knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and premarital sexual activities are at increase day by day [15] -[16].

1.1. Problem statement

The knowledge on sexuality and reproductive health is crucial for positive growth of adolescents. The international research community considered it as a very serious issue for teenagers and it would be resolved on priority basis for the safety of adolescents' future. The data on sexuality and reproductive health among adolescents is direly needed because the adolescents are at risk of HIV [17] -[18],number of AIDS cases in adolescents are increasing, the abortion rate is relatively rising and unwanted pregnancies are emerging. Particularly in Malaysia, all these issues are developing day by day

and it is essential to overcome and control these issues at the inception [19].The current study would provide a first milestone towards healthy destination of Malaysian adolescents.

1.2. Objectives

1. To find out the level of knowledge on sexuality and reproductive health among Malaysian adolescents.
2. To compare the differences in terms of knowledge about sexuality, between both genders, according to their education level, and district wise.

1.3 Hypotheses

H_1. The male students have more knowledge on sexuality as compare to female.

H_2. The level- 5 students have more knowledge on sexuality as compared to the level-3 students.

H_3. The adolescents belong to districts Seramban and Jempol have more knowledge about sexuality as compared to other districts.

II. METHOD

2.1 Participant characteristics

A total sample of this study is eighty (N= 80) students taking from eight different districts (Seremban, nilai, Port Dickson, Kuala Pilah, Jempol, Tampin, Jelebu, and Rembau) state of Negeri Sembilan,Malaysia. In whole sample 40 males and 40 females. The age range is 15 to 17 years old and studying at level 3 and level 5.

2.2 Research design and sampling

Cross sectional survey method used for this study. Data were collected from stratified sampling technique, 8 strata construct district wise and each stratum 10 students enrolled.

2.3 Measure and covariates

2.3.1 Knowledge test

Knowledge test by Kirby [20]is administered for investigating basic information about sexuality. The scale consists of 34 items of multiple choices. All questions are probing basic information about adolescent physical development, relationship, sexual activity, pregnancy, marriage, birth control and sexually transmitted diseases. It is valid scale for senior and junior school children.

2.4 Data analyses

Data is analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. Descriptive statistics and t-test employed for hypothesis testing.

2.5 Ethical consideration

Study fulfill all ethical considerations that provided by APA. Formal permission has taken from the respective author to use a scale. Departmental permission was taken to formally approach the schools. Informed consent acquired from students.

2.6 Operational definition

2.6.1 Sexuality

Sexuality involves individual gender identity and encompass different roles such as sexual orientation, eroticism, intimacy, reproduction and pleasure [21].

2.6.2 Reproductive Health

Reproductive health defined as ample achievement of well-being in terms of physical, mental and social condition; and less risks of STD's, HIV and unintended pregnancies [22].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1, shows the frequency of demographic variables. According to the results for both genders, are equal in percentage, such as 50% male and 50% female. In age reference 50% adolescents having 15 years old, same as 50% adolescents age is 17 years. In the context of education, 50% adolescents are from level-3 and 50% from level-5. In district wise frequencies, all eight districts have the same frequency that is 10, it means in every district 10 adolescents have taken and every district percentage is 12.5%.

Table 2, shows gender wise comparison. According to the results, male adolescents have more knowledge about sexual activities as compared to female. The Male average score is M = 21.68 (SD = 5.572) while female average score is M = 19.43 (SD = 3.967). Invariance of homogeneity was tested and Levene's F test performed F (78) = 4.906, p =.030 shows there is significant differences between both genders. Meanwhile, independent t-test was associated with a statistically effect t (78) = 2.080, p =.041.Hypothesis 1 justified.

Table 3, shows an education-wise comparison. According to results, level-5adolescents have more knowledge about sexual activity as compared to level-3. The mean score of level-3 students is M = 19.88 (SD = 5.140) while level-5 students mean score is M = 21.08 (SD = 4.659). Inhomogeneity variance was tested and satisfied via Levene's F test, F (77) =.368, p =.546 shows there is no significant differences between both level students. Moreover, independent samples t-test employed and score is t(77)= -1.088, p = .280, shows insignificant differences. Hypothesis 2 is approved. A similar study reported that a male has more knowledge on sexuality as compared to female means score of male M = 16.89 and female M =15.72 [23]. A contrast study reported that knowledge on sexuality is higher in female adolescents as compared to male and there are significant differences among both genders p = 0.001 [24].

Table 4, shows district wise comparison. According results adolescents of Jempol district have more knowledge as compared to other districts, their average score is *M* = 25.00 (*SD* = 3.771) and for Seremban adolescents, their mean score is high *M* = 24.00 (*SD* = 4.922). Port Dickson's adolescents mean score is *M* = 23.30 (*SD* = 2.830) that are considered as 3rd highest mean from eight districts. District Kuala Pilah and Rembau adolescents mean score that is *M* = 18.30 (*SD* = 3.683) and *M* = 18.20 (*SD* = 6.713) respectively. Furthermore, the lowest mean score that is *M* = 17.40 (*SD* = 3.658) came from Tampin district and they have less knowledge about sexuality as compare to other districts, same as for Jelebu district adolescents because their mean score is also *M* = 17.70 (*SD* = 2.452) similar to Tampin district adolescents mean score. Hypothesis 3 is verified.The district wise score differences may shed a light towards the exposure of students regarding sexuality.

Table 1 Demographic variables

Variable		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sex	Male	40	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	
Age					
	15	40	50.0	50.0	50.0
	17	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	
Education Level					
	3	40	50.0	50.0	50.0
	5	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	
District					
	Seremban	10	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Nilai	10	12.5	12.5	25.0
	Port Dickson	10	12.5	12.5	37.5
	Kuala Pilah	10	12.5	12.5	50.0
	Jempol	10	12.5	12.5	62.5
	Tampin	10	12.5	12.5	75.0
	Jelebu	10	12.5	12.5	87.5
	Rembau	10	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 Gender wise comparison of knowledge on sexuality

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Overall score	Male	40	21.68	5.572	.881
	Female	40	19.43	3.967	.627

Overall score of	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	4.906	.030	2.080	78	.041	2.250	1.081	.097	4.403
Equal variances not assumed			2.080	70.457	.041	2.250	1.081	.093	4.407

Table 3 Education-wise comparison of knowledge on sexuality

Education	levels	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Overall score	3	40	19.88	5.140	.813
	5	40	21.08	4.659	.746

Overall score	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.368	.546	-1.088	77	.280	-1.202	1.105	-3.401	.998
Equal variances not assumed			-1.090	76.598	.279	-1.202	1.103	-3.399	.995

Table 4 District wise comparisons of knowledge about sexuality

District	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.deviation
Seremban	17	33	24.00	4.922
Nilai	15	25	20.50	3.749
Port Dickson	19	27	23.30	2.830
Kuala Pilah	12	22	18.30	3.683
Jempol	17	30	25.00	3.771
Tampin	10	22	17.40	3.658
Jelebu	13	21	17.70	2.452
Rembau	06	27	18.20	6.713

CONCLUSION

The male adolescents carry more knowledge on sexuality and reproductive health as compared to females, and there is a significant difference among both genders. It depicts, for females there is a strict taboo of sexuality as compared to male.Furthermore,levels-5 students have a more knowledge as compared to the level-3 students. Finally, Jampol and Seremban district adolescents have more knowledge on sexuality as compared to other districts.

SUGGESTION AND LIMITATIONS

The study has some limitations. This study has targeted school adolescents, especially level-3 and level-5 but other levels remained in exclusion criteria. In the future,studies should include all school levels for acquiring knowledge on sexuality. The study included only eight districts of Malaysia but there are many districts of Malaysia that must be approached. Data should be gathered from whole Malaysia for good generalizability. There are many other factors that are associated with sexuality and reproductive health, these factors should be addressed and evaluated in future studies.

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