

Risk Behavior of Adolescents in Using Amphetamine Drug in the Upper Northern Region : Quantitative and Qualitative Studies

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ABSTRACT

This study was divided into 2 methods (quantitative and qualitative). Data for a quantitative study were from samplings of Mathayom 1, 2 and 3 students, totaling 6,457 respondents. They were from stratified random sampling in 8 provinces of the Upper Northern region. The findings of the study revealed that most of the samplings were male (54.58%), 14- year- old (34.44%), studying outside the city (57.58%), having affectionate parenting styles (67.98%), income was not enough for expenditure (43.01%) and smoking cigarettes at the school (52.6%). Most samplings had high risk level in using amphetamine in a factor related to receiving information about amphetamine. Factors of gender, school location, age and educational level affected risk behavior level differently in a statistically-significant manner. Moreover, the study also found out that factors of family economic status, education level of father and mother, parenting in neglecting style and democratic type had statistically-significant relationship with risk level of adolescents in using amphetamine.

As for a qualitative study, data were collected from Mathayom 1, 2 and 3 students, homeroom teachers and school administrators, totaling 278 respondents. These were from purposive sampling, and the data were collected by focus group discussion and in-depth interview in secondary schools in 8 provinces of the Upper Northern region. The results of the study revealed that most adolescents had two paradigms of attitudes towards using amphetamine, that is, they had a negative attitude towards amphetamine and they found that popularity of using amphetamine had changed. As for a process in initiating risk behavior in using drug, it was found that most adolescents began to have risk behavior from 3 conditions: personal condition, family condition and friend condition. As for general risk level, adolescents demonstrated behavior which violated school's regulations and stayed outside their homes but not yet involved with drug. In amphetamine risk level, most adolescents involved with basic addicted substances, especially tobacco and alcoholic drinks, and clearly demonstrated more negative behavior against school's regulations. The findings also revealed that factors of geography, northern culture, community strength, mass media, friends and stress were all important factors causing amphetamine risk behavior of adolescents in the Upper Northern region. Moreover, it was found out that the

situation of amphetamine spread in the Upper Northern region had decreased to 0–1%. However, adolescents still involved with other addicted substances, i.e., inhalants, cannabis and mixed cough syrup. Although the spread of these substances had reduced, the present situation showed that adolescents still had 3 problems in their behavior: using of basic addicted substances, i.e., tobacco and liquor especially local spirit which were cheap and easy to buy; sexual problem reflecting deterioration of Thai culture; and lastly, violence found in adolescents (quarrelling and being aggressive).

As for drug monitoring in schools in the Upper Northern region, this consisted of two components: monitoring within school compounds and monitoring outside schools. In school compound monitoring, organizational leaders' roles were stressed. Students taking-care system of Ministry of Education had been used. Staffing structure was positioned to prevent and solve the drug problem. Psychological knowledge was applied to solve adolescents' problems. Teachers' devotion, student inspectors and strict punishment were all applied to help solve the problem. As for monitoring outside schools, community and parent-student cooperation was used to prevent and reduce risk for school staff directly involving with drug prevention task.

Key words: Risk behavior, Amphetamine drug, the Upper Northern region

INTRODUCTION

Drug trafficking is a worldwide problem that affects national security. Thailand, in particular, due to her geographic location and supported by related conditions, is a convenient place for smuggling drug into the country, as shown by statistics on drug trafficking arrests. However, during the past five years (from 2001–2005), amphetamine has been the addicted substance which was ranked first in being caught nationwide (Bureau of Narcotics Suppression Board, 2005). Rate of its spread had been fast and it has been widely distributed to adolescents in schools. Thus, the government had implemented a serious policy in prevention and suppression of drug smuggling in order to solve drug-related problems. Nevertheless, the areas in northern part of Thailand are still the location where most amphetamine has been smuggled into country (89%) (Thairat, 2005) comparing to other areas of Thailand. Therefore, the research team aimed to study the factors related to the risk behavior of amphetamine using of adolescents in the Upper Northern region.

OBJECTIVES

This research has the following aims:

1. To find out the level of risk behavior of adolescents in using amphetamine drugs in the Upper Northern region
2. To determine the differences of risk behavior of adolescents in using amphetamine drugs in the Upper Northern region
3. To investigate factors relating to risk behavior of adolescents in using amphetamine drugs in the Upper Northern region
4. To find out the adolescents' viewpoints towards amphetamine drugs
5. To investigate risk behavior process of adolescents in using amphetamine drugs in