

RISK BEHAVIOR AMONGST ADOLESCENTS OF A RURAL LAND DEVELOPMENT SCHEME IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

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ABSTRAK

Tingkah-laku berisiko di kalangan remaja adalah satu masalah yang kian meningkat di kalangan remaja di Malaysia. Satu kajian keratan-mentas yang melibatkan pelajar Tingkatan Satu di tiga rancangan pembangunan tanah di Semenanjung Malaysia telah dilakukan pada bulan Januari 2003 untuk mengenalpasti prevalens tingkah-laku berisiko di kalangan remaja yang telah dipilih. Prevalens tingkah-laku berisiko rendah adalah 51.5% dan tingkah-laku berisiko tinggi adalah 10.7%. Tingkah-laku berisiko yang paling prevalen adalah ponteng sekolah (34.4%), melepak (21.5%), membuli (14.4%), mencuri (12.9%) dan merokok (12.0%). Jantina dan tahap pendidikan ibu-bapa adalah peramal signifikan untuk tingkah-laku berisiko.

Kata kunci : Remaja, tingkah-laku berisiko

ABSTRACT

Risk behavior amongst adolescents is an ever growing problem in Malaysia. A cross-sectional study involving 815 Form one students of secondary schools in three rural land development schemes in Peninsular Malaysia was conducted in January 2003 to determine the prevalence of risk behaviors amongst the chosen adolescents. The prevalence of low risk behavior was 51.5% and high risk behavior was 10.7%. The most prevalent risk behavior include truancy (34.4%), loitering in public places (21.5%), bullying (14.4%), stealing (12.9%) and smoking (12.0%). Gender and parents' education level are significant predictors of risk behavior.

Key words : Adolescent, risk behavior

INTRODUCTION

The stage of adolescent can both be a challenging and rewarding period in a human life time. It can be classified into three stages ; early adolescence ranging from 10 to 15 years of age, middle adolescence (15-17 years of age) and late adolescence (17 years old to adulthood) (Greydanus 1997). The physical and emotional changes that take place in an adolescent coupled with environmental influences may provoke risk behaviors amongst adolescents. Risk behaviors amongst adolescents have a negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of their adult life. It is therefore essential that these behaviors should be curbed at an early stage of the adolescent life before they become embedded into their style of living. Studies have shown that risk behaviors amongst adolescents are on the rise and crimes committed by adolescents as a consequence of these risk behaviors are alarmingly high (Morris et al. 1995 and Ministry of Health 1995).

In a study by Hanafiah et al (2002) it was found that out of 480 adolescents studying in secondary schools in the Gombak District of Selangor, 34.5% were engaged in risk behaviors. However, most of the studies carried out in Malaysia amongst adolescents were focused on urban adolescents.

This study was carried out to determine the prevalence of risk behavior amongst secondary school adolescents of three land development schemes in Peninsular Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

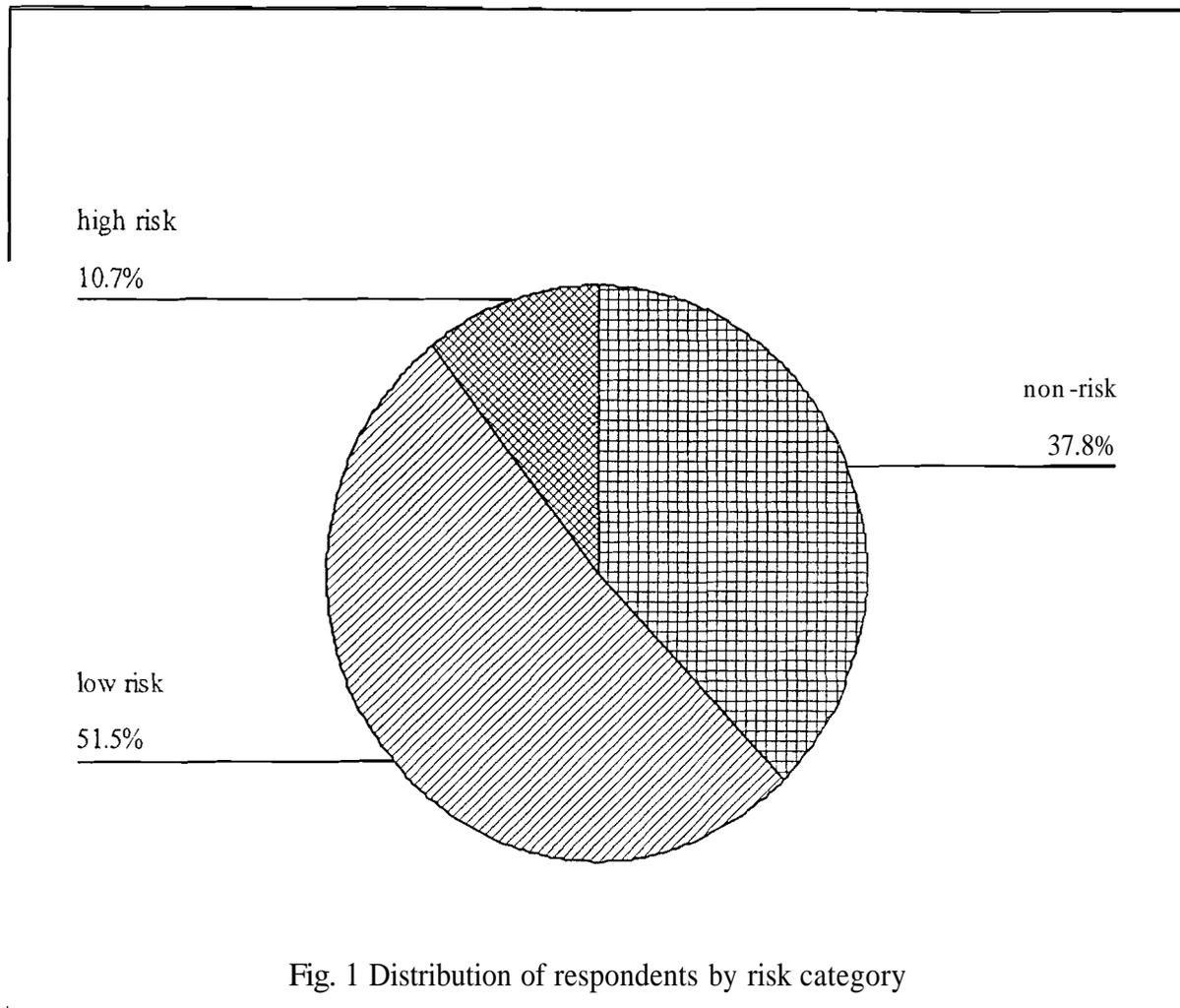
A cross-sectional study was undertaken in January 2003 amongst all Form One students studying at six secondary schools of three land development schemes in Peninsular Malaysia. The three land development schemes were conveniently sampled and all secondary schools in the land schemes were included in this study. A pre-tested questionnaire was administered to all form one students to be filled in individually. Socio-demographic data as well as risk behaviors were collected from each respondents. A score between one to three were given for various risk behaviors which include smoking, watching pornographic films, alcohol and drug abuse, vandalism, gambling, sexual relationship, truancy, illegal motor racing, gangsterism and disciplinary problem in schools. A total score of zero denote "non-risk" , 1-9 as "low-risk" and ten or more as "high risk". Data was processed and analyzed using the SPSS software, version 10.

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RESULT

Out of 815 students, 413 (50.7%) were boys and 402 (49.4%) were girls. Figure 1 shows the

distribution of respondents by risk category. A total of 308 students (37.8%) were considered as non-risk, 420 (51.5 %) have low risk while 87 (10.7 %) were categorized as high-risk.



The following figure (Figure 2) shows the distribution of respondents by total household income. The majority of the respondents came from households with total household income of

500 to 749 Ringgit Malaysia (RM). The median household income was 500.00 RM with the minimum household income being 30.00 RM and the maximum 9,960.00 RM.

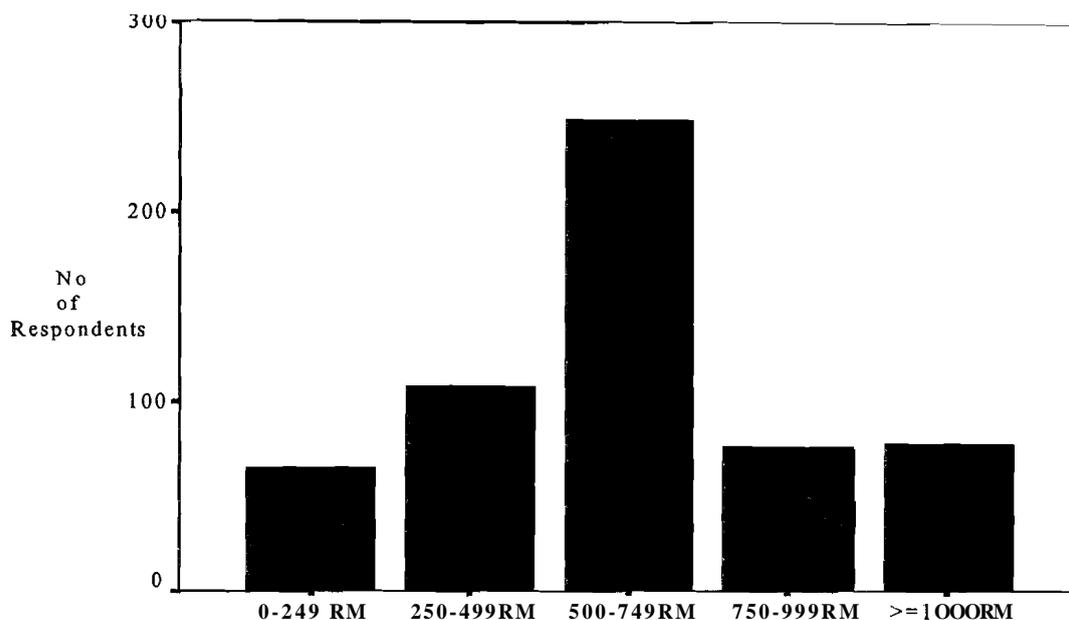


Fig. 2 Distribution of respondents by total household income

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by type of risk behavior. Truancy (34.4%) was the major risk behavior amongst the adolescents and this was followed by loitering in public places (21.5%). Bullying friends (14.4%), stealing (12.9%) and smoking (12.0%) were also common amongst the respondents. Forty-two (5.2%) of the respondents had viewed pornographic films before. Only 2 (0.2%) respondents who had experienced taking drugs and alcohol while 10 (1.2%) had engaged in glue sniffing before.

Table 1 : Distribution of respondents by type of risk behavior.

Risk Behavior	No. (%) (n=815)
Truancy	280 (34.4%)
Loitering	175 (21.5%)
Bullying friends	117 (14.4%)
Stealing	105 (12.9%)
Smoking	98 (12.0%)
Playing snooker	69 (8.5%)
Watching pornographic films	42 (5.2%)
Illegal motor racing	38 (4.7%)
Special friend	31 (3.8%)
Gambling	22 (2.7%)
Gangsterism	19 (2.3%)
Glue sniffing	10 (1.2%)
Drug use	2 (0.2%)
Alcohol intake	2 (0.2%)
Sexual relationship	2 (0.2%)

The following table (Table 2) shows the distribution of respondents by risk category and certain socio-demographic factors. Risk behavior was significantly higher amongst boys compared to girls. Amongst the non-risk group, the proportion of their mothers who had no formal education was 5.0% and this increased to 10.0% amongst the low risk group and 16.5% in the high risk group. The differences observed were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). There was also a significantly higher proportion of the low risk (7.2%) and high risk (10.3%) adolescents fathers who had no formal education compared to those in the non-risk (2.0%) group. There was no significant relationship between parents' religious education and level of risk behavior

Table 2 : Distribution of respondents by risk category and socio-demographic factors

Socio-demographic factors	Risk Category			χ^2	p-value
	Non-risk	Low-risk	High-risk		
1) Gender					
Female	213	181	8	111.03	0.0000
Male	95	239	79		
2) Parent's marital status					
Married	283	379	80	0.45	0.7997
Others	21	34	7		
3) Mother's Education					
Secondary & above	142	185	27	15.87	0.0032*
Primary	144	183	44		
None	15	41	14		
4) Father's Education					
Secondary & above	169	223	46	13.26	0.0100*
Primary	124	151	32		
None	6	29	9		
5) Mother's religious education					
Yes	196	246	49	2.44	0.2948
No	99	154	34		
6) Father's religious education					
Yes	196	247	48	2.33	0.3122
No	96	150	32		

* significant at $p < 0.05$

Note : Not all respondents responded to all the socio-demographic questions

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study the major risk behavior amongst adolescents include loitering in public places, truancy, bullying, stealing, smoking and watching pornographic films. Kim (2001) in his study amongst adolescent high school students in Korea, showed a high prevalence of risk behaviors amongst them. In the same study, 43.0% and 51% of the respondents admitted having viewed pornographic films and smoked before respectively (Kim 2001). These figures are higher than that found in this study. Takamura et al (2001) also showed a high prevalence of multiple risk behaviors amongst Japanese adolescents. In a study by Hanafiah et al (2001) amongst 1,470 form two students of urban schools in the Gombak District of Selangor in Malaysia, the prevalence of smoking was found to be 15.2% and this was higher than the prevalence of smoking (12.0%) found in this study. In another study in America, 37.0% of the school going adolescents reported ever trying cigarettes (Fetro et al 2001).

Smoking as a risk behavior amongst adolescents is common in many communities

(Dowdell 2002 and Faucher 2003). The overall relatively high prevalence of risk behavior amongst young adolescent is alarming. The presence of multiple risk behaviors amongst the respondents in this study warrants a more pro-active and innovative method of preventive-interventive activities to be initiated in these communities. Although other studies (Hanafiah et al 2001) showed no significant relationship between risk behavior and parents education, it was evident in this study that parents education had a significant influence on adolescent risk behavior. The right to obtain quality education is essential so that individuals would be able to educate themselves about current social issues that might affect their life and also that of their loved ones. The emphasis on education should be taken seriously since adolescents who engaged themselves in risk behaviors have a higher probability of not achieving well in academic performance and this will set a vicious cycle alike to their parents who were not able to access important information vital for prevention of adolescents risk behaviors.

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