ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR AMONG RURAL THAI ADOLESCENTS REGARDING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

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Abstract. Early initiation of sexual intercourse has been associated with negative consequences, such as higher rates of unwanted pregnancy and HIV infection. This study examined the attitudes and behavior of rural Thai adolescent students aged 16 to 20 years from northern Thailand regarding sexual intercourse. Differences between participants who previously had sexual intercourse and those who had not were explored. Those who had not previously had sexual intercourse were asked about the reasons why they had not had sex, their future plans for having sex and their dating experiences. More than 70% of participants stated they had not previously had sexual intercourse but one third of this group reported engaging in other sexual behavior. There were significant differences by gender, religion, ethnicity, and household income between those who had previously had sex and those who had not. Among those who had not previously had sexual intercourse, concern for their parents’ feelings was the most common reason for delaying intercourse. About two-thirds of this group had plans not to have sexual intercourse until after marriage; nearly half of them reported currently having a boyfriend/girlfriend. Interventions aimed at delaying sexual intercourse should involve adolescents in their design and include their attitudes for delaying intercourse. Because of many gender differences seen in our study, interventions should be designed differently for males and females in rural northern Thailand.

Keywords: attitude, behavior, sexual intercourse, adolescents

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