

# Gender Roles, Physical and Sexual Violence Prevention in Primary Extend to Secondary School in Samutsakorn Province, Thailand

Kanittha Chamroonsawasdi PhD\*, Jarueporn Suparp MD\*,  
Wirin Kittipichai PhD\*, Piyathida Khajornchaikul DEd\*

\* Department of Family Health, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

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**Objective:** To enhance positive attitude and life skills on gender roles to prevent physical and sexual violence.

**Material and Method:** A whole school-based participatory learning program using a quasi-experimental study with pre and post test design was conducted among 2 schools during June-September, 2005. The experimental group, were 134 students in a primary school and 179 students in a secondary school. While the control group, were 122 students in a primary school and 95 students in a secondary school.

**Results:** Means score of attitude toward gender roles before implementation in the experimental group was significantly lower than the control group ( $p < 0.05$ ). After implementation, the means score in the experimental group was not significantly different from the control group ( $p > 0.05$ ). Means paired different score (after-before) between the two groups was significantly different ( $p = 0.002$ ).

**Conclusion:** A whole school-based program on gender roles and violence prevention is suitable for youths and should be merged as school curricula and expanded as a nationwide program at all level of education. Gender equity should be taught at an early childhood. Parental involvement in school-based activities should be negotiated.

**Keywords:** Gender roles, Violence prevention

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Physical and sexual violence is an important health issue that impacts on human life. Several strategies to prevent and control of violence in society are by using law, strengthening individual knowledge and skills and giving community education to recognize its' importance<sup>(1,2)</sup>. To respond this event among an early childhood is by an integrating prevention program in an educational setting to increase more life skills development for positive behavior and to increase awareness, attitude and behaviors of students<sup>(3)</sup>. Socialization of individuals shows them how to act and how to expect others to act with them beyond the social norms on role expectation<sup>(4,5)</sup>. Gender roles are a set of perceived behavioral norms associated particularly with males or females, in a given social group or social system that can be created by family,

school, mass media and religion<sup>(5-7)</sup>. To realize and to practice appropriate gender roles at an early age will help children to reduce bullying behaviors, harmonize relationship, mutual understanding and reduce physical and sexual violence. The present study was aimed at using a whole school-based participatory learning program to enhance positive attitude and life skills on gender roles among students in primary extending to secondary school in order to prevent physical and sexual violence.

## Material and Method

A whole school-based quasi-experimental study using participatory learning from both students and teachers was conducted among 2 schools in Samutsakorn Province. Bann-Aoum Rong Heeb school was the experimental group while Wat Srisuwannaram school was the control group. The selection criteria were based on similar characteristics

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Correspondence to: Chamroonsawasdi K, Department of Family Health, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Bangkok 10400, Thailand.

of both schools as; a primary extending to secondary public school; medium size; open for kindergarten level to grade 3 of secondary school level; similar socio-demographic status of the students; located in Maung district of Samutsakorn province; agreement from school teachers and permission from the school director to set up students' learning schedules to allow free time to join the program in every week. Among the experimental group, the study sample was 134 students in grade 4-6 of primary school and 179 students in grade 1-3 of secondary school. While the control group, 122 students in a primary school and 95 students in a secondary school. The class sizes were approximately 40-45 students in both schools. Before the program started, the school director and the teachers in each school were appointed by the researchers to explain objectives of the program as well as to conduct a classroom meeting to explain the objectives of the program to the students and to collect pre-test data in each class. A self-administered questionnaire to collect socio-demographic data of students and parents, history of physical and sexual violence during the last 6 months and their attitude on gender roles was applied under a clear explanation given by the researcher team. Without any inform consent signed by the students and parents and those students who did not complete the questionnaire, they were excluded from the present study.

Among the experimental group, participatory learning was conducted altogether 11 weeks during June-September 2005, between 9.00-11.30 AM. Among the secondary school grade 1-3, the program was conducted on Tuesday while the primary school grade 4-6, the program was conducted on Friday. Purposes of the program were to motivate students to express their feelings, thoughts and acts with other people; to increase their life skills and how to improve themselves to reduce physical and sexual violence. All of 11 sessions consisted of; (1) Ideas development on happy school and family; (2) Realizing the importance of physical and sexual violence and its' impacts on life; (3) How to develop family relationships; (4) Mutual understanding on gender roles, how to exchange roles and responsibilities between males and females; how to act properly with the different sex; (5) How to avoid from pre-marital sex experiences; (6) Self-esteem development (7) Management of feeling and emotion; (8) Empathy building; (9) Coping with stress and self-management skills; (10) Problem solving skills and (11) Communication skills. The details of learning modules and materials were provided by the leader of

each topic and the others in the team as well as the teachers who acted as facilitators during the program was launched.

Two hours and a half in each session with games; questions; scenarios; reflection of thought; brainstorming; group work; conceptual ideas and applications; and group presentation were included. Students were enrolled into a small group as 10-12 students per group. At the end of each session, the leader researcher summarized on the main concepts. While among the control group, no intervention was carried out but all of the learning modules and materials were given to the teachers who participatory observed all activities carried out among the experimental group in each session.

Two weeks after the program was finished; both schools were given a post-test with the same self-administered questionnaire to compare their attitude on gender roles before and after implementation.

The questionnaire for data collection was developed by the researchers based on WHO life skills development concepts<sup>(8)</sup> divided into 4 parts. Part 1 was socio-demographic data of students and parents; and experiences of physical and sexual violence during the last 6 months. Part 2 was attitude on family relationship 10 items; attitude on gender roles 10 items and attitude on pre-marital sex experience 10 items. Part 3 was attitude on physical and sexual violence 9 items. Part 4 was life skills to prevent violence which included attitude on self-esteem 10 items, attitude on self understanding 8 items, attitude on empathy 8 items, coping skills 9 items, problem solving skills 9 items, and communication skills 12 items. The attitude scores were classified as agree, uncertain and disagree. The content validity of the questionnaire was done by 3 experts prior to conducting a pilot test. The reliability test was done among 31 primary school students and 29 secondary school students in one school of Banpaew district. The reliability test results using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient were as follows; attitude on family relationship 0.83, attitude on gender role 0.78, attitude on pre-marital sex 0.80, attitude on physical and sexual violence 0.76, attitude on self esteem 0.91, attitude on self understanding 0.6, and attitude on empathy 0.73, respectively.

Results were described by percentage and means ( $\pm$  SD). Chi-square test was used to compare socio-demographic data and experiences of physical and sexual violence within the last 6 months. Student t-test was used to compare means scores ( $\pm$  SD) of attitude toward gender roles and means score of

different (after-before) in both groups; and paired t-test was used to compare means different score ( $\pm$  SD) before and after implementation. Significant level of statistical test was at  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ .

### ***Ethical consideration***

The authors received approval from the reviewer board of ethical committee, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Thailand. The students and their parents in both schools were asked for their informed consent prior to study. Students may withdraw at any stage of the program. Data was analyzed and present as overall findings.

## **Results**

### ***Socio-demographic data***

There were 313 students in the experimental group and 217 in the control group. Means average of age in the experimental group was  $12.12 \pm 1.65$  years while in the control group was  $11.74 \pm 1.61$  years ( $p < 0.05$ ). Percentage of male to female in the experimental group was similar to the control group ( $p > 0.05$ ). The majority (57.2%) of the experimental group was grade 1-3, secondary school while the majority (56.2%) of the control group was grade 4-6, primary school ( $p = 0.002$ ). Concerning family status, percentages between the two groups were similar ( $p > 0.05$ ). While whom they currently living with, there were no significant differences regarding father (42.9%, 34.6%); mother (52.3%, 47.9%); and siblings (44.3%, 46.2%). But significant difference was found in terms of living with grandparents (18.7%, 27.2%,  $p = 0.021$ ) and living with other relatives (8.8%, 17.7%,  $p = 0.002$ ). There was no significant difference of father's education and mother's education ( $p > 0.05$ ) while father's occupation and mother's occupation were significantly different ( $p < 0.001$ ). The majority of father's occupation in the experimental group were labor and factory worker (25.9%, 24.3%) while in the control group were labor, trader and others (23.7%, 19.1%). The 'others' of father's occupation were fishermen and small business. The majority of mother's occupation in the experimental group were factory worker, agriculture and trader (35.4%, 16.6% and 16.6%) while in the control group were labor and factory worker (25.9%, 20.8%, 19.4%). Family income was not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 1).

### ***Experiences of physical and sexual violence during the last 6 months***

The respondents in both groups indicated their experiences of physical and sexual violence

during the last 6 months both as the abuser and the victim. There was no significant difference in both groups in all aspects ( $p > 0.05$ ) as that they were hit by others (38.2%, 37.4%); to quarrel with others (70.5%, 75.0%); to hit other people (31.3%, 31.9%); to snapshot other people in the toilet or to touch friends' buttock and breasts (7.4%, 7.9%); and to be snapshot by other people when going to the toilet or to be touched on their buttock and breasts by other people (6.5%, 5.6%) (Table 2).

### ***Comparison of average means score between the experimental group and the control group***

Results revealed that means score of attitude toward gender roles before implementation in the experimental group was significantly lower than the control group ( $25.93 \pm 2.96$  and  $26.98 \pm 2.39$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). After implementation, the means score in the experimental group was not significantly different from the control group ( $26.32 \pm 2.87$  and  $26.31 \pm 2.63$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Means score of attitude toward gender roles after implementation was higher than before implementation in the experimental group but the means paired different score (after-before) was not significantly different (Means paired diff =  $0.38 \pm 4.16$ ,  $p = 0.113$ ). While in the control group, the means score after implementation was slightly lower than before implementation. The means paired different score before and after implementation in the control group was significantly different (Means paired diff =  $-0.67 \pm 3.53$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The means paired different score between the two groups was significantly different ( $p = 0.002$ ) (Table 3).

### ***Brainstorming on gender different***

From a group work to identify gender difference, the students responded that between the two sexes there are differences in terms of:

1) General appearances as biological difference between genital organs, masculinity in male and femininity in females; and males are stronger and more powerful than females.

2) Emotion as males is aggressive while females is soft and sweet; more emotionally sensitive among female; male cannot control emotion when angry and will face with physical violence while females can calm down easier; males is less gambling than females; and female are easier to cry than males.

3) Behaviors as extrovert in males while introvert in females; males talk loudly and are not polite while females talk quietly and are more polite;

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic data of students and parents

Socio-demographic data	Experiment group n = 313 (%)	Control group n = 217 (%)	p-value
Age group (yrs)		(n = 216)	0.004*
8-9	26 (8.3)	8 (3.7)	
10-12	154 (49.2)	135 (62.5)	
13-16	133 (42.5)	73 (33.8)	
Mean $\pm$ SD (Min, Max)	12.12 $\pm$ 1.65 (9, 15)	11.74 $\pm$ 1.61 (8, 16)	
Sex	(n = 308)	(n = 217)	0.765
Male	162 (52.6)	117 (53.9)	
Female	146 (47.4)	100 (46.1)	
Education level			0.002*
Grade 4-6, primary school	134 (42.8)	122 (56.2)	
Grade 1-3, secondary school	179 (57.2)	95 (43.8)	
Family status (multiple answers)			
1) Parents both live together	(n = 310)	(n = 216)	0.873
Yes	223 (71.2)	154 (71.3)	
No	87 (28.8)	62 (28.7)	
2) Single parent from divorce/separate	(n = 310)	(n = 216)	0.354
Yes	60 (19.4)	49 (22.7)	
No	250 (80.6)	167 (77.3)	
3) Father was dead	(n = 309)	(n = 217)	0.599
Yes	19 (6.1)	11 (5.1)	
No	290 (93.9)	206 (94.9)	
4) Mother was dead	(n = 310)	(n = 217)	0.466
Yes	8 (2.6)	8 (3.7)	
No	302 (97.4)	209 (96.3)	
Whom currently living with (multiple answers)			
1) Father	(n = 310)	(n = 217)	0.054
Yes	133 (42.9)	75 (34.6)	
No	177 (57.1)	142 (65.4)	
2) Mother	(n = 308)	(n = 217)	0.327
Yes	161 (52.3)	104 (47.9)	
No	147 (47.7)	113 (52.1)	
3) Grandparents	(n = 310)	(n = 217)	0.021*
Yes	58 (18.7)	59 (27.2)	
No	252 (81.3)	158 (72.8)	
4) Siblings	(n = 309)	(n = 216)	0.657
Yes	137 (44.3)	100 (46.2)	
No	172 (55.7)	116 (53.7)	
5) Other relatives	(n = 308)	(n = 215)	0.002*
Yes	27 (8.8)	38 (17.7)	
No	281 (91.2)	177 (82.3)	
Father's education level	(n = 264)	(n = 178)	0.437
Illiterate	5 (1.9)	5 (2.7)	
Primary school	204 (77.3)	129 (72.5)	
Grade 1-3, secondary school	36 (13.6)	27 (15.2)	
Grade 4-6, secondary school	11 (4.2)	9 (5.1)	
Vocational school	3 (1.1)	6 (3.4)	
Bachelor degree or higher	5 (1.9)	2 (1.1)	
Mother's education level	(n = 268)	(n = 190)	0.174
Illiterate	11 (4.1)	5 (3.2)	
Primary school	206 (76.9)	147 (77.4)	
Grade 1-3, secondary school	38 (14.2)	18 (9.5)	
Grade 4-6, secondary school	8 (2.9)	11 (5.8)	
Vocational school	4 (1.5)	4 (2.1)	
Bachelor degree or higher	1 (0.4)	4 (2.1)	

\* Significant at p-value &lt; 0.05

**Table 1.** (Cont.)

Socio-demographic data	Experiment group n = 313 (%)	Control group n = 217 (%)	p-value
Father's occupation	(n = 309)	(n = 215)	<0.001*
Unemployment	14 (4.5)	9 (4.2)	
Agriculture	66 (21.4)	18 (8.4)	
Trader	38 (12.3)	41 (19.1)	
Government employee	6 (1.9)	4 (1.9)	
Private employee	12 (3.9)	11 (5.1)	
Labor	80 (25.9)	51 (23.7)	
Factory worker	75 (24.3)	40 (18.6)	
Others	18 (5.8)	41 (19.1)	
Mother's occupation	(n = 308)	(n = 216)	<0.001*
Unemployment	20 (6.5)	40 (18.5)	
Agriculture	51 (16.6)	8 (3.7)	
Trader	51 (16.6)	56 (25.9)	
Government employee	2 (0.6)	2 (1.0)	
Private employee	15 (4.9)	9 (4.2)	
Labor	49 (15.9)	45 (20.8)	
Factory worker	109 (35.4)	42 (19.4)	
Others	11 (3.5)	14 (6.5)	
Family income	(n = 232)	(n = 162)	0.238
Enough for saving	136 (48.6)	108 (66.7)	
Enough but not for saving	46 (19.9)	20 (12.3)	
Neither enough nor debt	24 (10.3)	17 (10.5)	
Not enough and had some debt	26 (11.2)	17 (10.5)	

\* Significant at p-value < 0.05

trial and error for some talent events found more among males; males do not pay attention to learn while females pay more attention; males obey their parents less while females do better, females put more concern on beauty, cosmetics and dressing.

4) Roles and responsibilities in both private and public spheres as males are leaders to earn money for their family while females are followers to take care of family members; females respond to domestic work such as cleaning the house, washing clothes, and cooking. While males respond to repairing electronic instruments, wooden crab, and some risky duties such as climbing up to change the roof and lamp.

The students also gave their opinion on changing roles and responsibilities in both private and public spheres as well as to promote on gender equity because any sex is a benefit to the society.

#### ***Brainstorming on prevention of pre-marital sex experiences***

Representatives from each group are summarized of the impacts from pre-marital sex as unwanted pregnancy followed by illegal abortion that will be harmful to life; to quit from school and have no

opportunity to gain a higher education; and to be stigmatized by the society. Ways to prevent pre-marital sex are to perform an appropriate relationship between boy and girl, not to stay together in a private place, a girl should not go out alone with her boyfriend but should be accompanied with others, and let the boy to see her at home under her parents' supervision.

#### **Discussion**

The results showed attitude score on gender roles were increased in the experimental group after implementation while in the control group was decreased. The comparison of mean different score before and after implementation between the 2 groups also found significant difference. This is due to an effect of the life skills program to enhance the attitude score among the experimental group by participatory learning approach. The participatory learning is a key strategy to motivate students in the experimental group to realize and change their attitude on gender roles.

Though socio-demographic status between the experimental and the control group were significantly different in several aspects the present study is a whole school-based approach to let all students participate.

**Table 2.** Experiences of physical and sexual violence during the last 6 months

Experiences during the past 6 month	Experiment group n (%)	Control group n (%)	p-value
To hit by others	n = 309	n = 214	0.852
Yes	118 (38.2)	80 (37.4)	
No	191 (61.8)	134 (62.6)	
To quarrel with others	n = 308	n = 216	0.252
Yes	217 (70.5)	162 (75.0)	
No	91 (29.5)	54 (25.0)	
To hit others	n = 309	n = 216	0.831
Yes	96 (31.1)	69 (31.9)	
No	213 (68.9)	147 (68.1)	
To snapshot other people in the toilet or to touch buttock and breast of others	n = 310	n = 216	0.848
Yes	23 (7.4)	17 (7.9)	
No	287 (92.6)	199 (92.1)	
To snapshot by other people in the toilet or to touch buttock and breast by others	n = 310	n = 216	0.672
Yes	20 (6.5)	12 (5.6)	
No	290 (93.5)	204 (94.4)	

**Table 3.** Comparison of means score before and after program implementation

Comparison of	Experimental group	Control group	p-value
Mean $\pm$ SD before	25.93 $\pm$ 2.96	26.98 $\pm$ 2.39	0.001*
Mean $\pm$ SD after	26.32 $\pm$ 2.87	26.31 $\pm$ 2.63	0.902
Mean pair diff $\pm$ SD (after-before)	0.38 $\pm$ 4.16	-0.67 $\pm$ 3.53	0.113
Mean diff $\pm$ SD	0.38 $\pm$ 4.16	-0.67 $\pm$ 3.53	0.002*

\* Significant at p-value < 0.05

This approach is difficult to control all comparable aspects between the 2 groups since a whole school approach is a public approach to violence prevention because it does not focus on individuals but rather on the health of all students in school<sup>(3)</sup>. A participatory learning program is suitable for youths to gain more life skills on gender roles and violence prevention. This method will help them to share their ideas and create mutual understanding on appropriate practices to promote their gender balance. A childhood education program on gender positioning will negotiate their understanding to others<sup>(9)</sup>. This program is similar to the Washington Middle School Project, a multi-level approach with students, school, parents and community to focus on sexual violence prevention among boys and to promote protective factors among girls by giving comprehensive sexuality education using participation of all levels<sup>(2)</sup> and the study done by Jensen JM and Dieterich WA, 2007 on effects of

skills-based prevention program on bullying and bullying victimization among elementary school children<sup>(10)</sup>. A wide range of discussion about masculinity, femininity, gender relations, and how to exchange roles to harmonize a relationship is a key strategy to overcome sexual violence similar to the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Model have been widely utilized as a school-based program in both boys and girls in the US<sup>(11)</sup> as well as Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in Norway<sup>(12)</sup>.

The strength of the present study was a quasi-experiment as a whole school-based approach to recruit all students to participate in the program so the results can be generalized to explain attitude on gender roles of Thai youths among other settings. The attitude on gender roles among the students shape a new dilemma of Thai society from traditional belief that females should be the subordinate group and should do all domestic work<sup>(13,14)</sup> to be a partnership



with equal responsibilities to maintain the family. This finding also supports the study of Davis SN<sup>(15)</sup> and Skrla L<sup>(16)</sup> that indicated gender ideology should begin in early childhood both at home and school. A participatory learning program is suitable for youths to gain more life skills on gender roles and violence prevention. This method will help them to share their ideas and create mutual understanding on appropriate practices to promote their gender balance. From findings, it is necessary to motivate family, school and community to create a clear understanding to their children on gender roles and gender equity at an early childhood period. The physical and sexual violence prevention program should be merged as school curricula and expand scope to implement as a nationwide program at all level of education. Parental involvement in school-based activities should be negotiated.

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## บทบาททางเพศ การป้องกันความรุนแรงทางร่างกาย และทางเพศในโรงเรียนขยายโอกาสทางการศึกษา จังหวัดสมุทรสาคร

กนิษฐา จำรูญสวัสดิ์, จรวยพร สุภาพ, วิริณธิ์ กิตติพิชัย, ปิยะธิดา ขจรชัยกุล

**วัตถุประสงค์:** เพื่อพัฒนาเจตคติเชิงบวกและพัฒนาทักษะชีวิตในเรื่องบทบาททางเพศ เพื่อป้องกันความรุนแรงทางร่างกายและทางเพศ

**วัสดุและวิธีการ:** การศึกษาแบบกึ่งทดลองโดยกระทำทั้งโรงเรียนในโรงเรียน 2 แห่ง โรงเรียนกลุ่มทดลองมีจำนวนนักเรียนชั้นประถมศึกษาปีที่ 4-6 จำนวน 134 คน และชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 1-3 จำนวน 179 คน ส่วนโรงเรียนกลุ่มควบคุมมีจำนวน 122 และ 95 คนตามลำดับ โปรแกรมการเรียนรู้แบบมีส่วนร่วมเพื่อสร้างความเข้าใจในบทบาททางเพศ โดยวัดผลก่อนและหลังดำเนินการในช่วงเดือนมิถุนายน-กรกฎาคม พ.ศ. 2548

**ผลการศึกษา:** ก่อนทดลองคะแนนเฉลี่ยเจตคติต่อบทบาททางเพศของกลุ่มทดลองต่ำกว่ากลุ่มควบคุมอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ( $p < 0.05$ ) หลังทดลองคะแนนเฉลี่ยในกลุ่มทดลองไม่แตกต่างจากกลุ่มควบคุม ( $p > 0.05$ ) ผลต่างคะแนนเฉลี่ยก่อนและหลังทดลองระหว่างทั้งสองกลุ่มแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ( $p = 0.002$ )

**สรุป:** โปรแกรมนี้มีความเหมาะสมที่จะใช้กับเด็ก เพื่อเพิ่มทักษะชีวิตในเรื่องบทบาททางเพศและการป้องกันความรุนแรง ควรสอนเรื่องความเท่าเทียมกันทางเพศให้รู้ตั้งแต่วัยเด็ก ควรผนวกโปรแกรมเข้ากับวิชาที่สอนในโรงเรียน และขยายการดำเนินงานไปสู่ระดับประเทศในการศึกษาทุกระดับชั้น และควรสนับสนุนให้พ่อแม่มีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมต่าง ๆ ของโรงเรียนให้มากขึ้น

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