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CHANDRIKA SUBASINGHE: DETERMINANTS OF KNOWLEDGE ON REPRODUCTIVE AND SEXUAL HEALTH MATTERS AMONG SRI LANKAN YOUTH. THESIS ADVISOR: VARACHAI THONGTHAI, Ph.D., SAIRUDEE VORAKITPHOKATORN, Ph.D. 69 p. ISBN 974-661-444-4.

An assessment of knowledge on reproductive and sexual health among Sri Lankan youth is an important step in the development and implementation of an appropriate program and curriculum. This study tried to investigate the existing knowledge about reproductive and sexual health matters among 2524 unmarried youth, both males and females in equal numbers aged 16 - 29 years. The mean age was 21.3 years. The majority, approximately 80 percent, of the sample comprised rural youth. Among both sexes, majority were not currently attending school and were living with their parents at home. A prominent feature of the sample was that 87 percent of the respondents have attained higher level education defined as up to 12 years of education.

In order to assess knowledge on reproductive and sexual health matters, questions pertaining to male and female reproductive systems, virginity, nocturnal emissions, masturbation, STDs and HIV/AIDS were considered. Overall, it was revealed that males possessed more correct knowledge on these issues than females. However, it was seen that knowledge varied according to specific topics while it was indicated that ancient myths and beliefs pertaining to virginity, nocturnal emissions and masturbation are still prevalent in the society and seemed to disturb a considerable number of youth. However, the majority of the respondents appeared to have correct knowledge on STDs and HIV/AIDS in comparison with knowledge on male and female reproductive systems.

In an attempt to find the determinants of knowledge, it was revealed that there were differences based on area of residence, age and level of education that have an influence on knowledge among both males and females. Living arrangements appeared to cause no difference among both these groups while school status and peer influence caused a difference among females.

These findings strongly indicate the need for an effective reproductive health program for the young, both in and out of school. The necessity of the introduction of sex education into school curricula is emphasized.