

Abstract

HEALTH AND SOCIAL STATUS OF THAI CHILDREN

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In 2001, the Holistic Development of Thai Children Study has conducted a nation-wide survey of 9,488 Thai children aged 1-18 years old and their families enrolled by a three-stage stratified random sampling. Besides data on total child development, information on health and social status were also collected.

Results: Among the under six years old group, the coverage of vaccines listed in the national immunization program was almost 100%, except for the measles vaccine which was 93.4%. Sixteen percent of the school age children (6-<13 years old) and 11.3% of the adolescents (13-18 years old) were admitted during the past year. Dengue hemorrhagic fever ranked second in the school age group and first in the adolescents as the cause of admission, while accidents came second and fourth in the adolescents and school age children, respectively. Mean age of menarche was 12.6 years, while that of the first experience of wet dream in boys was 13.6 years.

Among adolescents, 114 (3.6%) out of 3,154 cases have had sexual relationships. The mean age of the first experience was 15.5 years old. Less than half of these cases used condom in the past three months, whereas one third drank alcohol before having sex.

Over the past three months, about 42% did not wear a helmet during riding a motorcycle and 19.4% did not put on seat belt while driving. Eight percent of adolescents reported ever smoke, 21% had alcoholic drink and 15.6% have tried liquors.

Almost half of the 6-18 years old reported being verbally abused by the family. About 28% of the school age group and 8% of adolescents reported physical abuse. Over the past three months, 5.3% to 31.5% of the 6-18 years olds engaged in various violent activities. Suicidal attempt or idea was reported from 3.2% of adolescents. Those who have been abused reported violent behaviors significantly greater than those who have not.

Three quarter of the 3-<6 years old children were in day care or kindergarten. Almost all children watched television. Watching time increased from 10.15 hours per week to 14.7, 17.9, 20.6, 23.7, and 26.8 hours per week at the age of 3, 6, 9, 13, and 18 years old, respectively.

Among the 6,303 6-18 years old subjects, 5.2% reported working. 17.8% of this group were younger than 13 years old. About half of them were not in school. One fourth worked more than 48 hours per week. Nutritional status and emotional-social-moral score of these subjects were not different from those who did not work, whereas their IQ scores were significantly lower.

These findings are useful information for a strategic planning to upgrade health and social status of Thai children.