

PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR TEENAGE CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE OF SEXUALITY IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

DO THI LAN ANH 5638609 SHHS / M

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THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: THOMAS GUADAMUZ, Ph.D., PIMPAWUN BOONMONGKON, Ph.D., SEUNG CHUN PAEK, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Vietnam is a country in transition and is undergoing rapid social and economic development that has a population of teenagers aged 10-19 years which makes up 18.7% of the total population in 2009. Currently, teenagers under 18 years lack sufficient knowledge regarding sexual and reproductive health. However, they are engaged more in term of sexual expression and practices. The family is considered the primary sources of sex orientated information, however, parents often feel embarrassed or uncomfortable when talking about sexual conduct, and school based sex education programs are not comprehensive and effective. These study objectives are: 1) to examine parental perceptions of their teenagers' knowledge regarding sexuality; 2) to explore individual parents' discourses of teenagers' sexuality; and 3) to identify the factors which may influence parental perceptions of their teenagers' knowledge about sexuality in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

This research is a qualitative research study, and it was conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, the biggest city in Vietnam, over a period of six months. In-depth data was obtained through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and field notes writing. The sample consisted of one Community Advisory Board (CAB) with 9 participants including parents, teenagers 15-17 years old, and high school teacher; four focus group discussions including professional and non-professional with 24 fathers and mothers; and twelve in-depth interviews with 12 parents. Data analysis, the content and discourse analysis were conducted, and Foucauldian concepts of discourse and sexual analysis were used.

Findings indicated that 1) parents perceived that their teenagers had insufficient knowledge about sexuality because they view their teenagers as not participating as sexual beings (Foucault, 1978) while maintaining their innocent, so they police and control their teenagers regarding age appropriate messages, issues and information from peers, educators, and especially the Internet; 2) the discourses related to the sources of sexuality information for teenagers are the mass media, the Internet, schools, religious scriptures, and health services, while the parents' discourses are found in that parents only see sexuality as sexual intercourse for adult not for teenagers, and the issues relating to sexuality will destroy their teenagers' future; 3) there are the differences between parents' gender and class influence regarding parents' perception about their teenagers' sexuality.

KEY WORDS: TEENAGERS/ SEXUALITY/ SEXUALITY EDUCATION/ URBAN/ DISCOURSE/ PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS

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