

EVALUATION OF THE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION COMMUNICATION PROJECT TOWARD THE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN VINH CITY IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021

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ABSTRACT.

The study was conducted to: (1) Describe the knowledge and attitude of secondary school students in Vinh City on child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention; and (2) Assess the effectiveness of the Active Growth - A communication intervention project on preventing child sexual abuse in the 2020-2021 school year. The study was community-based interventional research using quantitative research methods. The results showed that the percentage of students with good knowledge of child sexual abuse prevention increased from 34.9% before the intervention to 88.5% after the intervention. Thanks to the project intervention, the percentage of students who had positive attitude towards child sexual assault prevention activities (discussing about CSA prevention and sharing with victims of sexual abuse) increased from 22.2% to 54%. The activities of the project received satisfying reflection from students at the secondary schools that the project implemented. All of the above changes were statistically significant with $p < 0,05$. It is necessary to continue to maintain and evaluate the long-term results of this program as well as expand the project.

Keywords: *Child sexual abuse, communication project, secondary students.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse cases are detected and reported in the mass media with increasing frequency and extent, causing adverse influence to society. The consequences of child sexual abuse are often cause severely adverse influence on the victim both physically and mentally, as well as child's future life [4].

Between 2015 and 2019, Vietnam detected 8,091 abused children, not including of abandoned and labor - exploited children. Of which, 6,432/8,091 children were sexually abused, accounting for 7,4%. In Vietnam, every day, there are more than 7 children suffering sexual abuse [2].

The comprehensive education about preventing children sexual abuse for secondary school students is facing many challenges due to the lack of a sufficient intervention program at the school as well as the family [2]. This leads to many children not having the appropriate knowledge and skills to protect themselves from CSA [3]. Active Growth was one of eight non-profit projects sponsored by U.S Embassy in the program of the Southeast Asia Young Leaders Initiative. The project was conducted from September 2020 to March 2021, at 6 secondary schools in Vinh city, with more than 6500 students benefited. The project's approach included: communication events; watching short films about CSA on social

networks; organizing a drawing contest, communication on Facebook.

II. OBJECTS AND RESEARCH METHODS

1. Study subjects: Students at secondary schools implementing Active Growth project in the school year 2020-2021.

2. Research method: a community-based interventional research design using "pre - post" intervention effectiveness assessment model. The sample size applied to the study was calculated according to the formula:

$$n_1 = n_2 = \frac{[Z_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}}\sqrt{2(1-p)} + Z_{1-\beta}\sqrt{p_1(1-p_1) + p_2(1-p_2)}]^2}{(p_1 - p_2)^2}$$

- **n₁**: the number of students who are questioned before the intervention.

- **n₂**: the number of students who are questioned after the intervention.

- **p₁**: percentage of students with good knowledge before intervention, $p_1 = 0.5$ (assumed)

- **p₂**: percentage of students with good knowledge after the intervention, the expected rate is 0.7.

- $\bar{P} = (p_1 + p_2)/2$.

- $Z_{(1-\alpha/2)} = 1.96$ (corresponding to the desired level of meaning, $\alpha = 0.025$).

- $Z_{(1-\beta)} = 0.842$ (corresponding to power levels $\beta = 80\%$).

Relying on the above formula, the estimated minimum sample size for the study: $n_1 = n_2 = 192$ students. Using cluster sampling method requires to double the sample size to ensure sample potency: $192 \times 2 = 384$. In fact, the study was conducted on 392 students in 4 grades at Ha Huy Tap and Hung Dung Secondary School, Vinh City.

3. Assessment Standards

3.1. Knowledge

In this study, a modified Bloom's cutoff value of 75% points of section/all contents was used to categorize participants' knowledge into two levels poor and good.

Table 1. Knowledge points

Section	Total points
Private area, body ownership	6
Child sexual abuse definition and behaviors	7
CSA perpetrators and their approaches	9
Victims, consequences of CSA	11
Coping with CSA behavior	4
All contents (total score)	37

3.2. Attitude toward child sexual abuse prevention

For the attitude section (4 questions, total score: 9), the attitude was categorized into positive, neutral and negative, as positive for a between 7 and 12 points, neutral for a score

between 6,9 and 3 points, and negative for a score less than <3 points.

3.3. Project performance assessment standard

- The effectiveness in change of knowledge and attitude was evaluated with the effectiveness indicator [5]:

$$\text{Effectiveness indicator} = \frac{\text{Pre – intervention percentage} - \text{Post – intervention percentage}}{\text{Pre – intervention percentage}} \times 100\%$$

- Student satisfaction level towards the project activities were assessed with the average score of 5-point Likert scale:

Score	0 - 1	1,1 - 2	2,1 - 3	3,1 - 4	4,1 - 5
Assessment	Very dissatisfied	Not satisfied	Normal	Satisfied	Very Satisfied

III. RESULTS

1. Demographics characteristics of students

Table 2. Demographics characteristics of students participating in the study (n=392)

Content		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Smallest	11	
	Largest	16	
	Mean	13,1	
Gender	Male	202	51,5
	Female	190	48,5
Grade	6	97	24,8
	7	101	25,8
	8	96	24,6
	9	97	24,8
Currently living with	Mom and dad.	323	82,4
	my mom or dad.	35	8,9
	Father/mother remarried	14	3,6
	Grandparents or relatives	20	5,1
Last semester's academic performance	Good	169	43,0
	Fairly	161	41,2
	Medium	60	15,3
	Weak	2	0,5

The average age of the study subjects was 13,1, the youngest was 11 years old, the oldest was 16 years old. The ratio of the two sexes were equal. The study subjects were evenly distributed in grade and sexes. The majority of students lived with their parents, had good academic performance in last semester.

2. Pre-interventional knowledge and attitude of student about child sexual abuse

2.1. Pre-interventional knowledge of student about child sexual abuse

Table 3. Percentage of students with good knowledge of CSA by gender (n=392)

Content	Male	Female	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Private area, body ownership	87 (43,1)	154 (81,5)	242 (61,7)
Child sexual abuse definition and behaviors	121 (60,5)	114 (60,3)	236 (60,2)
CSA perpetrators and their approaches	38 (19,0)	68 (36,0)	106 (27,0)
Victims, consequences of CSA	43 (21,5)	86 (45,5)	129 (32,9)
Coping with CSA behavior	125 (62,5)	126 (66,7)	252 (64,3)
All contents	45 (33,1)	91 (66,9)	136 (34,6)

Before participating in the project, 61,7% of students had good knowledge about private area and body ownership. The percentage of students with good knowledge of CSA definition and behaviors was 60,2%. The percentage of students with good knowledge about perpetrators and approaches;

knowledge of victims and consequences of CSA; and coping with CSA behavior were 27%; 32,9%; and 64,3%, respectively. The percentage of students with good knowledge of all contents of CSA was 34,6%. Female students had better awareness than male students in all content of CSA.

Table 4. Percentage of students with good knowledge of CSA by grade (n=392)

Content	Grade			
	6	7	8	9
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Private area, body ownership	51 (52)	59 (58,4)	59 (61,5)	73 (75,3)
Child sexual abuse definition and behaviors	41 (41,8)	61 (60,4)	64 (66,7)	70 (72,2)
CSA perpetrators and their approaches	16 (16,3)	16 (15,8)	30 (31,3)	44 (45,4)
Victims, consequences of CSA	19 (19,4)	28 (27,7)	34 (35,4)	48 (49,5)
Coping with CSA behavior	54 (55,1)	59 (58,4)	66 (68,8)	73 (75,3)
All contents	14 (10,3)	23 (16,9)	39 (28,7)	60 (41,1)

In all contents of knowledge about CSA described, the higher the grade was, the higher the percentage of students with good knowledge was.

2.2. Pre-interventional attitude of student about child sexual abuse

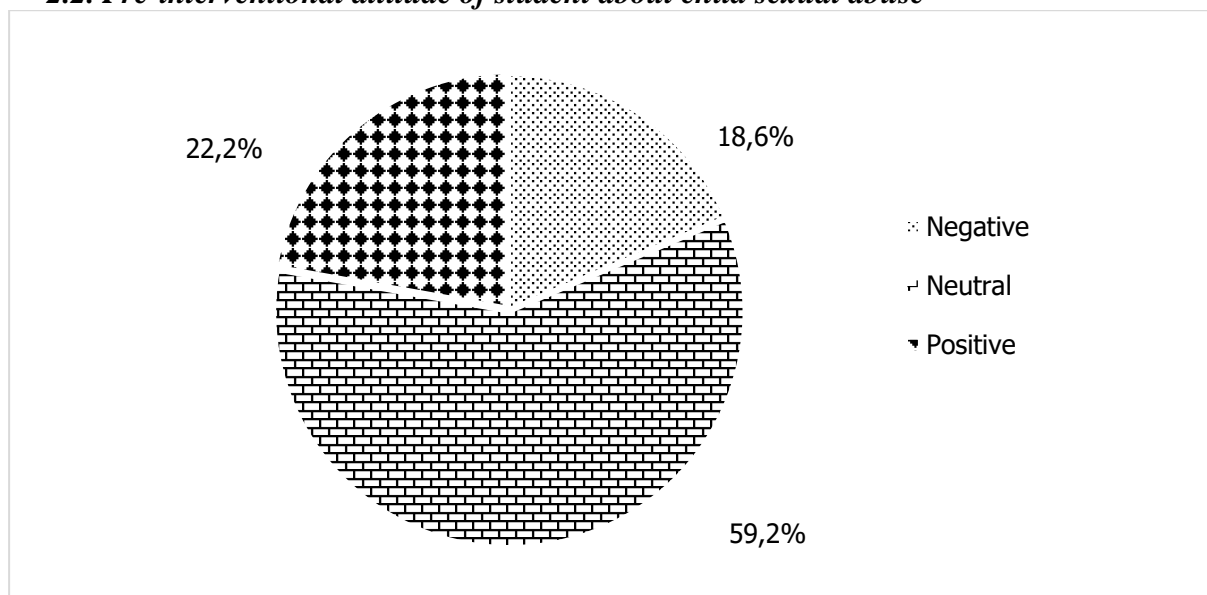


Figure 1. Student's attitude towards CSA prevention

Prior to the intervention, 18,6% had negative attitude towards CSA prevention activities; 59,2% had neutral attitude; and only 22,2% had positive attitude.

3. Effectiveness of Active Growth project

3.1. Change of knowledge about child sexual abuse prevention after the intervention

Table 5. Comparison of knowledge about CSA between pre-intervention and post - intervention

Contents	Pre - intervention	Post - intervention	Effectiveness indicator	p*
	n (%)	n (%)		
Private area, body ownership	242 (61,7)	338 (86,2)	39,7%	<0,05
Child sexual abuse definition and behaviors	282 (60,2)	329 (83,9)	33,3%	<0,05
CSA perpetrators and their approaches	86 (27)	338 (86,2)	219%	<0,05
Victims, consequences of CSA	129 (32,9)	325 (82,9)	151%	<0,05
Coping with CSA behavior	252 (64,3)	380 (96,9)	50,6%	<0,05
All contents	146 (34,6)	347 (88,5)	155%	<0,05

After the intervention, the percentage of students with good knowledge about all CSA contents increased with different levels with statistical significance, $p < 0,05$. The percentage of students with general knowledge of CSA increased from 34,6% to 88,5%, the effectiveness indicator was 155%.

3.2. Change of attitude towards child sexual abuse prevention activities

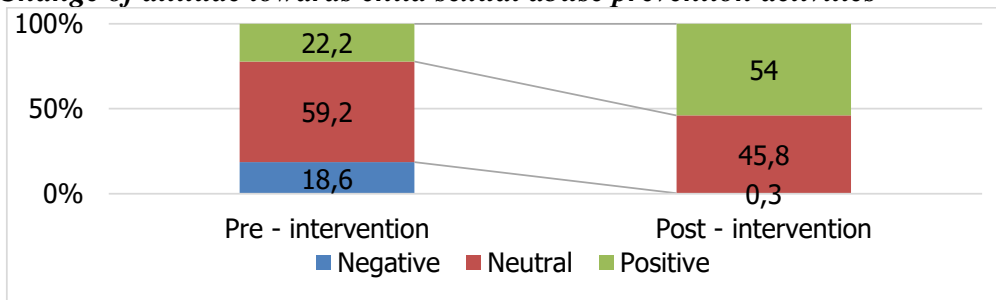


Figure 2. Change of attitude toward CSA prevention after the intervention

After intervention, students' attitude towards CSA prevention changed with statistical significance, with $p < 0,05$. The percentage of students with positive attitude increased from 22,2% to 54%, the effectiveness indicator was 143,2%.

3.2. Student satisfaction levels toward activities of the project Active Growth

Table 6. Student's assessment of the activities in the Active Growth project

Assessment content	Number of students participating	Mean	Standard deviation
Content, form of leaflets, posters	392	3,8	0,47
Communication events about CSA prevention	392	4,0	0,73
Short films about CSA on social media	392	4,3	0,67
Drawing Contest	70	3,6	1,48
Facebook posts	291	3,8	0,78
Confidence about the ability to cope with CSA behavior after joining the project	392	4,2	0,46

Most of activities of the project received positive reflection from students, especially watching short film on CSA on social network was the most appreciated with 4,3/5 points.

IV. DISCUSSION

1. Demographics characteristics of students

392 students evenly distributed in 4 grades at Hung Dung and Ha Huy Tap Secondary School, Vinh City, Nghe An. The ratio of the two sexes was equal. Most of the students were King ethnic. The majority lived with parents, that may be conducive to the child's mental development, knowledge and skills including CSA prevention. Majority of students had good studying results in latest semester, that was an advantage for the intervention because learning is one of the factors that help children recognize the world, contributing to helping children confidently communicate with their surroundings.

2. Pre-interventional knowledge of student about child sexual abuse

Percentage of students had good knowledge of private areas and body ownership; CSA definition and behavior; and coping with CSA behaviors were over 60%. On the contrary, the content about the CSA perpetrators and the approach; victims and consequences of CSA were relatively low, at 27,0% and 32,9%, respectively. CSA prevention programs should focus on strengthening the awareness and skills related to the identification of perpetrators and their approaches as well as the consequences of CSA so that students cannot avoid risk of CSA and sympathize with CSA victim, support victims' resilience.

The percentage of female students with good knowledge of CSA was higher than male students in many contents. The reason for this difference may be due to the view of Vietnamese society that women and girls are the only victims of sexual abuse, leading to a greater emphasis on educating girls about

privacy and body protection. This view can lead to the lack of adequate attention to protecting male children and downplay the situations in that male children may suffer CSA.

Students in higher grades had a better knowledge of the contents of CSA, proving that the knowledge of CSA directly proportional to age and grade. This result is equivalent to the study of Ha Ngoc Do and colleagues [1].

3. Pre-interventional attitude of students about child sexual abuse

The percentage of student having positive attitude toward CSA prevention activities was low, only 22,2%. This can be explained that students may be still shy to talk to their parents and teachers about issues relating to sex; and Vietnamese avoids to mentioning sex in their conversation. This leads children not have abilities to protect themselves or help others affected by child sexual abuse.

4. Effectiveness of Active Growth project

4.1. Changes in students' knowledge and attitude about child sexual abuse

The communication project's intervention activities led to significant change in students' knowledge and attitude about CSA prevention at various degrees. Especially, student's knowledge relates to 2 contents: (1) identifying the perpetrators and the approach of the perpetrators of CSA; (2) victims and the consequences of CSA changed dramatically with effectiveness indicator: 219% and 151%, respectively.

Along with the change in knowledge, students' attitude also changed in comparison with pre-intervention results. The percentage of students who had positive to CSA prevention activities such as talking about CSA, gender and sex; sympathizing with

CSA victim increased from 32.8% to 54%, the effectiveness indicator was 143%; the percentage of students with negative attitude and neutral attitude both decreased, with decreases: 18.5% and 23.6%, respectively. The change in knowledge and attitude in this study were not equivalent because people's perspectives and attitude are governed by many factors such as knowledge, personality, social values, and also previous experiences. Therefore, changing attitude takes a long time as well as different approach of intervention [3].

4.2. Student satisfaction levels toward activities of the project Active Growth

The results of the evaluation of the activities of the project showed a high level of satisfaction with the operation of the project, especially the communication events and short film about CSA on social network. After participating in the activities of the project, the average score on the level of confidence to cope with CSA was significantly high, reaching 4,2/5 points.

V. CONCLUSION

Secondary school students in Vinh did not have adequate knowledge about child sexual abuse prevention; Knowledge of female students was better than male students; The

level of education could be a protective factor to the awareness of child sexual abuse. The Active Growth communication intervention project brought positive change to students' knowledge and attitude on child sexual abuse prevention, with overall effectiveness indicator was 155%. The activities of the project received highly satisfied feedback from students.

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