

**KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND EXTENT OF INVOLVEMENT IN GANGS
AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN A PRIVATE AND A PUBLIC
HIGH SCHOOL IN ILOILO CITY**

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IN GANGS AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN
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by

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ABSTRACT

SUMMARY

This study was conducted to determine the knowledge about, attitudes towards, and extent of involvement in gangs among high school students in a private and a public high school in Iloilo City. Specifically, the study also aimed to: determine the characteristics of the respondents in terms of sex, year level, type of school, living arrangement, and their level of knowledge about gangs; determine and compare the students' attitude toward school gangs as a whole and when classified according to sex, year level, type of school, living arrangement, and level of knowledge about gangs; compare the attitudes of gang and non-gang members; determine the extent of involvement of gang members when taken as a whole and when classified according to age, sex, year level, type of school, living arrangement, and level of knowledge about gangs; determine the relationship between attitude of gang members and their extent of involvement in gang activities, and to determine the relationship between gang members' level of knowledge about gangs and their extent of involvement in gang activities.

The study areas and the study population included a sample of 107 students from Central Philippine University High School (CPUHS), a private school, and 243 students from Iloilo National High School (INHS), a public school, during the school year 2005-2006. The 350 student respondents of the study were chosen using the stratified random and proportional sampling techniques after solving for the sample size. A questionnaire that was tested for its reliability and validity was used as the survey instrument.

Data collected were processed and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows (Windows 10.0 version). For the descriptive part, the major variables were described using frequency distribution and percentages. The Z-test was used to determine significance of differences between proportions, while the Cramer's V was used to determine association between specified variables.

MAJOR FINDINGS

On the Background Characteristics of the Respondents with regard to Age, Sex, Year Level, Type of School, and Living Arrangement:

The profile of the population of the study showed that with regard to age and sex, there were more students who were 12-14 years old than those who were 15-17 years old, and there were more female than male students in the two high schools studied. As to year level and type of school, there were more students in the third and fourth year levels than those in the first and second year levels, and there were more students in the public school (Iloilo National High School) than those in the private school (Central Philippine University High School). With regards to living arrangement, most of the students were living with their parents while in school, while a few were living with their relatives or stayed in the dormitory or boarding houses.

On Gang Membership

Of the 350 respondents, only 25 were gang members.

On Students' Knowledge About Gangs

Majority (86.9 percent) of the high school students had high knowledge about gangs.

On Students' Attitude Towards Gang

On the whole, majority of both the gang and the non-gang members had unfavorable attitude towards gang. However, it was found out that there is significantly more non-gang members than gang members with unfavorable attitude.

Irrespective of age, sex, year level, type of school, living arrangement, and level of knowledge about gangs, majority of the high school students had unfavorable attitude towards gang. Significantly, however, there were more female than male students with unfavorable attitude.

Findings in this study also revealed that majority of gang and non-gang members had unfavorable attitude towards gangs. When the attitude of gang and non-gang members were compared, major and significant findings in the study revealed that there is significantly more gang members who were 12-14 years old than those who were 15-17 years old with unfavorable attitude towards gang. Significantly, there were also more female than male non-gang members and significantly more non-gang members in the first and second year levels than those in the third and fourth year levels with unfavorable attitude towards gang.

On Gang Members' Extent of Involvement in Gang Activities

On the whole, it was found out that most of the gang members in both high schools studied, had moderate and low involvement in gang activities.

As to gang membership, nine out of twenty five gang members were active members of a gang when this study was conducted, while seventeen had been gang members before. As to gang leadership, one out of twenty five gang members had been a gang leader, while four had been gang officers.

When ranked in a descending order, the gang activities gang members were mostly involved in were: joining gang-mates in hang out or “tambay” and smoking cigarettes with gang-mates. Four gang activities ranked third: participating in planning, discussions and decision-making during gang meetings; taking part in hazing, “jump in” or initiation rite for gang recruits; drinking alcoholic drinks with gang-mates, and getting involved in gang fights. Two gang activities ranked fourth: recruiting other youths and students to be a member of the gang and disobeying parents or guardians just to give-in to the wishes and desires of the gang-mates. Five gang activities ranked fifth: taking part in a fund raising activity of the gang; disobeying school rules and regulations just to give-in to the desires and challenges of gang-mates; “cutting classes” with gang-mates, going elsewhere and doing something else instead of studying in school; painting, spraying, and writing on walls, tables and chairs of their gang’s name, symbol, and messages in school and public places.

As to gang members’ extent of involvement in gang activities when classified according to age, sex, year level, type of school, and living arrangement, major and significant findings in the study revealed that there is significantly more female than male

gang members with low involvement in gang activities, while there is significantly more gang members in the third and fourth year levels than those in the lower year levels with moderate involvement. It was also found out that there is significantly more gang members who were not living with their parents while in school than those who did, with low involvement in gang activities.

On Relationship Between Gang Members' Level of Knowledge and Extent of Involvement in Gang Activities

Major findings in this study revealed that there is no significant relationship between gang members' level of knowledge about gangs and their extent of involvement in gang activities. Regardless of the students' level of knowledge about gangs (be it high, moderate or low), their extent of involvement in gang activities do not vary.

On Relationship Between Gang Members' Attitude Towards Gang and Extent of Involvement in Gang Activities

It was also found out that there is no significant relationship between gang members' attitude towards gang and their extent of involvement in gang activities. Regardless of the students' attitude towards gangs (be it favorable or unfavorable), their extent of involvement in gang activities do not vary.

On Students' Knowledge and Awareness of Gangs' and Gang Members' Presence in School and Community

More than ninety percent of the students knew and were aware of gangs' presence in their school and community while more than fifty percent of the respondents knew of a gang member or members in their school and community.

On How Gang Members Joined a Gang

When gang members were asked in the questionnaire how they joined a gang, sixteen out of twenty five claimed they were recruited, five out of twenty five said they volunteered, three of the twenty five answered that they joined a gang “out of curiosity”, while only one claimed that he was pressured to join a gang.

On Who Recruited Gang Members to Join a Gang

When gang members were asked who recruited them to join a gang, ten out of twenty five answered that it was their schoolmate, eight of the twenty five claimed that it was their friend, six of them said that it was their classmate, while only one answered that it was a relative.

Conclusions

The profile of the population showed that there were more students who were 12-14 years old than those who were 15-17 years old, and there were more female than male students in the two high schools studied. As to year level, there were more students in the third and fourth year levels than those in the first and second year levels. Moreover, there were more students in the public school (Iloilo National High School) than those in the private school (Central Philippine University High School). With regards to living arrangement, most of the students were living with their parents while in school, while a few were living with their relatives or stayed in the dormitory or boarding houses.

Of the 350 respondents, only 25 were gang members. Majority were non-gang members.

More than eighty six percent of the high school students had high knowledge about gangs.

On the whole, majority of both the gang and the non-gang members had unfavorable attitude towards gang. Significantly, however, there were more non-gang members than gang members with unfavorable attitude.

Irrespective of age, sex, year level, type of school, living arrangement, and level of knowledge about gangs, majority of the high school students had unfavorable attitude towards gang. Significantly, however, there were more female than male students with unfavorable attitude towards gang.

Findings in this study also revealed that majority of gang and non-gang members had unfavorable attitude towards gangs. When the attitude of gang and non-gang members were compared, major and significant findings in the study revealed that there is significantly more gang members who were 12-14 years old than those who were 15-17 years old with unfavorable attitude towards gang. Moreover, there is significantly more female than male non-gang members and significantly more non-gang members in the first and second year levels than those in the upper year levels with unfavorable attitude towards gang.

On the whole, most of the gang members in both high schools studied had moderate and low involvement in gang activities.

As to gang membership, nine out of twenty five gang members were active members of a gang when this study was conducted, while seventeen had been gang

members before. As to gang leadership, one out of twenty five gang members had been a gang leader, while four had been gang officers.

When ranked in a descending order, the gang activities that gang members were mostly involved in were: joining gang-mates in hang out or “tambay” and smoking cigarettes with gang-mates. Four gang activities ranked third: participating in planning, discussions and decision-making during gang meetings; taking part in hazing, “jump in” or initiation rite for gang recruits; drinking alcoholic drinks with gang-mates, and getting involved in gang fights. Two gang activities ranked fourth: recruiting other youths and students to be a member of the gang and disobeying parents or guardians just to give-in to the wishes and desires of the gang-mates. Five gang activities ranked fifth: taking part in a fund raising activity of the gang; disobeying school rules and regulations just to give-in to the desires and challenges of gang-mates; “cutting classes” with gang-mates, going elsewhere and doing something else instead of studying in school; painting, spraying, and writing on walls, tables and chairs of their gang’s name, symbol, and messages in school and public places.

As to gang members’ extent of involvement in gang activities when classified according to age, sex, year level, type of school, and living arrangement, major and significant findings in the study revealed that there is significantly more female than male gang members with low involvement in gang activities. Moreover, there is significantly more gang members in the third and fourth year levels than those in two lower year levels with moderate involvement. Significant findings in this study further revealed that there is significantly more gang members who were not living with their parents while in school than those who did, with low involvement in gang activities.

It was found out that there is no significant relationship between gang members' level of knowledge about gangs and their extent of involvement in gang activities. Regardless of the students' level of knowledge about gangs (be it high, moderate or low), their extent of involvement in gang activities do not vary.

It was also found out that there is no significant relationship between gang members' attitude towards gang and their extent of involvement in gang activities. Regardless of the students' attitude towards gangs (be it favorable or unfavorable), their extent of involvement in gang activities do not vary.

With regard to students' knowledge and awareness of the presence of gangs and gang members in their school and community, more than ninety percent of the students knew and were aware of gangs' presence in their school and community, while more than fifty percent of the respondents knew of a gang member or members in their school and community.

As to how gang members joined a gang, majority of them were recruited, and most of them were recruited by their schoolmates.

Recommendations

Based on the significant findings of the study and conclusion derived from the results the following recommendations are offered:

1. Guidance counselors, high school principal and teachers should work together as a team and be vigilant of all the complex issues involving youth gangs and youth gang recruitment efforts in their respective schools. Early prevention from gang involvement is of prime importance because gang recruitment in schools and community may begin as early as elementary school (Sandoval, 1999 as cited in ERIC Digest 99).

2. Guidance counselors and teachers should plan and conduct information dissemination program to students, both male and female, from first year up to fourth year levels, through classroom teaching and seminars about gang that would include illegal and criminal gang activities, destructiveness and violence, its negative consequences as well as ways to avoid and prevent it.

3. Guidance counselors and educators must target vulnerable students to gang recruitment especially the male students, and those who are in the third and fourth year levels in high school. They can provide special assistance to students through the use of peer counselors and support groups in school.

4. The Guidance Services' Peer Counselors' Program and Training should be implemented and conducted by the Guidance Staff to high school students every school year, and should be well-supported by high school teachers and school administrators as well.

5. The counseling and educational programs of the Guidance Services Center for the students must be implemented and conducted preferably in small groups where students can express their feelings comfortably. This will provide regular opportunities for students individually and/or in small groups to discuss their experiences in school and make future plans that offer hope and personal rewards.

If the students seem to be attracted to gangs, or if adolescent are associating with gangs, it would be helpful for school counselors and teachers to try to explore their feelings for the reasons why they want to be involved with gangs. This will give a good indication of what feelings and beliefs are not being met by the family, school, and/or community.

6. Guidance counselors, school administrators, teachers, and parents must work hand-in-hand in challenging the youth to expand their interests. They should be involved in coordinating and sponsoring wholesome activities for the students, and encourage them to get involved in sports or athletics, arts, music, dances, singing, drama, theater and the like. In this way, the guidance counselors and educators may be able to help provide students with alternative ways or means of expressing themselves in a healthy and constructive way, as well as to use their vacant time wisely and productively. This will help keep the students away from gangs and will decrease the strength and influence that the gang has in school and community.

7. Guidance counselors and educators must get the parents involved in combating youth gang involvement in school and community. Intensify Parent-Teacher Association programs. Offer special programs for parents on gangs and use it as an avenue to conduct seminars and lectures to parents on how to get involved in their children's lives, how to deal with them as a parent, good and effective communication between parents and children, spending quality time with the children, how to occupy their child's free time wisely and productively, and learn about gang and drug activity in school and community.

8. Guidance counselors, school staff, faculty and parents must provide Law Enforcement with information regarding gang-related criminal and/or illegal activities in school and the neighborhood in order to safeguard youth and children from being influenced and/or victimized as well as to keep the school and community safe and crime-free. Vigilant monitoring of young people's behavior, activities, and whereabouts

especially after school hours and late in the evenings should be emphasized to parents and guardians.

9. Studies and/or teachers should be further encouraged. Future studies on the said topic may take into consideration other variables and factors like peer pressure, self-esteem, misdemeanors in school, family dysfunction or problems in the home as well as students' school grades and performance to name a few, that have significant influence on the youths' gang involvement nowadays.

10. A similar study may be conducted involving more respondents from other public and private high schools in researches on adolescents and gang involvement by the school's guidance counselors and Iloilo City in order to have a wider scope of research and more sources of data. Moreover, a similar study may be conducted and extended to the first and second year college students whose ages (17-18 years old) belong to the usual gang age bracket.