

Responsible Social Values Program

2009-2010

A Program Evaluation Report

By

Timothy R. Jordan, PhD, MEd
Associate Professor of Health Education
Department of Health & Recreation Professions
The University of Toledo
Phone: (419) 530-4725
Email: timothy.jordan2@utoledo.edu

Lauren Maziarz, MSN, RN
Doctoral Student in Health Education
Department of Health & Recreation Professions
The University of Toledo

Joseph A. Dake, PhD, MPH
Associate Professor of Health Education
Department of Health & Recreation Professions
The University of Toledo

James H. Price, PhD, MPH
Professor of Health Education
Department of Health & Recreation Professions
The University of Toledo

For

The Alliance for Healthy Youth
1815 W. Market Street Suite 107
Akron, Ohio 44303
330-864-1359
Fax: 330-864-1540

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The high societal and personal costs associated with adolescent sexual behavior have made it necessary for schools, health care providers, community organizations, and government agencies to become involved in sexuality education for adolescents. One approach to sexuality education is to promote abstinence as the best course of action. The Responsible Social Values Program (RSVP) is an abstinence-until-marriage curriculum designed for students in grades 6-8. The fundamental “responsible social value” upon which RSVP is based is premarital sexual abstinence. The RSVP curriculum is owned by the Alliance for Healthy Youth in Akron, Ohio.

The primary goals of RSVP are to reduce adolescent pregnancy, early sexual activity, and substance use while encouraging strong academic performance. The program presents basic information about human sexuality combined with goal-oriented activities to positively affect adolescent behavior and attitudes, foster self-respect, and enhance parent-child communication about sexuality. Substance use information is included in the lesson plans to help students understand the association between alcohol and drug use, decision-making, and premarital sexual activity.

Purpose

The purpose of the current study was to assess the effectiveness of the RSVP curriculum as it was taught during the 2009-2010 school year in the Akron Ohio area. The program evaluation was conducted by investigators from the University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio.

Method

The program evaluation was a pre/post quasi-experimental design which utilized a non-equivalent control group. The investigators designed a reliable and valid survey instrument based on the goals, objectives and content of the RSVP curriculum. The survey included four primary subscales to assess program impact:

1. Perceived Likelihood of Remaining Sexually Abstinent
2. Efficacy Expectations for Resisting Sexual Pressure
3. Efficacy Expectations to Say “No” to Sex
4. Outcome Expectations for Practicing Sexual Abstinence

Convenience sampling was used to divide students into two groups: the RSVP intervention group and the non-equivalent control group. A total of 2,134 students in grades 6, 7, 8 who received the RSVP curriculum (i.e., intervention group) and 532 students in grades 7-9 who did not receive the RSVP curriculum (i.e. non-equivalent

control group) completed matched pre/post surveys that were analyzed by the investigators. Students in grade nine or higher were excluded from data analysis.

Results

A total of 1,935 matched pretests and post-tests from the RSVP intervention group were analyzed. The intervention group respondents can be described as white (89%), female (51%), with a mean age of 12.88 (SD = 1). Respondents came from grades 6-8. A plurality of students (45%) was in the 7th grade. The majority of students reported living in a home with two adults present (75%). Students in the intervention group were mostly irreligious. About half (45%) reported “never” or “almost never” attending religious services.

A total of 516 matched pretests and post-tests were analyzed from the control group. Students in the control group were white (83%), seventh graders (65%), male (53%), with a mean age of 13.2 (SD = 0.99). The majority of students reported living in a home with two adults present (75%). In contrast to the RSVP intervention group, slightly more than half (51%) of students in the control group reported attending religious services “most weeks” to “every week.”

At baseline, the vast majority of students (89%) in both the intervention and control groups reported always having been sexually abstinent. Of the 11% of students who had initiated sexual intercourse in the past, 4% reported having been coerced.

Perceived Likelihood of Remaining Sexually Abstinent

The intervention group responses changed in a positive way on all three of the survey items in this category. The amount of positive change (i.e., toward a commitment to abstinence) in the intervention group across the grade levels ranged from 8% to 22% - with less commitment to abstinence being expressed on items with more distant future time frames (compared to near future time frames).

In contrast, students in the control group showed negative pre to post change across the age groups for two of the three survey items. This finding provides moderately strong evidence that the RSVP curriculum was effective in increasing students' commitment to remaining sexually abstinent in the future. However, the fact that intervention group students were less likely to commit to sexual abstinence in the distant future time frames than in near future time frames suggests that this finding be viewed with caution.

Efficacy Expectations for Resistance to Sexual Pressure

Statistically significant change in the desired direction was noted in the RSVP intervention group for 6th graders ($t = -4.424$, $df = 159$, $p < 0.0001$), 7th graders ($t = -5.47$, $df = 842$, $p < 0.0001$), and 8th graders ($t = -4.72$, $df = 749$, $p < 0.0001$). In contrast, the 7th grade control group ($t = 1.96$, $df = 329$, $p = 0.051$) and 8th grade control group ($t = -0.87$, $df = 103$, $p = 0.388$) did not report any positive statistically significant change. There was

no 6th grade control group for comparison. The amount of change in the 7th grade RSVP intervention group was statistically significantly greater in the desired direction than the amount of change in the 7th grade control group ($F= 20.41 / p<0.0001$). The amount of change in the 8th grade RSVP intervention group was not statistically significantly different from the amount of change noted in the control group ($F= 0.806 / p=0.369$). This finding provides strong evidence that the RSVP curriculum improved 7th grade students' efficacy expectations for resisting sexual pressure. Such evidence is also suggestive that RSVP was effective with 6th graders. However, without a 6th grade control group, the investigators cannot rule out other plausible explanations for the noted change. Since the amount of change among 8th grade intervention students was not statistically significantly different from the amount of change noted among 8th grade control students, the investigators cannot rule out other plausible explanations (e.g. random chance) for the changes noted among 8th grade students in the intervention group.

Efficacy Expectations to Say “No” to Sex

Statistically significant changes in the desired direction were detected for both 6th grade ($t= -4.242, df=152, p<0.0001$) and 7th grade students ($t= -4.64, df= 328, p<0.0001$) in the intervention group – but not for 8th grade students. No such positive changes were noted in the 7th grade control group ($t= 0.853, df=323, p=0.394$). The amount of pre/post change noted above in the 7th grade intervention group was statistically significantly different from the amount of change noted in the control group. The intervention group had statistically significantly greater change in the desired direction ($F= 10.01 / p=0.002$). There was no 6th grade control group for comparison.

These findings provide strong evidence that the RSVP curriculum was effective in improving 7th grade students' efficacy expectations to say “no” to sex. Evidence is suggestive that RSVP was effective with 6th graders also. However, without a 6th grade control group, the investigators cannot rule out other plausible explanations for the noted change. This finding also suggests that the RSVP curriculum was not effective in changing 8th grade students' efficacy expectations to say “no” to sex.

Outcome Expectations

The RSVP curriculum performed best in the area of outcome expectations. Statistically significant change in the desired direction was noted for intervention group students in all three grade levels: grade 6 ($t=-5.03, df=158, p<0.0001$); grade 7 ($t=-15.19, df=820, p<0.0001$); and grade 8 ($t=-9.42, df=738, p<0.0001$). In contrast, there were no statistically significant pre/post differences for the 7th grade control group ($t=-0.509, df=315, p=0.611$) nor in the 8th grade control group ($t= 1.96, df=98, p=0.053$). There was no 6th grade control group for comparison.

The amount of pre/post change in the 7th grade intervention group was statistically significantly different from the amount of change in the 7th grade control group. The intervention group had statistically significant greater change in the desired direction ($F= 68.74 / p<0.0001$). Similarly, the amount of pre/post change noted in the 8th grade

intervention group was statistically significantly different from the amount of change noted in the control group. The 8th grade intervention group had statistically significant greater change in the desired direction ($F= 26.70 / p<0.0001$).

This finding provides strong evidence that the RSVP curriculum helped to change 7th and 8th grade students' outcome expectations regarding sexual abstinence. Positive, statistically significant, pre/post change was also noted for 6th grade students. Such evidence is suggestive that RSVP was effective with 6th graders also. However, without a 6th grade control group, the investigators cannot rule out other plausible explanations for the noted change.

Conclusions

1. RSVP was effective in changing the outcome expectations of students in grades 6-8.
2. RSVP was effective in changing 7th grade students' efficacy expectations for resisting sexual pressure.
3. RSVP was effective in changing 7th grade students efficacy expectations to say "no" to sex.
4. Moderately strong evidence suggests that RSVP was effective at changing students' perceptions of the perceived likelihood that they would remain sexually abstinent during three future time frames.
5. The data are suggestive that RSVP was effective at changing the efficacy expectations for resisting sexual pressure for 6th grade and 8th grade students.
6. Without items on the survey to actually measure students' self-reported sexual behaviors during the study period, it is not possible for the investigators to say that the RSVP curriculum actually changed students' sexual behaviors over time. The theoretical constructs that were measured are cognitive mediators of sexual behavior, not actual measures of sexual behavior.
7. Overall, RSVP was effective in changing several, specific cognitive variables associated with sexual activity among 6th and 7th grade students.