

# Using an Integrated Training Course with Family, Community, and Buddhism in solving Unintended Pregnancies among Vulnerable Thai Youth

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## Abstract

This study aims to involve the institutions of family, community, and Buddhism in designing a training course that could enhance vulnerable youths' knowledge of unintentional pregnancy prevention. The attitude toward the involvement of the three stakeholders and changes in teens' behaviors are also the center of the investigation. 302 vulnerable teenagers from Khon Kaen, Thailand, were sampled. Purposeful sampling was used. Income, marital status, and neighborhood were used to choose participants. 10 public workers responsible for protecting vulnerable youth were also sampled to take part in an interview session aiming to investigate participants' behaviors. The instruments consist of a training course for vulnerable youth unintended pregnancy prevention, a test for unintended pregnancy prevention knowledge, a satisfaction questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. Frequency, percentage, mean score, SD, and t-test were used to examine the data. The content analysis assessed qualitative data. The results study illustrates how a training course developed with the collaboration between institutions concerned with human development led to the development of knowledge, attitudes, and positive behavioral changes among vulnerable youths.

**Keywords:** training course development, vulnerable youth, unintended pregnancy prevention

## 1. Introduction

Vulnerable youth is one of the major concerns in education development. A certain group of children and adolescents suffer from their socioeconomic conditions and need specific support in dealing with difficulties in life and education. Lack of social support influences vulnerable teenagers to make decisions that lead to their life issues, such as unintended pregnancies, drug addiction, and criminal behavior, among others (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018). According to Skinner et al. (2006), the term "Vulnerable youth" refers to "The ones not having certain of their basic rights fulfilled". Children and adolescents who are orphaned, deficient in basic requirements, uneducated, abused or exploited, discriminated against, and involved in exploitative labor are examples of this group of youngsters. Their life conditions affect their education and future lives in general.

Moreover, in the world of capitalism, high competition among capitalists forces certain groups of society members to suffer social disparity in terms of both financial incomes and life quality. Some young people's lives, as well as their educational opportunities, are put in jeopardy by factors such as poverty, oppression, and general unpredictability in their environments (Moro et al., 2021). Even in developing nations, when families with average salaries have the financial means to send their children to public schools, the schools themselves could not provide quality education due to the limitation of budgets, teaching techniques, and the quality of staff (Chimombo, 2005). Because education is a crucial determinant of a person's future job, family, and quality of life, this deepens the gap between those who are wealthy and those who are impoverished (Croizet et al., 2019). Vulnerable youth who are at the bottom of the capitalism pyramid is one of the most affected.

At a contextual level, the socioeconomic condition of Thai vulnerable youths plays an important role in varying problems in their lives. The country's economy is described as a capitalist characteristic giving advantages to major companies (Asia Development Bank, 2015). Basic welfares include free public school and universal healthcare. The Thai economy has declined over the past decade, and the covid-19 pandemic worsened the

situation. According to the National Economic and Social Development Council (2022), 174,900 Thais were unemployed for more than a year. The national debt rate has climbed for 5 consecutive quarters due to shifting agricultural product prices, the main source of income for most Thais. The economy greatly affects vulnerable youth issues as more than 3.7 million Thai adolescents are labeled vulnerable, according to the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection (2017). This figure includes those with learning difficulties, extreme poverty, illegal immigrants, displaced people, etc. This number seems to increase in the post covid economy.

One of the most serious problems among vulnerable youth is unintended pregnancy. Generally, the problem causes physical, mental, and socio-economic effects on parents especially those at a young age. According to Bearak et al. (2018), 44% of pregnancies between 2010 and 2014 were unplanned, according to a global estimate. Moreover, unintended pregnancies can lead to problems such as domestic violence, depression, suicide, anxiety, stress, and death (Faisal-Cury, 2017). In youth, Teens with unwanted pregnancies are ostracized, and more likely to drop out of school, be forced to marry, or suffer medical conditions from unsafe abortion. According to the Office of Children and Youth Justice System (2021), 15% of newborns in Thailand were from juvenile mothers. In a society that strongly relies on Buddhism, abortion is believed to be a great sin. Therefore, most pregnant girls are forced out of school, and it affects their long-term socioeconomic well-being. The problem is even more serious in the vulnerable group as the unintended pregnancy rate was found to be associated with socioeconomic conditions. According to Morgan and Robert (2012), about 60% of low-income American teens become pregnant unwillingly.

Therefore, the issue of unwanted pregnancies becomes significant for the vulnerable population of adolescents. However, the circumstance that led to the problem is complicated, necessitating the participation of numerous institutions to solve it. In Thailand, the institutions responsible for youth should be the family, the community, and Buddhism. In the case of preventing unwanted pregnancies, the institution of the family should offer counsel and care for life planning and sexual matters. For the kids to comprehend the difficulty of unexpected pregnancies, family members might also share their own experiences. Community leaders should work with authorities to educate youth about pregnancy and reproductive systems. This includes providing youth members of the community with sex protection. Iyanda et al. (2020) found that fertility knowledge is associated with unintentional pregnancy among teens in 29 African countries. Buddhism has been deeply embedded in Thai culture since antiquity. According to the Office of International Religious Freedom, almost ninety percent of the population identifies as Buddhist. Therefore, religion influences the Thai people's morality, social conventions, and way of life. According to Vescolani (2009), a combination of sexual and ethical education could reduce the teen pregnancy rate. Consequently, a collaboration between family, community, and Buddhist stakeholders could provide an alternative solution to the challenges.

The collaboration between organizations to prevent unprepared pregnancy could be seen in empirical studies in various areas (e.g., Palinkas et al., 2014; Teuton et al., 2016; Thongnopakun et al., 2019) For example, Palinkas et al. (2014) examined the impact of the collaboration in California's child welfare and probation agencies that resulted in the decline of juvenile arrests, substance addiction, youth violence, and teen pregnancy among abused and neglected adolescents in the region. Thongnopakun et al. (2019) found that female teens who had low self-esteem and social support tend to experience inappropriate sexual activities in terms of unintended pregnancy prevention. The authors suggested that responsible organizations should collaborate to provide support and prevent further undesired circumstances. Moreover, Teuton et al. (2016) found the empirical benefits of the Outcomes Framework for Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People (PPYP) on unintentional pregnancy prevention among adolescents in Scotland. The framework includes the collaboration of educational institutions, healthcare services, and the community.

Previous research found that the collaboration of organizations that takes responsibility for youth development in each context could lead to the achievement in the prevention of unprepared pregnancy. In Thailand where Buddhism influences morals, tradition, conventions, and ways of living, Buddhism, family, and community — institutions close to children and youth — could work together to prevent the problem of unintended pregnancy. This study aims to involve the institutions of family, community, and Buddhism in designing a training course that could enhance vulnerable youths' knowledge of unintentional pregnancy prevention. The attitude toward the involvement of the three stakeholders and changes in teens' behaviors are also the center of the investigation. The research questions were 1) to what extent does a training course designed with the collaboration of family, community, and Buddhist institutions improve vulnerable youth's knowledge of unintended pregnancy prevention? and 2) What are vulnerable youth's attitudes toward the training course designed with the collaboration of family, community, and Buddhist.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

302 vulnerable teenagers from Khon Kaen, Thailand, were sampled. Purposeful sampling was used. Income, marital status, and neighborhood were used to choose participants. 1,412 out of 12,241 local teenagers met the criterion. They were in high schools and colleges. Yamane's approach (1967) yielded 302 samples. Anonymous participants were treated ethically.

Table 1. Samples' detail

Gender	Male = 136 (45.03%) Female = 166 (54.97%)
Age	15 = 54 (17.88%) 16 = 53 (17.54%) 17 = 64 (21.19%) 18 = 75 (24.83%) 19 = 56 (18.54%)
Family Income	Low = 249 (82.45%) Lower-middle = 53 (17.55%)
Marital status of parents	Married = 215 (71.19%) Divorced = 32 (10.59 %) Separated = 40 (13.24%) Widowed = 15 (4.96%)
Neighborhood	Low-income area = 235 (77.81%) Middle-income area = 67 (22.19 %)

10 public workers responsible for protecting vulnerable youth were also sampled. They took part in an interview session aiming to investigate participants' behaviors three months after learning in the training course.

### 2.2 Instruments

The instruments consist of a training course for vulnerable youth unintended pregnancy prevention, a test for unintended pregnancy prevention knowledge, a satisfaction questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. In detail, the training course was developed with the participants of vulnerable youth's family members, community leaders, authorities, and Buddhism monks. The course took 3 days to complete. It has an experience-sharing session, a sex education session, and ethical studies session. The test consists of 30 multiple-choice items aiming to investigate the participants' knowledge of unintended pregnancy prevention. The questionnaire consists of 15 positive statements regarding the training course. The interview questions aim at examining authorities' perception of the changes in behaviors of vulnerable youth in their responsible areas.

### 2.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data was collected in August 2021. The participants took the training course for vulnerable youth unintended pregnancy prevention. The participants' knowledge before and after the course was assessed. The participants' satisfaction with the course was also examined. 10 officials were interviewed three months following the course to assess sample behavior changes. Frequency, percentage, mean score, SD, and t-test were used to examine the data. The content analysis assessed qualitative data.

## 3. Results

Table 1. The comparison of the participants' unintended pregnancy prevention knowledge

Tests	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	t	Sig.
Pre-test	302	14.65	0.89	14.66	0.00*
Post-test	302	22.67	0.74		

P<0.05

The result of the study indicates an improvement in the participant's knowledge regarding unintended pregnancy prevention. A paired t-test shows that there was a significant difference between the participants' average pre-test score ( $\bar{x} = 14.65$ , S.D =0.89) and average post-test score ( $\bar{x} = 22.67$ , S.D = 0.74),  $t=14.66$ ,  $p=0.00$ . It could be interpreted that the participants gained unintended pregnancy prevention knowledge after taking the developed training course.

Table 2. The participant satisfaction with the training course

Statements	$\bar{x}$	S.D
<b>Family</b>		
1. My family gave me advice about unintended pregnancy prevention.	3.82	1.05
2. My family taught me the value of being a woman.	4.35	0.80
3. My family exemplified the effects of unintended pregnancy.	4.09	1.06
4. My relatives showed me kindness.	4.25	0.87
5. My family taught me the social values of matrimony.	3.39	1.02
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>0.66</b>
<b>Community</b>		
6. People in my community valued reserved behaviors among non-marriage women.	3.63	1.02
7. My community collaborated with the responsible organization in preventing unintended pregnancy.	3.32	1.05
8. My community collaborated with the responsible organization to provide sex protection.	3.55	0.98
9. My community collaborated with the responsible organization to hold activities against unintended pregnancy.	2.82	1.11
10. My community collaborated with the responsible organization to constantly provide information about unintended pregnancy prevention.	3.05	0.95
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.79</b>
<b>Buddhism</b>		
11. Learning Buddhism Dharmas encouraged me to prevent unintended pregnancy because I do not want to kill an innocent being.	4.01	1.04
12. Learning Buddhism Dharmas encouraged me to prevent unintended pregnancy as it might lead to stealing.	4.30	1.00
13. Learning Buddhism Dharmas encouraged me to prevent unintended pregnancy as it is against sexual morality.	4.46	0.79
14. Learning Buddhism Dharmas encouraged me to prevent unintended pregnancy as it might lead to telling lie.	4.08	0.83
15. Learning Buddhism Dharmas encouraged me to avoid using drugs and alcohol as it might lead to unintended pregnancy.	4.12	0.93
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>0.67</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>0.70</b>

The result of the study indicates a high level of participant satisfaction with the training course for vulnerable youth unintended pregnancy prevention ( $\bar{x} = 3.81$ , S.D = 0.70). In detail, the aspects of Buddhism ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ , S.D = 0.67), family ( $\bar{x} = 3.98$ , S.D = 0.66), and community ( $\bar{x} = 3.28$ , S.D = 0.79) were rated respectively. The participants perceive their participation in the training course for vulnerable youth unintended pregnancy prevention as a project that helps them gain knowledge about unintended pregnancy prevention, recognize the importance of family and community in preventing them from engaging in sexual misconduct and apply Buddhist Dharmas to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Therefore, it could be interpreted that the training course for vulnerable youth satisfied the participants of vulnerable subjects.

Moreover, the conclusion of the interview session reveals intriguing questions regarding the sexual modifications of the participants. It could be summarized from the interview session that sexuality is quite forbidden in Thailand's conservative society. Sexual matters are unlikely to be discussed between children and their parents or guardians. It must be admitted that the problems associated with unwanted pregnancies cannot be claimed to be resolved quickly. Nonetheless, the authorities indicated that the behavior of the samples improved. In addition to the improvement of samples' knowledge regarding behaviors, techniques, and Buddhist moralities that could prevent unwanted pregnancy, it was found that they were more willing to discuss their love life and difficulties with more experienced individuals, such as instructors and parents. According to the respondents, this is a great sign for resolving teen pregnancy issues.

#### 4. Discussions

The study indicated that the training course for vulnerable youth unwanted pregnancy prevention designed with the involvement of the family, community, and Buddhism was successful in developing vulnerable adolescents in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral changes in preventing unwanted pregnancy. Previous studies

(e.g., Palinkas et al., 2014; Teuton et al., 2016; Thongnopakun et al., 2019) have also demonstrated the positive effects of collaborative projects of stakeholders on social protection against unintended pregnancy among vulnerable youth. In this study, scientific knowledge, family support, and moral teaching were effective in preventing vulnerable teens' unwanted pregnancies.

Furthermore, the results demonstrate the significance of family, community, and religion in preventing vulnerable youth from undesirable social conditions. According to Fernandes-Alcantara (2018), vulnerable youth are at risk of engaging in risky social activities. Therefore, caregivers, community leaders, and religious leaders should collaborate to protect them from societal dangers such as drugs, child abuse, and sexual harassment, among others. According to the findings of the study, a training course developed with the collaboration between family, community, and Buddhist institutions led to the growth of knowledge and expected behavioral changes among vulnerable youths.

## 5. Conclusion

The study seeks to investigate the effects of a training course developed with the collaboration between family, community, and Buddhist institutions on the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of vulnerable youths regarding unintended pregnancy prevention. The results study illustrates how a training course developed with the collaboration between institutions concerned with human development led to the development of knowledge, attitudes, and positive behavioral changes among vulnerable youths.

For the implication, the study's findings may affect vulnerable youth development in diverse settings. Stakeholders with responsibilities for vulnerable youth could utilize the principle of the course design in their setting. Family, society, and belief are the core parts. Future studies should focus on developing additional training courses that consider context and stakeholder roles. Further studies should still focus on vulnerable youth. To help marginalized and oppressed children and adolescents, research elements that may impact abusive behavior, stakeholder collaboration, and subject participation.

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