



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

1. Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to inform the development of a health promotion intervention targeting high school students in Vientiane Municipality, PDR Laos, which required a cross-sectional survey

More specifically, the intend was to describe socio-economic characteristics, drinking and driving experiences, road traffic accident history and the inter-relationships between these variables.

This study was done with the expectation that findings can be generalized for the total senior high school population in Vientiane Municipality. Although the literature offers a variety of studies on drinking and drinking including among adolescents, to the author's knowledge this is the first study undertaken in Laos.

This study provides an information base that can support 'health promotion' program development efforts in Vientiane Municipality.

This discussion returns to the research questions to explain how study results support answers to the questions, as well as to describe the relationship among findings and place it in the context of the literature.

2. Reflection on Findings

Only 6.6% of the respondents use regular a helmet. This finding is in line with a previous study among adolescents in the USA by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 1992).

Senior high school students using alcohol faced more accident experiences. This result is supported by the study of Zandon (1991) that established increased risk for road traffic accidents after alcohol use.

Findings in this study support the conclusion that older students with more driving experience faced more accidents, which is in contrast with the study of Murichun (1998) who concluded that there was no relationship between age, driving experience and road traffic accidents. Singri (1999) challenged Murichun's conclusion, by establishing a relationship between these variables. Compared with the findings of this study the conclusion is opposite. For example, Singri concluded that the younger the adolescent driver and the less experience, the more risk for accidents; while this study's findings indicate that the older the adolescent driver and the more driving exposure, the higher the frequency of accident experiences. Further comparison of methodologies applied in data collection and analysis of various studies is required.

Findings support the conclusion that driving after drinking does affect the driving style. Findings in this study showed a statistical significant difference on overtaking behavior, slowing down for yellow traffic lights and following other violating vehicles. That driving after drinking does affect driving style and impairs control is well established in the literature (Farrow and Brissing, 1990).

Although literature on traffic code violation and drinking was not explored for this study, based on studies about drinking and driving style, it would be reasonable to assume that drinking does affect traffic code violating behavior. Results of this study indicate increased reckless behavior and traffic-code violations after drinking.

Considering the sensitivity of the issues involved, such as income, drinking experiences and violations of road traffic codes, as well as the sites (high schools) where the questionnaire was administered, a possible response bias can not be excluded.

Reflecting on the findings of this study, there might be scope to further improve the questionnaire. For example an alternate use of negative and positive formulated questions may confuse respondents and therefore might have affected outcomes. Further, the limited demographic section in the questionnaire created a barrier to a more in-depth analysis on possible relationships between demographic profiles and drinking and driving experiences. Also the use of ordinal scales with limited variations of replies might have affected results. For example using a scale from 0 (never) to 9 (always) would have provided more fine-tuned data.

The section on family and students' own income had to deal with 'item non-response'. The phenomenon on item non-response is acknowledged as a problem in the literature (Groves, 1989) and there are advocates and critics on statistical manipulation of missing data. Usually there are three main causes for item non-response: (1) respondent does not understand the question, (2) respondent understands the question but is not in a position to answer and (3) the respondent is not motivated to disclose the answer.

Although for questions related to income often the 3rd cause, lack of motivation, is mentioned in the literature; in this study students could ask for assistance and it was noted that several of the respondents did not know their family income.

3. Summary

Although general findings of this study will be of use for the development of health promotion interventions, further study might be required to improve the usefulness of information for the development of a 'health promotion' program in Vientiane Municipality, PDR Laos.

This would require a more systematic review of the literature leading to refinements of research questions. In addition, if repeated, the questionnaire used in this study need further improvements to facilitate a more in-depth analysis.

Future studies should use multiple data collection strategies, in terms of methods and sources to ensure validity and richness of findings.