

**DOIN' IT DOESN'T GET IT!**

*Save Sex for Marriage!*

# **ABSTINENCE EDUCATION: PROGRAM EVALUATION WITH YOUTH SURVEY**

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# Introduction

- Concerns that early sexual involvement may have negative consequences.
- Government funding for abstinence education: Section 510 of Title V of the Social Security Act.
- This study: Evaluation of one project in Alabama's Abstinence-Until-Marriage Education Program with special attention given to the use of a comparison group.

# Goals

- Determine program impact focusing on eight legislative priorities federally mandated for Title V abstinence education interventions.
- Describe psychometric properties of a measure—the *Youth Survey*—designed specifically for use in the evaluation of Title V abstinence education programs.

# Legislative Priorities

Programs funded through Title V must adhere to the legislative definition of abstinence education as an educational or motivational program which

- **Exclusively teaches the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;**
- **Teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;**
- **Teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;**

# Legislative Priorities (cont.)

- Teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity;
- Teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
- Teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;

# Legislative Priorities (cont.)

- Teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increases vulnerability to sexual advances; and
- Teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.

# Method

- *Choosing the Best LIFE* was implemented in 66 seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms, five schools (public/private), in four school systems (city/county) in a predominantly rural area where demonstrated need was great.
- Pre-planned seventh- and eighth-grade modules were presented by a trained abstinence educator on 5 consecutive days during the academic year with 1 day being used for either the pretest or posttest and the remaining 4 days being used for the actual delivery of the curricular lessons.

## Method (cont.)

- Interventions during Year 1/Study I (N = 717) were replicated in Year 2/Study II (N = 708) in the same schools.
- In Study I and again in Study II (Replication), classes within grade and within school were randomly assigned to intervention (posttest) or comparison (pretest) conditions with assessment being via the Youth Survey. Between the pretest and posttest, all students received the abstinence intervention.

# Youth Survey

- The 84-item *Youth Survey* (Halpin & Halpin, 1998) designed for evaluating Title V abstinence interventions assesses extent of agreement with Legislative Priorities A-H.
- First 21 questions elicit information about demographics, prior sexual activity, and future intentions to abstain from sex.
- Remaining 63 items assess extent of agreement with Legislative Priorities A-H using a 4-point Likert scale with response options ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*.
- Number of items per legislative priority scale range from 6 to 12.

# Analyses

- Cronbach's coefficient alpha was computed to determine the internal consistency reliability for the eight A-H legislative priority scales.
- Bivariate and multiple correlation coefficients between scores on the eight legislative priority scales as independent variables and sexual abstinence (past year and lifetime) as well as future intentions to be sexually abstinent (next year/ until marriage) were computed as evidence of criterion-related validity.
- Multivariate and univariate analyses of variance were computed using scores on the legislative priority scales to determine the main effects of the intervention, as well as the interactive effects of grade level, gender, race, and replication year.
- Finally, bivariate correlations were calculated between sexual activity (ever and past year) and sexual intentions (next year and until marriage).

# Results

## Research Question 1: What is the internal consistency reliability for each of the A-H legislative priority scales?

- Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged from .68 to .87 for the total sample.
- Reliability coefficients generally ranged from .60 to .90 for the eight legislative priority scales across gender, race, and grade.

## Research Question 2: What evidence may be provided regarding the criterion-related validity of the eight legislative priority scales with the criteria being sexual abstinence and future intentions to be sexually abstinent?

- Bivariate and multiple correlations between scores on the eight legislative priority scales and sexual activity and sexual intentions, which ranged from .22 to .68, provide strong support for the criterion-related validity of the legislative scales.

## ***Legislative Priority Scales: Reliabilities and Correlations Separately and in Combination With Sexual Abstinence and Intentions***

Scale	Reliability	Always abstained	Abstained last year	Intend to abstain next year	Intend to abstain to marriage
Legislative Priority A	.82	.44	.39	.54	.58
Legislative Priority B	.87	.48	.42	.53	.64
Legislative Priority C	.68	.27	.22	.34	.31
Legislative Priority D	.77	.40	.38	.45	.49
Legislative Priority E	.79	.39	.36	.47	.53
Legislative Priority F	.69	.31	.28	.33	.34
Legislative Priority G	.72	.30	.26	.37	.40
Legislative Priority H	.87	.43	.38	.48	.50
Multiple R		.51	.46	.58	.68

Note: All coefficients reported are significant at the .001 level.

**Research Question 3: Does teaching seventh- and eighth-grade Black and White boys and girls to abstain from sex emphasizing the eight legislative priorities result in their increased agreement with the sexual abstinence message as specified on the eight legislative priorities scores when the priorities are analyzed separately and in combination?**

- Results of the multivariate test of group differences, before and after intervention, indicated that the means of an optimally weighted combination of the eight legislative priority scales for the intervention (posttested) and comparison (pretested) groups were significantly and meaningfully different [ $\eta^2 = .20$ ;  $F(8, 1407) = 7.25$ ,  $p = .000$ ].
- A series of follow-up univariate tests indicated that, using a probability of .05 to determine statistical significance, the means for seven of the eight legislative priority scales were significantly lower (more abstinent) following the intervention than before the intervention. Eta values obtained also show that these differences were meaningful generally.

## Means, Standard Deviations, and Univariate Tests for Comparison and Intervention Groups

Scale	Comparison Pretest		Intervention Posttest		<i>F</i>	<i>Eta</i>	<i>P</i>
	Mean	SE	Mean	SE			
Legislative Priority A	1.85	.02	1.68	.02	42.11	.170	.000
Legislative Priority B	2.30	.02	1.88	.02	26.94	.138	.000
Legislative Priority C	1.75	.02	1.61	.02	29.02	.141	.000
Legislative Priority D	1.72	.02	1.32	.02	11.73	.089	.001
Legislative Priority E	1.91	.02	1.77	.02	24.41	.130	.000
Legislative Priority F	1.99	.01	1.95	.02	2.92	.045	.088
Legislative Priority G	1.79	.02	1.68	.02	14.37	.316	.000
Legislative Priority H	1.90	.02	1.74	.02	22.43	.126	.000

**Research Question 4: Does the teaching of seventh- and eighth-grade Black and White boys and girls to abstain from sex emphasizing the eight legislative priorities result in a change in their intentions to abstain from sex for the next year and until marriage that is more favorable to abstinence?**

- When responding to the question, *How likely is it that you will abstain from sex during the next year?*, 56.9% of the comparison (pretest) group reported that they would certainly or probably abstain from sex for the next year as contrasted with 70.7% of the intervention (posttest) group who reported that they would certainly or probably abstain from sex during the next year.
- Regarding intentions to abstain from sex until marriage, 39.2% of the comparison group reported that they certainly would or probably would as contrasted with 58.3% of the intervention group.
- Group differences were statistically and practically significant for both aspects of this question.

# Conclusions

**Results in this study support the conclusions that**

- The internal consistency reliability of the eight legislative priority scales on the *Youth Survey* is sufficient to justify meaningful subsequent analyses conducted in Title V abstinence program evaluations.
- The abstinence intervention in this study effected a change in participant attitudes related to abstinence.
- The legislative priorities are warranted foci in abstinence interventions. A conclusion that may be inferred from the study results is that teaching the legislative priorities will effect changes in adolescents' sexual intentions and/or behavior.

# Conclusions (cont.)

- A limitation of this study is that there was no direct assessment of behavior. However, theory and research have long held that a person's beliefs and attitudes do impact behavior. Thus, the attitudinal changes found in this study are encouraging from a pro-abstinence perspective. If young people come to believe that abstinence is the best course of action, then related actions should follow.

# Addendum

## Advantages of Pretest-Comparison/Posttest-Intervention Design

1. A design that was recognized by Campbell and Stanley in their classic 1963 book that legitimized quasi-experimental designs in research.
2. A design that minimizes disruption in the school as compared to a design where individual students are randomly assigned either to a treatment group receiving the intervention or to a comparison group having an alternate activity.
3. A design that allows for all students to participate in the intervention process.
4. More efficient in terms of student class time in that one less class period is required than with the pretest all/posttest all design.
5. Very effective in assessing knowledge, attitude change, and change in intentions.

# Addendum

## Disadvantages of Pretest-Comparison/Posttest-Intervention Design

1. A design in which history (i.e., events happening between pretest and posttest in addition to the intervention) might impact results.
2. A design in which maturation (i.e., processes within the individual as a function of the passage of time rather than external events) might impact results.
3. A design, as employed in this study, in which inadequate time has passed to assess the full impact of the intervention on behavior.

# Addendum

## Design Further

1. Start with the pretest-comparison/posttest-intervention design.
2. Survey a group one year older (test-only comparison group).
3. Follow-up with survey of posttest-intervention group some time later (e.g., 1 year).
4. Compare test-only comparison group with posttest-intervention group.

PROBLEMS -

SOLUTIONS -