

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM ON PREVENTING CYBER SEXUAL HARASSMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a life skills training program to prevent cyber sexual harassment among secondary school students. Grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, the program integrated digital safety, emotional regulation, and medial literacy to strengthen students' competencies. A one-group pretest-posttest design was used with 35 Grade 9 students in southern Thailand. The intervention spanned four weeks, with two sessions per week, each lasting one hour. Two research instruments were utilized: (1) a validated Cyber Sexual Harassment Prevention Competency Scale assessing knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Cronbach's alpha = .909), and (2) an interactive training program incorporating real-life scenarios, discussions, and role-play. Data were collected before and after the intervention and analyzed using paired sample t-tests. The results showed statistically significant improvements in students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes ($p < .05$), indicating the program's effectiveness in promoting digital resilience. This interdisciplinary approach demonstrates how psychosocial education, experiential learning, and digital ethics can be integrated into adolescent learning. The findings offer implications for broader STEM and physics education, suggesting that life skills programs can support ethical digital behavior and personal safety in technology-based environments, contributing to holistic student development in the digital age.

Keywords: *life skills program, cyber sexual harassment, adolescent prevention, digital safety, secondary school*

Introduction

Sexual harassment encompasses any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, including coercion, abuse of power, or inappropriate behavior. In today's digital age, such behaviors have increasingly migrated to online platforms, giving rise to cyber sexual harassment. This form of harassment involves intrusive, non-consensual, and emotionally damaging sexual behaviors conducted through digital means, such as sending explicit messages, sharing sexual content without consent, impersonation, and identity fraud. The anonymity and borderless nature of cyberspace facilitate these offenses, making them challenging to trace and address (Angela et al., 2023).

Adolescents, as active users of social media, are particularly vulnerable to cyber sexual harassment. The developmental stage of adolescence is marked by hormonal, neurological, and psychological changes that intensify the need for autonomy, self-esteem, and identity formation. These factors can make youth more susceptible to peer pressure, risky behavior, and emotional instability (Naresuan University Hospital, 2023). Moreover, many adolescents engage with online platforms without the critical awareness or emotional readiness to navigate digital risks safely. A study by Pew Research Center (2022) found that nearly half of teens aged 15–17 reported being threatened or harassed online, with 32% of teen girls experiencing multiple types of online harassment. Additionally, a national study in Australia revealed that over one in four girls aged 16–24 had been sexually

propositioned online or via phone messages before turning 18, with 80% of these incidents occurring before the age of 15 (Daily Telegraph, 2025).

In Thailand, the situation mirrors global trends. The Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA) reported that nearly 93% of Thai students under 20 use social media, averaging 12 hours online daily, with Facebook being the most popular platform (ETDA, 2020). Furthermore, a study by Sarinda (2019) indicated that nearly half (49.3%) of Thai adolescents aged 15–24 had met online acquaintances in real life and experienced some form of cyberbullying or harassment. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these risks, with increased online activity leading to a surge in child victims of online abuse during periods of remote learning (Rittaphiphat, personal communication, January 28, 2025). The psychological, emotional, and social development of adolescents aged 10–15 is particularly intense. Hormonal changes, identity exploration, curiosity about sex, and the desire for peer approval become increasingly significant, especially in a digital age dominated by social media (Itsarajoti, 2022). Risky behaviours such as cyberbullying are becoming more common, and adolescents need the skills to protect themselves and respond appropriately. Life skills education, endorsed by the World Health Organization, has proven effective in enhancing adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding sexual abuse prevention (Koedin, 2016). A study by Santre and Pumpaibool (2022) found that life skills programs improved cyber harassment awareness, attitudes, coping strategies, and behavioral responses. Research in Thailand's southern border provinces revealed that cyberbullying often stemmed from family issues, media exposure, low self-esteem, peer pressure, and unregulated access to technology. Victims typically coped by withdrawing or retaliating, and few sought help from parents or trusted adults (Sitthichai & Tudkua, 2017). Based on the researcher's prior experience delivering online safety programs to over 1,500 students in Phuket (For Freedom International, 2020), both students and parents lacked knowledge of digital safety and support systems. A study by Maneephak & Lerttomasakul (2019) identified three main vulnerability factors in online sexual harassment: suitable victims, offender motivation, and insufficient protection, the factors with serious consequences for physical, psychological, and social well-being.

To address these concerns, the current study aims to develop a life skills program designed to equip junior secondary students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to prevent cyber sexual harassment. The intervention emphasizes media literacy, digital safety, self-esteem, and human rights, aiming to build internal resilience and empower adolescents to navigate the digital world with discernment. The research objectives are: (1) to develop a life skills program aimed at enhancing the competency of lower secondary school students in preventing cyber sexual abuse; and (2) to compare the mean scores of cyber sexual abuse prevention competency before and after participating in the life skills program. Given the pervasive and borderless nature of online abuse, this issue cannot be addressed in isolation. It demands sustained attention and proactive investment from educational systems, policymakers, and child protection agencies worldwide. All countries must prioritize equipping their youth with digital resilience and life skills to safeguard them in an increasingly complex and vulnerable online environment.

Method

Research design

This is quantitative research design, the objective of this study was to develop and test the effectiveness of a life skills program aimed at improving the competencies of junior secondary school students in preventing cyber sexual harassment. The competencies examined include: knowledge of online threats skills in self-protection and attitudes toward digital safety and media responsibility. This study employed a pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest format to evaluate the effectiveness of a life skills training program designed to prevent cyber sexual harassment among lower secondary school students. The experimental framework was based on the model proposed

by Sin Phanphinit (2004), and the intervention was conducted over a period of eight weeks, with one session per week lasting one hour.

Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
O_1	X	O_2

O_1 represents the pretest scores of cyber sexual harassment prevention competencies.
 X refers to the treatment: the life skills training program.
 O_2 represents the posttest scores after program implementation.

Population and Sample

The research was conducted during Semester 1 of the academic year 2024 at a selected secondary school under the Pattani Secondary Educational Service Area Office, located in southern Thailand. The entire data collection process, including pretest, intervention, and posttest, was carried out within an 8-week period. The population consisted of all Grade 9 students in 17 public schools under the jurisdiction of the Pattani Secondary Educational Service Area Office 2. The sample was selected through simple random sampling. One school was randomly chosen and all Grade 9 students from that school were invited to participate, totalling 35 students.

Research Procedures

The research procedures followed these steps: 1) pretest: students completed a competency assessment before participating in the intervention. 2) intervention: the life skills training program was conducted over 4 weeks and 8 sessions (2 sessions/week, 1 hour/session) and the last step 3) posttest: the same assessment was administered to evaluate the changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Research Instruments

Two main research instruments were used:

1. Cyber sexual harassment prevention competency scale: This tool measured three domains; knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It consisted of [insert number] items and was validated by experts in psychology, education, and law enforcement. The scale's reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and validity is 0.909
2. Life skills training program: This program was specifically developed for this study, integrating concepts from sexual abuse prevention and David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (2017). The program included modules on: Digital identity, Cybersecurity, Critical thinking, Media literacy, Emotional regulation, Digital empathy. This program was validated by three experts to examine the content.

The instructional materials involved interactive media, participatory activities, and real-life digital scenarios relevant to adolescents.

Data collection and data analysis

Data were collected at two time points: before and after the intervention. The researchers coordinated with school staff to administer the instruments during class periods. Informed consent was obtained from both students and guardians prior to participation. Data analysis were used pretest and posttest scores were compared using statistical techniques to assess program effectiveness.

Ethical considerations

This research was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Prince of Songkla University, Approval Date: May 21, 2024, Project Code: PSU.PN.2-011/67. All participants were informed of their rights, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the process.

Results

Part 1: Development of the Life Skills Program

The life skills program was developed to enhance the competency of lower secondary school students in preventing the risk of cyber sexual abuse. Based on a review of developmental characteristics in early adolescence, it was found that essential competencies or life skills for youth in the digital age must be cultivated through direct experiences. This involves classroom activities, learning materials (e.g., worksheets), and assessment through pre- and post-tests to evaluate program effectiveness. Therefore, the development of this life skills program tailored to the developmental stage and specific needs of adolescents is essential to equip them with the necessary skills to protect themselves against cyber sexual abuse. The program functions as a form of psychological and behavioral immunity, helping students learn and apply prevention strategies in real-life digital contexts. The researcher's program emphasizes experiential learning and life skills development specifically focused on cyber safety.

The alignment of the program with relevant theoretical frameworks was assessed across all eight sessions. The evaluation covered aspects such as objectives, processes, techniques, expected outcomes, assessment methods, media, and materials. The content validity index as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Content Validity of the Life Skills Program for Enhancing Cyber Sexual Abuse Prevention Competency among Lower Secondary School Students

Session	Fundamental Principles	Objectives	Process	Expected Outcomes	Assessment	Media and Materials
1	1.00	0.67	0.67	0.67	1.00	1.00
2	0.33	0.67	0.67	1.00	1.00	1.00
3	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
4	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
5	1.00	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
6	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
7	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
8	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
9	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67

The content validity of the developed life skills program, designed to enhance the competency of lower secondary school students in preventing cyber sexual abuse, was assessed by a panel of experts using a structured evaluation framework. The program consisted of nine sessions, each evaluated across six key components: fundamental principles, objectives, instructional process, expected outcomes, assessment methods, and media/materials. The Content Validity Index (CVI) scores ranged from 0.33 to 1.00. Most sessions demonstrated moderate to high consistency ($CVI \geq 0.67$), indicating that the program components were generally well aligned with theoretical

foundations and educational objectives. Sessions 1 and 5 achieved the highest levels of consistency, while Session 2 showed a lower alignment in its fundamental principles. These findings suggest that the program is content-valid and appropriately structured to support the development of life skills relevant to the prevention of cyber sexual abuse among adolescents, though minor refinements may enhance its overall coherence and effectiveness.

However, the study examined expert opinions regarding the structure of the life skills program aimed at enhancing the competency of lower secondary school students in preventing the risk of cyber sexual abuse. The analysis revealed that the average ratings for the program's five key components 1) objectives, 2) activity implementation, 3) skills utilized, 4) assessment, and 5) instructional media and materials with the ranged from 4.00 to 4.66 on a 5-point scale. This indicates a high level of agreement among experts regarding the appropriateness of the program's design. The standard deviation ranged from 0.73 to 1.03, suggesting a consistently strong consensus across all components, reflecting a high degree of alignment and approval as show in table 2.

Table2. Expert Evaluation of the Life Skills Program Structure for Preventing Cyber Sexual Abuse among

Item	(<i>X</i>)	(SD)	Interpretation
1. Objectives	4.44	0.88	Strongly Agree
2. Activity Implementation	4.33	0.73	Strongly Agree
3. Skills Utilized	4.00	0.86	Strongly Agree
4. Assessment Methods	4.33	1.03	Strongly Agree
5. Instructional Media and Materials	4.66	0.73	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.35	0.85	Strongly Agree

Based on the analysis of expert evaluations, the overall structure of the life skills program was rated highly across all five assessed components. The average scores ranged from 4.00 to 4.66, with all items falling within the "strongly agree" range. Specifically, the component "Instructional Media and Materials" received the highest mean score ($X = 4.66$, $SD = 0.73$), indicating strong approval of the resources used. This was followed closely by "Objectives" ($X = 4.44$, $SD = 0.88$) and both "Activity Implementation" and "Assessment Methods" ($X = 4.33$). The component "Skills Utilized" received the lowest, yet still high, rating ($X = 4.00$, $SD = 0.86$), suggesting minor room for refinement. The overall mean score of 4.35 ($SD = 0.85$) reflects a strong consensus among experts that the program structure is well-designed, relevant, and appropriate for enhancing students' competency in preventing cyber sexual abuse.

Part 2: Analysis of Competency Scores in Cyber Sexual Abuse Prevention Before and After Participation in the Life Skills Program

Pretest and Posttest Assessment of the Participants Before and After Participation in the Life Skills Program of three componants are knowladge, skill and attitude as show in table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores and Correlation Analysis of Cyber Sexual Abuse Prevention Competency (n = 35)

Competency Area	Pretest		Posttest		Correlation	Sig.
	(<i>X</i>)	(SD)	(<i>X</i>)	(SD)		
Knowledge	10.09	3.54	11.49	3.02	.581	.001**
Skills	10.11	4.25	13.40	5.24	.354	.037*
Attitudes	3.90	0.67	4.25	0.50	.397	.018*

Based on the analysis of pretest and posttest scores, the life skills program resulted in statistically significant improvements across all three areas of cyber sexual abuse prevention competency: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The mean knowledge score increased from 10.09 (SD = 3.54) to 11.49 (SD = 3.02), with a moderate positive correlation ($r = .581$, $p = .001$), indicating a strong relationship between pre- and post-intervention scores. Skills also showed a marked improvement, with mean scores rising from 10.11 (SD = 4.25) to 13.40 (SD = 5.24), and a statistically significant but weaker correlation ($r = .354$, $p = .037$). In terms of attitudes, the mean score increased from 3.90 (SD = 0.67) to 4.25 (SD = 0.50), with a moderate correlation ($r = .397$, $p = .018$). These findings confirm that the program effectively enhanced students' knowledge, practical skills, and positive attitudes toward preventing cyber sexual abuse, with all improvements reaching statistical significance ($p < .05$).

Discussion

Regarding the first research objective, the developed life skills program was found to be of high quality, in alignment with the research hypothesis. The program was intentionally designed to address the specific needs of Generation Alpha—adolescents who have been exposed to digital media from an early age. In response to the digital transformation and the realities of online risks, the program incorporated interactive media, simulations, and participatory learning strategies to stimulate students' engagement and enhance their awareness of cyber threats. Key activities such as decision-making role plays, critical media analysis, and rights-awareness exercises were purposefully aligned with 21st-century learning characteristics and promoted deep, experiential learning. The curriculum emphasized the development of core competencies including self-esteem, media literacy, confidence in seeking help, and awareness of digital rights, skills essential for navigating the complexities of the online world.

A central feature of the program was the cultivation of help-seeking behaviors. Students were trained to identify and engage with trusted individuals and support systems, including parents, teachers, and national organizations such as the Thailand Internet Crimes Against Children (TICAC). Simulated scenarios allowed students to practice reporting inappropriate incidents, managing emotional responses, and communicating effectively while minimizing further risk. Furthermore, student-led media campaigns addressed topics such as safe content sharing, recognizing online grooming behaviors, and identifying misinformation. These activities encouraged responsible digital behavior and strengthened critical thinking in line with Buckingham's (2019) media literacy framework. Practical exercises—such as adjusting privacy settings, reporting inappropriate users, and protecting personal data on platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and LINE, bridged theoretical knowledge with real-life application. These approaches, consistent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and WHO's digital safety education guidelines, resulted in observable behavioral changes, such as increased caution online, greater confidence in asserting digital rights, and more proactive help-seeking behaviors. These findings highlight the program's value as a structured, theory-informed intervention capable of enhancing adolescents' digital resilience and should be considered for wider integration into secondary education curricula.

The second research objective aimed to compare students' competency scores before and after participation in the program. The findings confirmed the hypothesis, revealing statistically significant post-intervention improvements across three key domains: knowledge ($M_{pre} = 10.09$, $M_{post} = 11.49$), skills ($M_{pre} = 10.11$, $M_{post} = 13.40$), and attitudes ($M_{pre} = 3.90$, $M_{post} = 4.25$), with significance levels at .01 and .05. Students exhibited enhanced ability to identify online risks, apply safety strategies, and reject inappropriate contact—supporting Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which underscores the effectiveness of learning through observation, modeling, and active practice. These findings are also consistent with Santre and Pumpaibool (2022), who concluded that cyber safety training significantly improves youths' capacities to respond to online threats. Moreover, students demonstrated a more positive attitude toward cyber safety, reflecting greater responsibility and self-regulation in digital environments. This is aligned with Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory, which identifies adolescence as a crucial period for the development of identity and social responsibility. The improvement across all three domains confirms the effectiveness of the program in promoting comprehensive cyber safety competence. This outcome supports the Iceberg Model of competency proposed by Saengngern (2016), which distinguishes between surface-level competencies—such as knowledge and skills—that are more easily developed, and deeper traits—such as values, attitudes, and motivations—that require sustained interventions. Similarly, the work of Parry (1996), the WHO (2010), and Anantathep (2022) affirm that knowledge, skills, and attitudes form the foundation of personal and professional competence and can be cultivated through experiential learning and real-world application.

Notably, the program's findings also reflect key developmental patterns in adolescence. Students showed a tendency to prioritize peer relationships over family connections and displayed greater concern for appearance, self-esteem, and social belonging. When asked who they would consult in the event of cyber sexual harassment, many students preferred seeking help from peers rather than parents. This finding aligns with Itsarajoti (2022), who highlighted that adolescents seek greater independence, exhibit more nuanced emotional and social reasoning, and develop deeper peer affiliations. It also points to the urgency of ensuring that adolescents are equipped with clear guidance on identifying trusted adults and accessing formal support systems when needed.

Additionally, the program revealed that all participants faced varying degrees of risk for cyber sexual harassment, largely due to limited self-protection skills and unrestricted internet access. Alarmingly, 14% of students reported prior experiences of online harassment. This finding aligns with data from the Office of Justice Affairs (2011), which classified cyber sexual harassment as a form of cybercrime that exploits the speed, accessibility, and anonymity of the internet to target children—often through the distribution of exploitative content. Without early intervention, adolescents lacking life skills and digital awareness may become vulnerable to long-term psychosocial harm. The program's experiential learning approach, based on Kolb (2014), involved real-life case analysis, response simulations, and structured instruction on seeking help and providing students with opportunities to engage critically with online experiences and build self-protective confidence.

In summary, this multidimensional program demonstrates that integrating knowledge acquisition, skills development, and attitudinal growth is essential to effective cyber safety education. The significant gains in students' post-test scores reflect the success of the program in fostering holistic digital resilience. These findings offer strong support for the implementation of similar life skills interventions in school-based digital safety initiatives, particularly in contexts where adolescents are at high risk of online exploitation.

Conclusion

The Life Skills Program for Preventing Cyber Sexual Harassment Risks has proven to be an effective intervention in enhancing adolescents' digital resilience. By integrating experiential learning, media literacy, and psychosocial development, the program significantly improved participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding online safety. The findings align with recent research emphasizing the importance of comprehensive, school-based digital safety education in mitigating cyber sexual harassment among youth. To further strengthen adolescents' capacity to navigate digital spaces safely, it is recommended that educational institutions integrate comprehensive life skills programs into their curricula, focusing on digital literacy, emotional intelligence, and help-seeking behaviors. Such programs should be culturally sensitive and age-appropriate, incorporating interactive and participatory methodologies to engage students effectively. Collaboration between schools, parents, and community organizations is essential to create a supportive environment that reinforces the program's objectives. Additionally, continuous professional development for educators on emerging digital risks and prevention strategies will ensure the sustainability and relevance of the program. Implementing these recommendations will contribute to a holistic approach in safeguarding adolescents against cyber sexual harassment.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Master of Arts in Psychology Program, Faculty of Education, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, for their generous support throughout the completion of this research.

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